

Meeting Minutes

Village of Downers Grove
Human Service Ad Hoc Committee

Committee Room

09/22/20

7:07 PM

I. Call to Order

Village Manager Dave Fieldman called the meeting of the Human Service Ad Hoc Committee of the Village of Downers Grove to order at 7:07 p.m. in the Committee Room of the Downers Grove Village Hall.

II. Roll Call

Committee Members Attendance (Present): Samantha Aycock, Becky Campbell, Tom Connolly, Chris Gilmartin, Azizi Marshall, Kimberly Nagi

Absent: Stephanie Williams

Staff: Village Manager David Fieldman, Administrative Secretary II Rosa Berardi

Guests: Marie Grover and Matt Chicola, Youth Outlook

Mr. Fieldman asked for a motion to permit electronic attendance by Samantha Aycock, Becky Campbell, Chris Gilmartin, Azizi Marshall, Marie Grover, and Matt Chicola

Ms. Nagy moved to approve the motion. Mr. Connolly seconded the motion.

Mr. Fieldman declared the motion approved by voice vote.

III. Approval of August 25, 2020 Minutes

Mr. Fieldman asked for a motion to approve the August 25, 2020 minutes.

Ms. Marshall moved to approve the minutes as presented. Ms. Nagy seconded the motion.

Mr. Fieldman declared the minutes approved by voice vote.

IV. Presentation by Youth Outlook

Mr. Fieldman introduced Marie Grover and Matt Chicola with the Youth Outlook organization. Ms. Grover used a PowerPoint presentation to explain the services offered by Youth Outlook. She started by stating that Youth Outlook is the 1st social agency solely dedicated to the support of LGBTQ+ youth in Illinois. Ms. Grover currently holds the Treasurer position on the Board of Directors. She said the organization has locations in 7 counties in the Chicagoland suburbs and has been serving northern IL for 22 years. Youth Outlook takes no state or federal funding and relies solely on private donations and grants. The programs offered through the organization are made possible entirely by the support of the communities it operates in. Youth Outlook offers the following services:

- Drop-in centers for youth
- Parent support groups
- Community Education

Ms. Grover said the Youth Outlook drop-in centers are offered to children ages 12 through 20. The drop-ins used only be available to high school-aged youth; once younger children started attending, the organization lowered the starting age to 12 years. A complete list of drop-in locations, including meeting dates and times, can be found here: [Drop-in Schedule](#). Due to the pandemic, drop-ins are currently operating online only. Those interested should contact Nancy Mullen via email at nancy.mullen@youth-outlook.org for Zoom login information.

Mr. Chicola, a resident of Downers Grove for 34 years, introduced himself and said he is a volunteer and Board Member of Youth Outlook. He told his story of growing up feeling confused and isolated. He spoke of being bullied, which forced him to take on a false persona and drove him away from his community. Once in college, he reached rock bottom and got arrested for substance abuse. He sought help and support and found both in Youth Outlook

Ms. Grover spoke about the Youth Outlook Thrive program. She said it is available to parents, foster parents, guardians, and full-time caregivers of LGBTQ+ teens. Ms. Grover said the organization's goal is to empower families and teach them to be more sympathetic and understanding to their children. Before COVID-19 the Thrive meetings were held in Naperville and Palatine, two Wednesday evenings a month. Due to the pandemic, sessions are online. Follow this link for the meeting schedule: [Thrive Schedule](#). For further information, contact Maggie Dix at maggie.dix@youth-outlook.org. Ms. Grover made mention that under normal circumstances, the organization hosts a picnic during the summer months, bringing youth and their families together.

Ms. Grover went on to speak of Youth Outlook's focus on Community Education. It develops relationships with schools and organizations within communities. She said they work with school faculty, administrators, health professionals, and social service workers by teaching them the particular risks the LGBTQ+ youth face. The organization provides information about resources that are available in the community.

Mr. Chicola commented that Youth Outlook is always looking for volunteers and personally feels that volunteering for the organization has been a privilege.

Ms. Grover said she would like to see more people volunteer and become board members. She said that volunteering doesn't necessarily mean one has to meet with people. Volunteers assist with marketing efforts, help IT, or in the case of those working in the legal field, provide the organization with legal knowledge. One could also contribute to Youth Outlook with a monetary donation. She also mentioned that purchasing from the new online merchandise [store](#) is another way to show your support.

