

TUMWATER PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE
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CONVENE: 8:00 a.m.

PRESENT: Chair Leatta Dahlhoff and Councilmembers Peter Agabi and Angela Jefferson.

Staff: City Administrator John Doan, City Attorney Karen Kirkpatrick, Police Chief Jon Weiks, Fire Chief Brian Hurley, and Police Administrative Services Manager Laura Wohl.

CHANGES TO AGENDA: There were no changes to the agenda.

**APPROVAL OF
MINUTES: JANUARY 11,
2022:**

MOTION: Councilmember Jefferson moved, seconded by Councilmember Agabi, to approve the minutes of January 11, 2022 as published. Motion carried unanimously.

**TUMWATER HOPES
UPDATE:** Janine Koffel, Coalition Coordinator, Tumwater HOPES (Healthy Opportunities for Prevention and Empowerment and Success), reported the organization is a community coalition as part of the Community Prevention Wellness Initiative, a statewide effort to address risk and prevent teen substance use. Tumwater HOPES, established in 2018, is one of approximately 100 coalitions across the state. Councilmembers Schneider and Swarthout serve as members representing the City of Tumwater.

Ms. Koffel reviewed some key objectives focused on since the beginning of the school year. One objective is increasing the capacity of Tumwater to address alcohol, tobacco, and other drug uses. Virtual coalition meetings are held monthly in addition to two youth coalition monthly meetings (THEE Club - Thurston Hope for Everyone Everywhere) facilitated by Big Brothers, Big Sisters. The organization completed an annual Community Survey receiving 240 completed surveys with one Spanish survey submitted. The Tumwater School District coordinated the Healthy Youth Survey for students in grades 6, 8, 10, and 12 in October 2021. The results are pending and will be released in April 2022. Data from the youth and community surveys in addition to other organizational datasets will help inform revisions to the organization's Strategic Action Plan.

Tumwater HOPES has partnered with the City of Tumwater to conduct an annual key leader event, a meeting focused on engaging key decision-makers across the City representing schools, organizations vested in supporting youth and families,

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parents, neighborhood associations, and other stakeholders in the City who promote or provide services promoting children, youth, and family health and wellbeing to prevent teen substance use, as well as teen suicide.

Tumwater HOPES employs a system-wide comprehensive approach to improve the health of the population by considering youths, families, cities, county, schools, and the state to identify ways to increase the capacity for positive and low-risk choices and decrease risk factors that might contribute to a youth's high risk decision to use drugs and alcohol as a coping strategy for stressors or other system issues related to housing, food, and employment insecurities. The key leader event is intended to bring as many of those stakeholders together to review the results of the surveys. The last surveys were completed in 2018. Survey results in 2018 reflected an increase in vaping in grades 6, 8, 10 and 12.

Ms. Koffel responded to questions regarding the intent of the community survey and how the survey was distributed throughout the community. The community sought feedback about youth and wellbeing from different perspectives. For example, the survey goal for participants representing law enforcement and first responders was information from their perspective on what they believe are key concerns for youths, drugs, and alcohol use in Tumwater. The survey was distributed within the community through different venues beginning in August 2021 at the Tumwater Farmers Market, through coalition partner networks, in neighborhoods during Halloween, the City's annual Clean-Up, Drop-Off event, at vaccination clinics, postcard distribution with QR code information in Spanish through the Thurston County Food Bank, local churches, PTAs, school district, and City promotional efforts.

