

**TUMWATER PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE  
MINUTES OF VIRTUAL MEETING  
March 14, 2023 Page 1**

**CONVENE:** 8:01 a.m.

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

Staff: City Administrator John Doan, Police Chief Jon Weiks, Fire Chief Brian Hurley, Assistant Fire Chief Shawn Crimmins, and Police Administrative Manager Laura Wohl.

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

**APPROVAL OF  
MINUTES: PUBLIC  
HEALTH & SAFETY  
COMMITTEE,  
FEBRUARY 14, 2023:**

**MOTION:** Councilmember Jefferson moved, seconded by Chair Dahlhoff, to approve the minutes of February 14, 2023 as presented. A voice vote approved the motion.

**TUMWATER  
HOPES UPDATE:** Tumwater HOPES Co-chairs, Beau Wilson and Keitha Bryson, and Georgia Aust, Tumwater HOPES Coalition Coordinator with Thurston County Public Health and Social Services, updated the committee on activities by the coalition.

Ms. Wilson explained how Tumwater HOPES serves as a community coalition designed to prevent youth substance use collaboratively in an inclusive and engaged community where every youth feels they belong. The coalition promotes the health and well-being of children, teens, and families in partnership with Tumwater Parks and Recreation, Tumwater School District, 4-H, TOGETHER, Family Education and Support Services, Washington State University (WSU) Extension, and Big Brothers Big Sisters of Southwest Washington through evidence-based and innovative programs. The goal is to ensure the community is providing enough protective measures to outweigh risks youth face. Some risks arise from their personal home life, sense of belonging in the community, and their school life. Protective measures include youth and family education, social and emotional resources, environmental strategies, and attitudes and social norms of the community.

Data from the 2021 community healthy survey highlighted room for growth in Tumwater for education surrounding the significant risks of daily alcohol, vaping, and marijuana use by youth. Survey data highlights the correlation on how mental health and emotional health can be affected by substance use. Approximately 43% of students reported feeling sad and

**TUMWATER PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE**  
**MINUTES OF VIRTUAL MEETING**  
**March 14, 2023 Page 2**

hopeless every day for two weeks or more in a row. The state average is 38% placing Tumwater significantly higher than the state average.

Ms. Bryson reported she is a retired Highline School District teacher who moved from King County to Thurston County prior to the COVID statewide shutdown. During the last three years, she has worked with youth in the community. The League of Women Voters has been instrumental in engaging youths in policy. Some students have completed training with the Lacey City Youth Council. Recently, the Chair of the Voter Services Committee shared information on an opportunity for Tumwater students to join a YMCA Civics training class to teach youth on understanding policy and the process of adopting policy to enable youth an opportunity to participate in government despite their inability to vote because of age. The Olympia Rotary has offered a similar program for foreign exchange students.

Ms. Aust shared information on current coalition initiatives. Tumwater HOPES serves as a community prevention and wellness initiatives coalition funded by a grant from the state to provide evidence-based and innovative prevention programs. Some risk and protective measures to help youths lead substance-free lives include the mentoring program in partnership with Big Brothers Big Sisters offering two mentoring programs at Tumwater's Peter G. Schmidt Elementary School and a program at the Tumwater Boys and Girls Club. The mentoring program provides social connection between Tumwater High School students, who serve as mentors, and elementary students. Another program is Positive Action in partnership with Washington State University (WSU) Extension 4-H Program offering first, third, and fifth grade students an evidence-based program to strengthen their physical, intellectual, social, and emotional skills. Research reveals that when youths have a healthy older person in their life they are less likely to engage in risky behaviors. The program is supplemented through 4-H activities of crafts and farming. Positive action develops the social and emotional character skills youths need to take positive action.

The coalition offers a secure drug take-back campaign. During the fall drive in partnership with the City, the coalition collects prescription medicine for safe disposal.

The coalition's E-Club is provided through a partnership with Big Brothers Big Sisters to educate Tumwater High School students on prevention science and it is an opportunity for students to participate in a community service. Youth input to the coalition is important. The E-Club serves as the coalition's youth voice.

