



## HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Shin-Yi Lao, Commissioner

1000 Commonwealth Avenue  
Newton, MA 02459-1544

# City of Newton Youth Commission Advisory Board

## Meeting Minutes

Monday, October 27, 2025 – 6:30pm

This meeting was held in person at the Newton Free Library in the Druker Auditorium.

**Attendance:** Ana Ciric, Newton South Sophomore (YCAB member); Megan Coffey, Teen Librarian, Newton Free Library (YCAB member); Marcia Cooper, Board Member & President Emerita, Green Newton (YCAB member); Naman Dadlani, Newton South Sophomore (Youth Commissioner); Theo Evangelinos, Newton North Junior (YCAB member); Andrew Feinberg, Newton South Senior (YCAB member); Amanda Feiner, Newton South Sophomore (YCAB member); Georgia Finkelstein, Newton South Senior (YCAB member); Hana Futai, Newton South Senior (Youth Commissioner); Armine Freeman, Newton South Senior (Youth Commissioner); Alex Gusenoff, Brown Middle School 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Student (YCAB member); Leyla Gustin, Newton North Junior (Youth Commissioner); Meri Haas, Assistant Director, Human Services, City of Newton (Advisory Board staff); Safinah Kasirye, Newton North Sophomore (YCAB member); Amelia Kessler, Newton North Sophomore (YCAB member); Stephanie Lapham, Recreation Program Manager, Newton Parks, Recreation and Culture (YCAB member); Lauren Lele, Senior Director, Community Health and Volunteer Services, Newton-Wellesley Hospital (YCAB member); Jeff Lemberg, Executive Director, Newton Food Pantry (YCAB member); Deirdre Madden, Resource Navigator, Health & Human Services, City of Newton (YCAB member); Simba Makura, Roxbury Latin School Senior (Youth Commissioner); Grace Mitrokostas, The Rivers School 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Student (YCAB member); Gene Roundtree, Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Education and Special Programs, Newton Public Schools (YCAB member); Henri Rousseau, Teen Coordinator, West Suburban YMCA (YCAB member); Alexander Savoulides, Belmont Hill School Junior (YCAB member); Evie Shih, Nobles & Greenough School Junior (Youth Commissioner); Laura Tavares, Executive Director, WPS Institute (YCAB member); Colin Van Vliet, Newton North Freshman (YCAB member); Bea van den Bosch, The Windsor School Freshman (YCAB member); Delia Walsh, Newton North Freshman (YCAB member); Bomi Woo, Newton South Junior (YCAB member)

- I. The meeting began at 6:40pm
- II. Meri Haas, Assistant Director of Human Services, presented about Youth Commission Advisory Board member expectations, the meeting schedule and the open meeting law.
- III. A few ice breaker, get-to-know-you games were played to introduce Youth Commissioners and Advisory Board members to each other.

- IV. Guest presenter, Shin-Yi Lao, Newton Health & Human Services Commissioner, presented an overview of Newton's municipal government, the Health and Human Services Department and the Youth Commission and Advisory Board's orientation to the City of Newton.
- V. The group broke out into small groups to answer the question, "what makes it easier or harder for Newton youth to get involved in community issues?"
  - a. Topics discussed among youth included:
    - i. not being able to vote yet
    - ii. competitiveness for opportunities
    - iii. lack of knowledge of opportunities
    - iv. lack of paying job/intern opportunities
    - v. lack of education of community problems/problems are hidden
    - vi. lack of understanding about how community issues impact youth directly
    - vii. don't know how to get involved in community work or where to start!
    - viii. being too busy
    - ix. change feeling out of reach (the process is long)
    - x. disconnect between youth (different schools)
    - xi. school can be all encompassing and feel separate from other community groups/there being no other time to engage. School takes up so much time. Need more designated time
    - xii. youth can be scared to do things alone ("what will friends think?). it would be easier if friends could do it with you.
    - xiii. Lack of variety, everyone has different issues
    - xiv. Lack of youth-specific organizations/or other organizations for learning and sharing about community issues/opportunities.
    - xv. adults can be helpful
    - xvi. adults truly care about youth issues
    - xvii. youth are encouraged (by adults) to use their voices
  - b. Topics discussed among adults included:
    - i. Youth aren't often asked to participate
    - ii. not aware of community-wide opportunities
    - iii. time constraints and challenges with managing all of the ongoing obligations
    - iv. competing demands & task prioritization

- v. finding a way to take the first steps is difficult
  - vi. need more adult mentors
  - vii. not understanding the details until commitments are made for activities
  - c. Limited time was available for this activity and therefore many groups weren't able to discuss both barriers to involvement and things that make involvement easier.
- VI. The meeting ended at 8:02pm