Regular Meeting Minutes of October 27, 2026
Blake Room, Somers Public Library
2 Vision Blvd, Somers, CT

Members and Staff in Attendance: Dan Clement, Kevin Cook, Joanne Nichting, Jennifer O'Brien, Margot Martello, Jeremy Shepard, Kim Littig, Kassie Mashiak, Ellen D'Angelo, Jen Griger, and Matthew Cox

Call to Order

Matthew Cox called the meeting to order at 10:35 a.m.

Welcome and Introductions

Matthew welcomed attendees and led introductions. New members included Jennifer O'Brien, Human Resources Specialist with Somers Schools; Dan Clement, Assistant Principal at Somers High School; and Kevin Cook, the new School Resource Officer for Somers Schools.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Kassie moved, and Joanne seconded, a motion to approve the September 22 meeting minutes with one correction: adding Joanne Nichting to the list of members present. There was no discussion, and the motion carried.

Sector Reports and Discussion

Margot noted that students sometimes obtain substances from home through older siblings or parents, with or without permission. She emphasized the importance of encouraging parents and caregivers to secure or remove substances from the home. Jen added that SHINE can provide lockboxes and lock bags to help families safely store medications and other substances out of reach of youth.

Dan reported that the high school offers flexibility in providing alternative interventions when students seek help for substance use. Jen explained that the Youth Diversion Process is increasingly focused on identifying substance use and connecting youth with intervention and support before an arrest occurs. He also requested lock boxes to have on hand having had several situations where it would've been helpful for the families.

The group discussed available supports for students and families when prohibited substances or other items are found on school property. Margot noted that out-of-school suspensions are rare and that the Healthy Futures program provides a valuable educational opportunity for students to learn about substances and their effects on the body.

Parent Education and Outreach

Margot praised the Operation Parent handbook as an excellent resource and emphasized the importance of making its information more accessible. She suggested exploring Spanish-language and plain-language versions for parents with varying literacy levels. Jen expressed interest in strengthening connections with the elementary school to reach parents earlier. Margot recommended contacting Melissa Mucci at Somers Elementary School and having the school department's leadership team review the elementary version of the handbook for possible distribution.

The group discussed additional opportunities to educate and engage parents, particularly those with younger children, in establishing family expectations and having early conversations about substance use. Ideas included a Hidden in Plain Sight display and hosting a parent conference featuring experts from the Health District, Health Department, legal community, mental health services, and peer support programs.

Members emphasized the importance of targeted outreach, including personal phone calls, to encourage participation among parents who may be most in need of these resources.

Community-Wide Prevention Event

The group discussed collaborating with neighboring communities, including Stafford, Ellington, and Longmeadow, to expand prevention efforts and reach more families. Dan suggested inviting speaker Stephen Hill as a keynote presenter, noting his popularity in other communities and his relatable approach to sharing real-life experiences with substance use.

After discussing the planning and coordination required, members agreed that fall 2027 would be a more realistic timeframe for a community-wide event, ideally at the beginning of the school year. Jen agreed to research the speaker's availability and cost.

Adjournment

With no further business or announcements, Kim Littig moved to adjourn the meeting, and Joanne Nichting seconded the motion. The motion carried, and the meeting adjourned at 11:35 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Matthew Cox

Minutes are not official until approved at a subsequent meeting.