Another initiative is providing and identifying locations to post signs at schools for visitors and occupants advising them that the facility does not

**TUMWATER PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE**  
**MINUTES OF VIRTUAL MEETING**  
**March 14, 2023 Page 3**

condone the use of drugs, tobacco, vaping, or the possession of firearms. A recent project included placement of signs at all school entrances at schools in the Tumwater School District. The New Market Skills Center posted signs in restrooms as well because many students vape in restrooms.

The coalition also promotes and conducts coalition and community member training. Coalition members attend conferences to learn about prevention science and community organizing to ensure the coalition is more effective. The coalition also invites speakers and trainers to provide training to the public and parents on prevention science and the true risks of youths using substances.

Ms. Bryson added that in addition to posting signs, New Market Skills Center also posted a list of resources available to parents on the entrance door to help guide parents who may have unmet needs.

Councilmember Jefferson commented on the coalition's efforts in support of the community. The coalition has many passionate contributors who are working to ensure the program moves forward. The coalition is actively recruiting more participants to help promote the program. She and Councilmember Schneider serve as members of the coalition on behalf of the City.

Councilmember Agabi asked about the legal age for purchasing marijuana and ways underage youths obtain marijuana. Ms. Aust advised that the legal age for purchasing cannabis in the state is 21. Youths often obtain cannabis from an older sibling, a friend, or a parent (voluntarily or involuntarily). It underscores the importance of prevention as a community effort. The norms of a community have an effect on youth. It is important for communities to convey messages discouraging the use of cannabis by youths under 21 years of age.

Councilmember Jefferson commented that during a recent meeting, a local principal shared that some youths vape in the car with parents before entering the school. Parents are often sharing vaping products with their children, which speaks to the importance of reaching out to parents and community members.

Chair Dahlhoff referred to previous presentations to the committee and discussions on collaboration and ways the City can support coalition efforts through policy decisions. She asked about the possibility of continuing those discussions beginning with the issue of signage and comparing signage with the City's sign code, which could result in a recommendation. For instance, during the current legislative session, different youth groups are proposing legislation. It could entail Tumwater youth proposing some updates to the City's sign ordinance.

**TUMWATER PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE**  
**MINUTES OF VIRTUAL MEETING**  
**March 14, 2023 Page 4**

Ms. Bryson mentioned how employees with the City of Lacey participate in lunchtime training provided by Margaret Shields on a program titled “Learning Circles.” The training is on public policy currently under consideration by the Legislature on vaping and drug use by youth. Passage of the legislation would provide funding for creating a healthy environment for students. Ms. Shields records all training sessions. She offered to forward the recordings to the committee.

Chair Dahlhoff inquired about the membership drive and the types of skill sets and demographics the coalition is seeking to strengthen Tumwater HOPES. Ms. Aust said the coalition is seeking more participation by parents, as well as youths. The coalition seeks a broad diversity of representation across all sectors within the community. The coalition lacks representation from the business community, faith communities, law enforcement, recovery organizations and substance abuse service providers, and members of the healthcare community. The major skill set the coalition is seeking is a willingness to help and a passion to keep youth healthy and safe.

Police Chief Weiks advised that a School Resource Officer is assigned to work with Tumwater HOPES. However, the demands of schools often prevent the officer from attending meetings.

Chair Dahlhoff recommended Tumwater HOPES contact Councilmember Schneider to follow-up on possible participation during chamber meetings.

Ms. Wilson referred to the success the Tumwater School District has achieved through the establishment of various student advisory panels. The school district recently formed an equity student panel to work with school officials and share information about student experiences. Tumwater HOPES is seeking to involve more youth during meetings. It speaks to how a youth advisory council at the City could benefit the City.

Chair Dahlhoff commented on the possibility of South Behavioral Hospital pursuing an opportunity to collaborate with Tumwater HOPES.

**SOUTH SOUND  
BEHAVIORAL  
HOSPITAL:**

Chief Executive Officer TJ O'Reilly, South Behavioral Hospital, supported the suggestion to follow up with Tumwater HOPES.