Mr. Koffel described the efforts of the THEE Club comprised of youth interested in helping to promote teen health. Youth members received training on advocacy, public speaking, and event planning. The effort also focuses on classroom situations and how that environment affects youths. Twenty-one staff members at Peter G. Schmidt Elementary School received training on the evidence-based good behavior game, a game geared to reduce disruptive behavior in the classroom. However, because of the pandemic and the chaotic environment it has created in schools, the program has been difficult to implement. The effort contributed to a partnership with the Tumwater Parks and Recreation Department. At Tumwater Middle School, staff

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requested training on an evidence-based intervention program to help students develop positive goals around health, nutrition, and an exercise to help reduce risk of substance use. Bush Middle School has experienced some staff disruptions within health classes and deliveries of training programs have been delayed. Big Brothers, Big Sisters, as a coalition partner, also subcontracted with Tumwater HOPES to establish and promote the THEE Club. Six youth consistently participate in the club with the first in-person event planned at the end of February in partnership with the Cultural Center in Tumwater. The intent is to provide a pro-social, low-risk event for high school students to attend a supervised event.

Increasing the perception of harm is another goal, as many youths view the legalization of marijuana and use of alcohol as legal and safe. Rebecca May, North Student Assistance Specialist, is implementing Project Success, another evidence informed program through a good vibes club providing sixth and seventh graders an opportunity to help her with prevention programming at Bush Middle School. The effort helps students understand the risks and consequences of drug use.

The Tumwater Parks and Recreation Department and Family Education and Support Services are providing the virtual Guiding Good Choices program to increase parent skills to reduce risk and manage perceived harms. The program is a six session virtual series with a planned in-person session in spring 2022. Six families were registered for the program with four families consistently participating in the program.

Each year, the objectives are reviewed along with supporting data to identify gaps and opportunities to reinforce gains and identify missing partners. Many voices within the community are missing. Those voices would help the organization understand the entire picture of what youths and their families are experiencing in Tumwater.

Councilmember Agabi commented on the importance of ensuring surveys are widely distributed or advertised broadly in the community to increase awareness. Mr. Koffel responded that the pandemic has played an important role in creating a cumulative fatigue spanning all systems causing more challenges on ways to engage the community around the concern of teen substance use.

Chair Dahlhoff referred to previous discussions on ways the City can partner and support the coalition. One area was through

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City advertising. She asked whether the coalition has considered the proliferation of signs promoting vaping and smoking. Mr. Koffel said it speaks to a greater level of intervention. The most recent focus has been directly to youths, families, and schools. Moving toward spring, the coalition is featuring speakers providing latest science on youth and cannabis and the role policymakers play in promoting and protecting teen health. Signage often promotes normalization of the perception that substance use is acceptable for anyone. Controlling signage, as well as the exposure youths have to that type of advertising is definitely of interest to the coalition and something the coalition will explore during spring and summer. One such effort is riding local school bus routes for an environmental scan of information students are exposed to daily as they travel to school.

City Administrator Doan commented that surveying a community is a notoriously difficult process. The City has used traditional means resulting in a limited segment of the population completing surveys. Additionally, all communities have been bombarded by different surveys. Titles of surveys can also narrow the response rate as many believe a survey might not be applicable to them. In addition to the key leader event, the City also sponsored several community summits before the pandemic. Last year, the City and TOGETHER combined efforts and hosted an in-person summit with support from the school district.

UPDATE FROM THURSTON COUNTY PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE:

City Administrator Doan briefed members on the City's decision to transition municipal court services from the City's municipal court to contracting with the Thurston County Prosecutor's Office. The City had contracted with the Thurston County Prosecutor for prosecution services for many years prior to the transition. However, in 2013, the City transitioned to three contracts with Thurston County for court operations with District Court, prosecution services through the Thurston County Prosecutor's Office, and services through the Office of Public Defense.

Christy Peters, Chief of Staff, Thurston County Prosecutor's Office, added that in addition to those services, the Prosecutor's Office prosecuted each felony for the City of Tumwater. Today, Thurston County provides all criminal justice court services. Additionally, all juvenile cases were handled by the Thurston County Prosecutor's Office.

Jon Tunheim, Thurston County Prosecutor, updated members on

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the Tumwater prosecution program. Most cases are serious traffic violations (impaired drivers, driving with suspended license, and hit and run), assaults (primarily domestic violence now referred to as imminent partner violence (IPV) or violence that occurs between people involved in a relationship), lower level theft cases, vehicle prowls, and other property crimes.

