**TNP Marijuana Meeting Minutes**

July 7, 2022

**Present:** Jeff Santo (RIPPLE), Ed Milton (Kids in Crisis), Kelley Meier (Norwalk Health Dept), Diamond Sead (HSC / parent), Nicole Hampton (woman in recovery / parent), Rebecca Oliveira & Margaret Watt (Positive Directions & parent)

1. Announcements:
	* Positive Directions got an ARPA grant from the City of Norwalk to run 2 weekly support groups (one gender-specific, alternating girls and boys, for 10 weeks, plus an ongoing SMART Teens group) and a monthly social-rec activity for teens, in collaboration with our subcontractor / co-facilitators at Youth Business Initiative (YBI). The girls group started last night with 7 participants in attendance and the SMART Teens group starts next week with 14 kids signed up!
	* Our first Teen Night Out is a bowling night, tomorrow, with 80 students signed up!! Diamond led on this. ☺
2. Report out / discussion of recent Ordinance meeting:
	* Due to new information / issues, Committee delayed a vote to go to a public hearing. That vote will likely happen at the next Committee meeting and then take place a month later.
	* See meeting minutes at <https://www.norwalkct.org/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/18641> **Please note**:
		+ Committee discussed the new legislation this session that *removes* the limit of 3 cannabis businesses for a city the size of Norwalk. (Previously the # of businesses was based on the population size.) **There is now no limit on the number of cannabis businesses in Norwalk.**
		+ Committee talked about how to select a spot where public consumption of cannabis will be allowed. They talked about equity because if the public spot is in one part of town, others won’t have access or will have to travel.
		+ To address equity, **Tom Keegan suggested that the public consumption spot could be the entire City of Norwalk, with the exception of areas that the law specifically disallows. This idea was discussed with no decision.**
	* The proposed Ordinance would give the City of Norwalk Community Services Division power to administer the protected marijuana fund. There was discussion about whether the Committee would suggest priorities for Community Services to make those decisions, or recommend what % of the funds should be used for each of the 6 allowed areas. It appeared that the Ordinance will likely remain general, giving those decisions to Community Services.
		+ The 6 allowed uses of the 3% municipal tax are listed below; **please note that “prevention” is not listed anywhere but we can advocate to ensure that it is identified by Norwalk under #2 or #6. Compliance checks, traffic stops, and other law enforcement are also not listed anywhere:**
		1. make improvements to the streetscapes and other neighborhood developments in and around community,
		2. fund education programs or youth employment and training programs,
		3. fund services for individuals released from the custody of the Commissioner of Correction, probation or parole,
		4. fund mental health or addiction services,
		5. fund youth service bureaus and municipal juvenile review boards, or
		6. fund efforts to promote civic engagement in communities
3. Marijuana messaging:
	* TNP created and sent out the first 2 in an intended series of postcards with substance prevention messages. The first 2 focused on marijuana and vaping (see attached). They are aimed at middle and high school families. **It cost just over $1000 to print and mail each postcard. If any participating agencies have some money to support this campaign, please let us know!**
	* Feedback from Committee
		+ Postcards look attractive, draw attention
		+ Condensed, solid information
		+ Kids don’t know this information
		+ Nice to have included action item at the bottom
		+ They definitely need info on 2nd hand smoke! Positive Directions made a 2nd hand smoke flyer based on input from the teens we work with in Westport which was shared with Norwalk high schools
		+ Appreciate sharing the statistic that only 8% of Norwalk kids are vaping – helps to fight the perception that it’s everyone. (Although that statistic was from June 2021, and during this past school year vaping does appear to have increased again. We will re-survey in October 2022.)
		+ Health impacts like popcorn lung are a good way to capture their attention
		+ Teens think they’re invincible!
	* Broader discussion about vaping:
		+ Flavor bans: kids think if it smells like peanut butter, how can it be bad for you? Important to teach them about being an informed /smart consumer - they don’t want to be told what to do, yet are being duped.
			- Stanford University’s vaping and marijuana curricula (which TNP has shared with health teachers) have a big focus on exactly this – analyzing media and seeing what they’re doing.
		+ Our postcards are aimed at parents. Our Norwalk Strong club members (high school students) could work on their own materials / training to teach other kids
		+ Problem may be bigger at BMHS than NHS since NHS has vaping detectors.
		+ Raise awareness about hookah / shishah – they don’t connect the dots – kids have little personal cups
	* Next steps:
