

**VILLAGE OF WALDEN
COMMUNITY YOUTH MEETING
OCTOBER 5, 2005**

Mayor Becky Pearson called the special meeting of the Village of Walden Board of Trustees to order at 7:00pm.

On roll call the following were:

Present:	Mayor	Becky Pearson
	Deputy Mayor	Mary Ellen Matise
	Trustees	Mary Jean Norman
		Jose DeJesus
		Roy Wynkoop

Absent:	Trustees	Richard Hurd
		Lauren Keator

Also Present:	James Politi, Village Manager
	Kevin Dowd, Village Attorney
	Jeff Holmes, Police Chief
	John Howland, Recreation Coor.

Community Youth Committee

Mayor Pearson asked how things are going on Valley Avenue, with the kids hanging out.

Brenda Adams stated that its better.

Chief Holmes stated that it's gotten better on Valley Avenue because of school opening and police presence. They have moved to the East Main Street corridor by the Mobil Station and Hess Station. You also have 15 East Main Street that has caused another problem. Twenty two Valley Avenue has quieted down a little bit, but the same kids over there are now at 15 East Main Street. It is a cycle. He has been in contact with the landlord at 15 East Avenue. That seems to be an area that a lot of people coming in the Village see as the corridor of the problem. It is the same group at 15 East Main Street that was down on Valley Avenue.

Mayor Pearson asked what we do as a community. Do we move them along?

Chief Holmes stated that there is a point where you can move them along. You can make their lives difficult. The officer parks the car in that area and watches them. He can't keep doing that because there are other things they get called for service to do.

Mayor Pearson asked if they are reachable kids.

Chief Holmes stated that from his experience, out of the eleven hard core ones, his opinion only, three can be diverted. He suggested they go through a program with their parents. The others are so close to 15 and 16 that they've already got it in a mind set that sixteen they are going to be a problem and then the police can deal with them as an adult.

Trustee DeJesus stated that it doesn't mean it isn't doable.

Chief Holmes stated that he's not saying that.

Trustee DeJesus stated that there are two kids here tonight and he would like to hear from them to see what they feel about this. We need to look from our prospective what we are going to be doing. Which we are doing and the police department is doing enforcement and that is working. There is something missing here and that is the kids. Maybe we need to identify someone else in our community besides the police officers, someone that we need to look into hiring to bring those kids to the table through a different avenue. They're not going to come here, because they would be intimidated by the people sitting here making these decisions. How do you bring those kids into a discussion? That is the concern he has. There was nothing in the paper about this meeting.

Mayor Pearson stated that she wanted to get a committee up and running. She wanted a chairperson from the Board and also from the community to work together to start a committee.

Trustee DeJesus suggested that there be an adult from this board and a co-chair that would be a youth and you will be mentoring that kid and see how you can get that kid to bring in those kids.

Trustee Norman and Pat Glass volunteered to chair this committee.

Carol Chichester indicated that 25 kids is a high number. It's probably a small amount as far as total youth population. It is a significant number of high risk kids. There has to be some outreach, somebody who loves working with kids and somebody who kids can relate to. Somebody from the school, youth worker or someone from the police force. Someone the kids can look up to and respect and have dialogue. We have to find out what is hurting those kids. Are they in school? Are they out of school? If they are out of school they should get their GED and find a job. They should be linked up with services. Then you want to prevent others from following in those footsteps. That is when you pull kids together.

Chief Holmes stated that he was youth officer for almost four years. The funding resources have changed for every community. Before they were able to do a lot more diversion. A lot of police are no longer doing the diversion because they don't have the time. To really successfully follow through to help a kid you've got to follow through right from the start meaning making it goes through diversion and it doesn't necessarily go right to family court. Pushing it to family court does two things, it gets the kids into the system and it also has someone else monitoring that kid. It's also telling the parents that these are the programs we want you to follow because if you don't follow them he will be back here.

Trustee DeJesus stated that it will get to a point where you're going to have kids who are not going to adhere by the rules and they will wind up in the criminal justice system. We don't want the ones who will be directing kids to the criminal justice system if we can help them go in another direction.

