

City of New Haven
Meeting Minutes (Short)
Youth Committee

165 Church Street
New Haven, CT 06510
(203) 946-6483 (phone)
(203) 946-7476 (fax)
cityofnewhaven.com

Wednesday, March 25, 2009

5:30 PM

Meeting Room 3

ALDERMANIC NOTICE - NEW HAVEN

The Youth Services Committee of the New Haven Board of Aldermen will hold a workshop at 5:30 p.m. on Wednesday, March 25, 2009 in Meeting Room 3 of City Hall, 165 Church St., to:

- Meet with youth advocate Anthony Draper
- Discuss new and continuing business.

Per order: Frances T. Clark, Chairwoman; attest, Ronald Smith, City Clerk. For a disability-related accommodation, please call 946-8122 (V) or 946-8582 (TTY) at least three business days prior to the meeting.

MEETING MINUTES

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Youth Services Committee

March 25, 2009

Chair Bitsie Clark called the meeting to order at 5:38 p.m. in Meeting Room 3. Present were Aids. Colon and Edwards.

Also present were Che Dawson, director of the city's youth department; Rachel Heerema of the Citywide Youth Coalition; youth advocate Anthony Draper; citizen-activist Marcus Paca; Laurie Fraser, who works for New Haven Public Schools; and two Yale Daily News reporters.

The main purpose of the meeting was to hear from youth advocate Anthony Draper, 16, who is starting a program called Voices for Youth. He said he has lived in New Haven for several years and immediately noticed the divisions among youth from different neighborhoods. His program will attempt to remove barriers through digital media and performing arts. He has been working with CTV and Bregamos Theater. He has been involved with a program called The Color of Words. He has also contacted the Connecticut Youth Alliance.

Heerema gave an overview of the Citywide Youth Coalition. It is a membership organization comprised of 25-40 youth services organizations across the city. It seeks to help them be more effective and build partnerships.

Draper said it is important to unify the youth from the various neighborhoods. He said there cannot be safe hang-out spots for youth from all across the city as long as the rivalries exist. He described conditions here as "a secret war" or civil war.

Draper said he used to live in Brooklyn, which is even tougher than New Haven. His mother was addicted to drugs and he had to care for his siblings.

Dawson said youths want jobs, independence, to be able to congregate and socialize with friends, and leadership. They are addressing these needs through Youth @ Work and other programs. They support youth summits and conferences. Another round of mini grants for youth providers is coming.

Alderman Edwards said cooperation among agencies could be improved. She suggested that aldermanic newsletters contain a section on youth activities and resources.

Ald. Colon said the issues in her ward in the Hill are the same as those of youths in other neighborhoods. They want part-time jobs to buy video games and clothes. They feel congregating places close to early. Churches cannot fulfill all their needs, such as dancing.

Paca said parents need training on how to be parents who can teach responsibility to the children. However, Dawson said it is unfair to lay all the blame on teenaged parents.

Fraser said one problem is single mothers raising up to five children. She lamented the demise of the Q House.

Heerema said the Family Resource Centers are an excellent, underused facility. They are in various public schools around New Haven.

Draper said it is important for youths to understand they do not necessarily need to be a product of their situations. He said the New Haven schools "teach to the test" and do not encourage critical thinking.

Ald. Edwards discussed personal experiences with child-rearing.

Fraser discussed a youth curfew that existed in New Haven in the 1970s. Draper said the recent curfew proposal would have been a mistake.

Ald. Colon lamented the poor quality of celebrity role models and dwindling support organizations for youth. Society is eroding. Video games are partly to blame.

There was a wide-ranging discussion of negative influences on youth in modern society.

Adjourn: 6:55 p.m.

An audio recording of this meeting is available in the Office of Legislative Services.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael Mercier
Legislative Aide