		+ Hit the school bathrooms hard with these and other messages since that’s where kids vape the most
		+ Postcards will be posted on the TNP marijuana, vaping, and Spanish pages
		+ **ACTION ITEM:** Rebecca will post these postcards on TNP social media next week (boosted posts) – **everyone please reshare and tag others in town**
4. Billboard in Norwalk issue - again!
	* The billboard on Westport Ave that is illegally right by a preschool is back. They took it down on one side and then put it back up on the other.
	* **ACTION ITEMS**: Aniella confirmed that: Prohibited advertising of cannabis will be considered a violation of Connecticut’s Unfair Trade Practice Acts (“CUTPA”). DCP has jurisdiction over CUTPA and may investigate claims of violation and hold hearings to render decisions on those investigations. If the Commissioner of Consumer Protection finds that a violation did in fact occur, s/he has the authority to issue certain penalties. However, if seeking injunctive relief (i.e., taking down the billboard), the Commissioner must work with the State’s Attorney General to seek an order, which means requesting that relief from the court. The process for submitting a complaint regarding a CUTPA violation is available here: <https://portal.ct.gov/DCP/Complaint-Center/Complaint-Forms-and-Procedures>.
	* File a complaint with the AG's office here: <https://www.dir.ct.gov/ag/complaint/e-complaint.aspx?CheckJavaScript=1>
	* Steve Kleppin indicated to me when we had a meeting a month or so ago that P&Z might be able to bring some pressure to bear as well. I'll let him clarify that!
5. Sharing new data & resources
	* Positive Directions has purchased an organizational license so that anyone associated with us or our projects (e.g., TNP) can be trained to deliver the *Johnny’s Ambassadors* marijuana prevention curriculum.
		+ We have 4 teens from BMHS who will get trained in order to deliver the curriculum to their peers next year. We also hope to train a similar number of teens from NHS.
		+ TNP MJ Committee members who want to get trained: Ed, Nicole, Kelley, Tory
		+ Nicole suggests presenting it to legislators
		+ **ACTION**: TNP will reach out to schedule the training. We can do it individually or as a group, online or in person. Let Margaret know if you want to get trained and deliver the training.
	* Margaret & Tory joined yesterday’s national Youth Marijuana Prevention Conference livestream and will continue watching the recordings when they are released next week. We will share data/findings through revised infographics. Some takeaways so far:
		+ Health impact data that was presented reinforced the critical need for health education around marijuana. We emphasized this in our legislative forum on marijuana last January, where we strongly recommended warning labels on packaging and provided suggested language, but which CT is still not addressing.
		+ Colorado has suffered many negative outcomes as a result of removing all barriers to recreational marijuana when they first legalized it, and have had a very hard time restricting it after the fact. They did just pass a law this session requiring warning labels, but only after a hard fight. They shared some of the language that will go into effect, but the marijuana industry fought back hard and they weren’t able to include a warning label about suicide.
		+ More and more research points to a very strong influence of high-THC products on suicidal ideation and attempt. Researchers have found a pathway that explains violent behavior among people with Cannabis Use Disorder—both aggression toward others as well as self-harm.
		+ In pregnant women, THC crosses the placental barrier freely, leading to brain malformation, still birth, low birthweight, etc. – yet budtenders at cannabis dispensaries have been known to actually *recommend* marijuana to pregnant women since it reduces nausea. (At a hospital where the presenter works, just last week a woman who used THC during her pregnancy gave birth to a baby that was missing part of its brain.)
		+ An addiction treatment specialist and researcher commented at length on how the delusionality among people with Cannabis Induced Psychosis is different from other psychosis. It appears to be extremely long-lived and deeply felt, outlasting the effects of the drug and possibly changing the brain.
		+ Significant differences in how cannabis affects males and females in terms of behaviors and the pathway to addiction.
		+ High THC products are leading some people to become addicted within just a couple of uses.
	* Delta 8 THC is not technically considered illegal in CT because it falls under the classification of hemp rather than marijuana (which is Delta 9 THC), so it is available for sale under a loophole. However, members of the New Canaan Parent Support Group found that a vape shop was not only selling Delta 8 but actually selling Delta 9 as well. They identified a brand that is literally selling cannabis products now, and it was also found in Greenwich and other towns.
		+ **ACTION:** TNP will send warning
		+ **ACTION:** Kelley will identify who in Norwalk is responsible for Consumer Protection issues around the vape shops. We can invite that person to join this committee