

CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES COLLABORATIVE COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES – 12/11/24

4850 MARK CENTER

Attendance

Amanda Ruff	Daniel Daponte	Marcia Jackson	Trinady Maddock
Carrie Phillips	Eva Billips	Meredith Forbes	Ursula Rocha
Catherine Clinger	Isabel Shultz	Nicole Davi	Zeinab Yassin
Christine Raino	Laura Durham	Rose Dawson	
Dan Edwards	Laura Funes Quinones	Terry Glover	

Excused Absent

Councilwoman Sarah Bagley	Julie Murphy
Angie Green	Kate Garvey
Councilwoman Alyia Gaskins	Tim Beaty
Jacinta Greene	
J-Lynn Vanpelt	

Staff

Barbara Paulson
Noraine Buttar
Chelsea Eickert (Virtual)

Guests

Alethea Predeoux, Deputy City Manager
Caitlin Brown, Executive Director, Alexandria Beyond the Classroom (Alx Beyond)
Erica Mack, Alx Beyond
Jennifer Lockwood Shabat, Alx Beyond

Meeting Called to Order at 6:34 pm by Dan Edwards, Chair

Dr. Edwards welcomed the Commission and guests.

Public Comment: none

Minutes from November: Approved without objection.

Presentations: Catherine Clinger and Meredith Forbes from GG2 introduced the Guest Speakers related to the topic of Out of School Time:

Guest Speakers –

- 1) **Hjarmen Cordero, Executive Director and Katherine Posada Mebreno, Director of Elementary Leadership, Casa Chirilagua (CC)**
 - Children, youth, and families from across the community are referred to their services
 - Kids Club (grade 1-5) – tutoring, SEL, spiritual development

- Connecting kids to services—IEP, MTSS, etc.
- Challenges include
 - Supporting families who have come from Central America as they adjust to the US
 - Average income of a CC family is \$45K
 - Housing, employment, language, social distribution of goods
 - Housing is one of the biggest challenges
 - Many in need of rental assistance
 - Food distribution
 - Healthcare
 - Sickness, health issues leads to absences, students may not have access to healthcare
- Serve a very high rate of young single mothers
- Good partnership with Mount Vernon principal, who helps connect them to students, school-service connection
 - Mt. Vernon Elementary School helping CC develop a system for behavioral/emotional health based on what is used in the school
 - Supporting students involved in drugs, alcohol, gang activity
- Many parents are concerned about their children's safety with the incoming administration
 - CC looking to develop a plan alongside parents that will help support student mental health, help to alleviate fear
 - Reassuring parents that CC is a safe space

2) Ana Bonilla, Laura Funes-Quinones, and youth from Youth in Progress (YIP)

- Latino-based, but not Latino-exclusive program
- Post-pandemic, there were high levels of disengagement and absenteeism primarily among Latino males
 - Created a soccer program that also provides afterschool tutoring, career development, parent connection
- Our programs should not just be “checkmarks”—they should be genuinely engaging the youth. A program that they believe in, that they care about being involved in.
- Theory:
 - Once there is a connection to a trusted adult, academics will improve
 - Goal is that 80% of program participants pass English, math
- 2023-24 data show that
 - Grades improved for students active in the program
 - Feelings of safety, belonging, and academic success improved
- YIP students shared their stories
- YIP is powered by donations—please send food, join as a volunteer, etc.
 - YIP is not a 501c3. They are a program at the school, but don't receive set funding. PTA offers some grants, but it's not enough.

3) James Parker, Executive Director for Athletic and Student Activities at ACPS

- Recently launched middle school sports program
 - Provide a safe space, positive influences for young people
 - To get young people involved in sports earlier
- High school offers ~20 different sports
- Offering all of this costs money

- Overall, the community is good at asking for funding for sports
- Local businesses also support sports
- Being involved in athletics support academic success
 - Also good for community, positive connections, etc.

4) Roberto Gomez, Executive Director for Cornerstone Craftsman

- Pre-apprenticeship program serving kids 12-17
 - Received 501c3 status in October
 - Don't say "at-risk"—"strategically undervalued" !
 - Also works with court services and families for those transitioning out of justice-involvement
- Program has 95% retention rate
- Accepts donations that support including more young people in the program, compensation, etc.

Questions?

- CC mentioned health issues for some students involved—how can CYFCC help?
 - Mental health
 - Homes are not safe—insulation, etc.
 - Poor nutrition—they may get food, but it's not a balanced diet
 - In terms of athletics—why is the soccer field in Four Mile Run park always locked? There are not a lot of green spaces for these kids. Soccer is an activity that is really popular for this community, and they don't have access to it.
 - Lack of trees in the communities where these young people live—poor air quality. This leads to many of the students and adults having upper respiratory problems
 - Some parents don't take kids to the doctors, because they can't take the time off from work
 - We need support for the families overall
- If Santa came early, what would he bring under your tree? (ie, what is one thing you would ask of us?)
 - **YIP:** Field trip money so YIP can go to the ropes course! More reliable funding
 - **ACPS Athletics:** Exposure—all the kids in ALX could be exposed to sports a little earlier, so that when they get to high school, they have that identity, that background
 - **CC:** Needs to replace the old carpets in the center (environmental health!), new tables in the center
 - **Cornerstone:** Get YIP whatever they need!

Next Month

- Caitlin Brown, Executive Director of Alexandria Beyond the Classroom (formerly Youth Support Network)
 - Every youth in ALX has access to equitable, meaningful out of school time programs
- Presenting to CYFCC on the 8th

Social Media

- If anyone is interested in helping with CYFCC's social media posts, please reach out to Trinady (trinadymaddock@gmail.com), or email Noraine, noraine.buttar@alexandriava.gov

Announcements

- New AI policy should be shared with the school board in the next few months

Meeting Adjourned at 8:00 p.m.