Ms. Grover spoke of the one-hour Youth Outlook Mission Tours offered to the public. The tours provide professional development and training to educators, mental health providers and other healthcare providers. Staff and volunteers talk about the programs and services that support LGBTQ+ youth, their families, and their communities. Mission Tours are currently only offered virtually. The next tour will be offered on October 4, 2020 at 6 p.m. Contact marie.grover@youth-outlook.org to participate or to schedule a personal tour.

Ms. Grover ended the presentation by speaking about the Dare to Dream Gala 2020 to take place on October 16th from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. This year the gala will be virtual. Tickets are available online. Follow this link for event information: [Dare to Dream Event](#) .

Ms. Aycock thanked Ms. Grover and Mr. Chicola for presenting to the group. She spoke of her brother waiting until later in life to come out and one of her biggest dreams is to prevent any other youth from not being able to live out their dreams. She is hoping that the Village can play a role in supporting LGBTQ+ youth.

Ms. Aycock asked Ms. Grover if she could provide the Downers Grove Village Council with a customized 1 hour Mission Tour.

Ms. Grover stated it can be arranged to have Nancy Mullen, Executive Director, give her “Youth Outlook 101 talk”. She said the more the Village welcomes openness, the more there will be a shift in the community.

Ms. Campbell said she agrees that if the Village shows support to the LGBTQ+ youth population, there will be a shift in the schools to offer more support and guidance to its students.

Ms. Grover said that Youth Outlook doesn’t provide much education to the elementary schools yet, but hopes they will be able to in the future. She has seen children as young as six years of age questioning their sexual identity; she hopes to educate their parents, so they can be there to guide their children.

Mr. Gilmartin thanked Mr. Chicola for sharing his story and asked Ms. Grover if COVID-19 has placed any challenges on the Youth Outlook organization.

Ms. Grover said they are not able to handle all of the requests for drop-in centers they have received; each drop-in center costs anywhere from \$5,000 - \$7,000 to open and requires volunteers. 1-2 drop-in centers opened per year before COVID-19. Lastly, she said having a plan for volunteers to work the drop-in centers is as important as having a location.

Mr. Gilmartin asked if drop-in centers have to be in churches and also asked what type of commitment a drop-in center involves. Additionally, he wanted to know how the organization determines what the best location for the next drop-in center will be.

Ms. Grover said drop-in centers do not need to be in churches and most drop-in centers take 3-5 hours a week to operate. The host group usually meets 2 hours on a weeknight, anytime between 6-9 pm.

Ms. Grover also indicated that most drop-in center locations are in churches. Youth Outlook volunteers run the sessions and the centers usually have the backing of a pastor. Ms. Grover continued by stating that once there are proposals for host sites, the Youth Outlook Board takes a look at where the greatest need is. She said the funding provided by the potential hosts and their readiness to open also plays a factor in the final decision.

Ms. Campbell mentioned that there have previously been talks of opening a drop-in center in Downers Grove and she is hoping those talks can resume.

Ms. Grover said 20 years ago Youth Outlook groups used to hide in church basements. Fast forward to today, the requests for locations are far greater than what the organization can handle. She stated that she would like the organization to focus on educating elementary school professionals, parents, and healthcare providers. She wants to help our youth as young as possible. Ms. Grover ended her presentation by saying that she will look into sending a proposal, for a Downers Grove location, to Manager Fieldman to look over and share with the HSAHC.

Manager Fieldman thanked Ms. Grover and Mr. Chicola for taking the time to talk to the committee.

V. Review of 2019 Report and Discussion of 2020 Report

Mr. Fieldman directed the attention of the group to the 2019 HSAHC Report. Prior to this meeting, Mr. Fieldman asked each of the committee members to prioritize and expand on each of the recommendations listed on the 2019

HSAHC report. Mr. Fieldman created a table that the group would look over, discuss, and complete with their compiled responses this evening.

The members of the Committee rated each of the 21 recommendations with an A, B, or C based on priority. As a whole, the Committee prioritized 14 of the items as an A and seven as a B. The group also decided to combine two of the recommendations and narrow the list to 20. Mr. Fieldman explained that his goal for the group is to come up with the three most important recommendations for the Committee and present them in the 2020 HSAHC Report to the Village Council. To do this, Mr. Fieldman asked each of the Committee members to take some time on their own and prioritize the 20 recommendations again, this time with 7 A's, 7 B's, and 6 C's. He asked the members to return their results to him anonymously; once collected, he would recalculate the results and share them during the Committee's October meeting.

V. Public Comment

There was none.

VI. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 8:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Rosa Berardi
Administrative Secretary II
Village Clerk's Office