Mr. O'Reilly reported South Sound Behavioral Hospital has been open for three years in Lacey. The hospital provides 108 beds serving people as young as 13 years of age experiencing mental illness or substance use issues. An in-patient center provides detoxification services for individuals experiencing withdrawal symptoms from alcohol or substance abuse. Last year, the hospital served 577 individuals for fentanyl addiction. The hospital provides a partial hospitalization program whereby

**TUMWATER PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE**  
**MINUTES OF VIRTUAL MEETING**  
**March 14, 2023 Page 5**

patients transfer from inpatient to the partial hospitalization program and receive 20 hours a week of group therapy. The next level of care is the intensive outpatient clinic. Patients participate in 9-hour group sessions. The hospital recently launched a medication management program providing patients with a monthly service as a check-up. The hospital offers a full continuum of care and employs 350 individuals. The hospital works closely with the fire department, police department, and schools, as well as with St. Peter's Hospital and Capital Medical Center to ensure psychiatric patients in the emergency room are transferred to the psychiatric hospital to reduce overflow in emergency rooms.

Councilmember Jefferson asked about the hospital's current capacity. Mr. O'Reilly advised that over the last several months, the hospital had filled 94 of the 108 beds. The hospital also has block beds in those cases where a patient presents a danger to another patient. The hospital averages six block beds each day throughout the facility. The hospital recently submitted a condition of need with the state for approval of an additional 30 beds on the top floor of the hospital to increase bed capacity to 138. Typically, hospital occupancy is 90%.

Councilmember Agabi inquired about the delay in providing the additional beds. Mr. O'Reilly advised that the 30 beds located on the top floor were not licensed by the state. During COVID, Providence planned to construct a hospital near the Cabalas store, which involved some interference in licensing the 30 beds due to competition. However, the plan was dissolved and South Sound Behavioral Hospital subsequently pursued licensing of the additional beds. The condition of need was approved last week.

Mr. O'Reilly addressed questions about the patient intake process. The City of Lacey has prohibited the placement of patients facing current criminal charges or who are sex offenders.

Chair Dahlhoff urged Mr. O'Reilly to consider ways to collaborate with Tumwater HOPES. Mr. O'Reilly responded that as a parent of three school-age children, he is interested in supporting the coalition. If he is unable to attend a coalition meeting, he would send another representative from the hospital. He added that he and his family often talk about some of the same issues. Legalization of marijuana has made it more accessible to the younger generation. Marijuana has been legal for 10 years and it has created a situation where people are probably using marijuana at a younger age. As a youth, he remembers the issue surrounded availability of beer while today youth are seeking both beer and marijuana. He personally believes in the importance of building self-esteem, ensuring youths have a person to talk with, and assisting youth to learn about coping skills.

Mr. O'Reilly reported the hospital provides a 13-bed inpatient unit for youth and an intensive outpatient program for those seeking to receive

**TUMWATER PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE**  
**MINUTES OF VIRTUAL MEETING**  
**March 14, 2023 Page 6**

mental treatment outside the hospital. Hospital administration plans to pursue the addition of an outpatient program in the school setting, which affords collaboration opportunities between the two parties.

Police Chief Weiks thanked Mr. O'Reilly and the hospital for services to the community. Several months ago, officers faced a situation where a juvenile was experiencing a mental health crisis. The department encountered too many brick walls for offering assistance to the youth. The officer then reached out to South Sound Behavioral Hospital. The hospital assisted the officer and the family of the youth. The hospital is a great resource in the community.

Fire Chief Hurley said the Tumwater Fire Department interacts with individuals experiencing behavioral health-related issues daily and welcomes the opportunity for the hospital to assist the department in those types of situations. Mr. O'Reilly said the hospital works closely with the fire department in Lacey as well.

Chair Dahlhoff thanked all speakers for their participation and for sharing ideas. She met Mr. O'Reilly last year and participated in a site visit of the facility in December 2022.

**ADJOURNMENT:**      **With there being no further business, Chair Dahlhoff adjourned the meeting at 8:49 a.m.**

Prepared by Valerie L. Gow, Recording Secretary/President  
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