Mr. Tunheim shared high level statistical information on referred cases, charged cases, and declined cases. Some offenses have declined likely because of COVID and new legislation on policing limiting the ability of law enforcement to make traffic stops and other types of actions. Currently, 268 non-IPV cases are pending trial and 77 IPV cases are pending trial.

Councilmember Agabi asked whether data exists prior to the passage of 1310 accounting for traffic violations or infractions. Mr. Tunheim advised that data likely exists; however, it is only recently that the impacts of 1310 have been identified. Another year of data would provide more information on the decline.

Police Chief Weiks added that the new laws have severely limited the department's ability to proactively police with traffic stops declining because of liability risks.

Mr. Tunheim said both the District and Superior Courts have essentially closed periodically during the pandemic. Currently, Thurston County District Court is not conducting any jury trials until the end of February. Each time, the courts shut down caseloads back up creating more challenges for the office. Not all cases will advance to trial and some will be resolved. During the pandemic, more cases were settled prior to trial.

The current population in the Mental Health Court – Veterans Court has declined during the pandemic for many of the same reasons. It is anticipated that as the courts begin to reopen, cases will begin to increase as more referrals are forwarded to the therapeutic courts. The Mental Health Court also serves people who are charged with felonies; however, it entails a process as the Mental Health Court is housed in District Court, which only has jurisdiction over misdemeanor offenses. In those instances involving a felony, the felony charge is converted to a misdemeanor charge filed in District Court to afford the ability of the offender to participate in the therapeutic court. Those instances often involve a felony where mental health was a factor in the criminal conduct.

Councilmember Agabi inquired as to whether the Prosecutor's

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Office tracks recidivism data for the therapeutic courts. Mr. Tunheim affirmed the therapeutic courts maintain recidivism data, which is tracked through the courts. The shortage of mental health beds is an ongoing issue for the criminal justice system at all levels for misdemeanor and felony offenses. Unfortunately, many people are confined for long durations because of the lack of mental health beds. Additionally, participants in the therapeutic courts are not subject to involuntary treatment or civil commitment. Participants in the Mental Health Court receive intensive case management and connection to a variety of mental health services, as well as substance use disorder treatment and housing referrals.

Some of the innovations provided by the therapeutic courts include the ability to divert cases through the pre-trial services department that are misdemeanors for those who do not require intensive case management while affording an opportunity to make restitution and receive referral to services. Those services are funded from the county's treatment sales tax and are anticipated to be offered over the next several months as a strategy to address the backlog of cases.

Mr. Tunheim spoke to the success of the LEAD Program over the last several months. Approximately two-thirds of the referrals to the program are from local law enforcement agencies.

The Prosecutor's Office also provides a victim advocacy program with staff specifically designated as victim advocates who work with victims to help them connect to different support services.

Ms. Peters encouraged members to view virtual court proceedings because of the pandemic. Access is available through the Thurston County District Court website with links to each court hearing. Members can login as an observer to watch court proceedings. The therapeutic courts can also be viewed virtually. The therapeutic courts continue to broadcast graduation ceremonies. She offered to follow-up with staff when a Tumwater citizen is scheduled to graduate from the Mental Health Court or the Veterans Court.

Chair Dahlhoff conveyed appreciation for the update and recommended scheduling periodic updates to the committee.

City Attorney Kirkpatrick noted that previously, the committee received an annual update other than when specific topics were

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scheduled, such as when an update was provided on DUIs. The contract is scheduled for renewal at the end of this year, which might be timely to schedule an update to the committee.

Chair Dahlhoff offered some suggestions on updates, such as driving while suspended in the third degree, the proliferate use of fentanyl, and impacts from the Blake decision.

City Administrator Doan suggested scheduling an update in four months on three different topics.

ADJOURNMENT:

With there being no further business, Chair Dahlhoff adjourned the meeting at 9:05 a.m.

Prepared by Puget Sound Meeting Services, psmsoly@earthlink.net