Chief Holmes stated right now with the system the way it can work is when they do get the first report on them and whatever they've committed they send it down to probation intake. At probation intake they can make the decision, we're going to go through diversion or we're going to go through family court. That is where the youth officer has to be involved. The role of the youth officer is let's go with your diversion programs and then they are following a whole completely different track. They are not into the family court system and they are in those diversion programs and they are working. That's what the youth officer has to do. Some are going to go right to family court. He will make that suggestion, but the majority will go through diversion and now the youth officer is following what diversion programs they are going to and if they are going to them and are the parents going to them.

Ms. Chichester stated that in order to get the kids off the streets you have to give them something to do.

Trustee Norman stated that we need to set goals. We have to get the kids in here and find out what are we doing that is not making them happy.

Ms. Chichester asked the young people why they don't go to the youth center.

They answered that they've never been there.

John Howland explained that they can't give out flyers in the middle school and high school. They will make an announcement and they will have flyers in the office. He further stated that the youth's in attendance wanted a skate board park. They haven't forgotten it and they have to get through the process. The next time they have a meeting he will call them so they can be a part of it.

Ms. Chichester asked the youths what they wanted to do in Walden. What would the youths come to?

A young man stated that they like to skateboard.

Mr. Howland stated that there is a pool table at Wooster Grove and they are open Friday and Saturday, 7pm-11pm.

Trustee DeJesus asked if Ms. Chichester's office has programs for youth leadership.

Ms. Chichester stated yes. If the Village gets the youths together they will be able to do leadership things.

Chief Holmes stated that youth courts do work if you have the leadership.

Trustee DeJesus stated that at one point they need to set some goals. One goal would be to make the recreation center a center of activities for the kids.

Ms. Chichester stated that you need to get the kids in here.

Trustee DeJesus asked if there was someone in the recreation department that could go out after school and hand out flyers at bus stops. It should be a weekend meeting and have refreshments.

Mayor Pearson suggested they have the meeting at the youth center.

Ms. Glass stated that she would like to go down to the youth center on a Friday or Saturday night and see how many kids are there and what they are doing. She suggested talent shows and concerts.

Chief Holmes stated that the officers tell the kids to go home or go to the youth center.

Someone suggested the Wallkill Valley Times interview the kids to see what they like, don't like and what would they like to see.

Trustee Norman suggested an open house at Wooster Grove.

The first goal was to get the kids to a meeting. A survey with the kids was also talked about. A dance was also discussed.

Trustee DeJesus stated that you need the kids to do the survey.

Ann Ilkew explained that they were going to the Olley Park and turn the farmhouse into a haunted house, on the outside, turn the trail into the trail of terror and when they get to the excavated part they will turn that into a graveyard.

Mayor Pearson asked who was involved in this.

Ms. Ilkew stated that she is, and Patricia Heneghan and her daughter. Also, the kids are going to distribute petitions to save the Olley Park.

Trustee DeJesus asked what kids are involved.

Ms. Ilkew stated that she has talked to the kids on Valley Avenue.

An arcade was suggested.

Mayor Pearson stated that there is a pool table, foos ball table and television at Wooster Grove. There is ice skating in the winter and basketball courts.

Mayor Pearson arranged to meet Alex and his friends at Wooster Grove.

Mike Lynch suggested that structure of the programs change. He also suggested that school step up and do their part.

Carol Chichester asked if the Village ever thought of partnering with the YMCA Boys and Girls Club.

Mayor Pearson stated that there is a meeting in the Town tonight that has the Boys and Girls Club involved.

Deputy Mayor Matisse stated that she has spoken to the Boys and Girls Club in Manhattan and the regional director would be happy to come and talk with the committee, but he suggested the Village partner up with the Town of Wallkill. She suggested the committee look at the different age groups and see where there are gaps.

Ms. Chichester suggested a community needs assessment.

Mayor Pearson asked Ms. Weiss how the town meeting went.

Ms. Weiss stated that it went well. They talked about joining forces.

The next meeting was scheduled for Friday night at Wooster Grove at 7:30pm.

Adjournment

Trustee DeJesus moved to adjourn. Seconded by Deputy Mayor Matisse. All ayes. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Mitchell
Village Clerk