



HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Shin-Yi Lao, Commissioner

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City of Newton Youth Commission Advisory Board

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, January 14, 2026 – 6:30pm

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

Attendance: Melissa Bernstein, Artistic Director, Newton Theater Company (YCAB member); Ana Ciric, Newton South Sophomore (Presenter, 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); Amanda Decker, Bright Solutions Consulting (Presenter); Andrew Feinberg, Newton South Senior (YCAB member); Amanda Feiner, Newton South Sophomore (YCAB member); Alex Gusenoff, Brown Middle School 8th Grade Student (YCAB member); Meri Haas, Assistant Director, Human Services, City of Newton (Advisory Board staff); Safinah Kasirye, Newton North Sophomore (Meeting Co-Presenter, YCAB member); Amelia Kessler, Newton North Sophomore (Meeting Co-Presenter, 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); Josh Levitt-Horne, Newton South Junior (YCAB member); Chloe Lyons, Newton North Senior (Youth Commissioner); Deirdre Madden, Resource Navigator, Health & Human Services, City of Newton (YCAB member); Simbarashe Makura, Roxbury Latin School Senior (Youth Commissioner); Grace Mitrokostas, The Rivers School 8th Grade Student (YCAB member); Sharyn Roberts, Newton Resident, League of Women Voters; Henri Rousseau, Teen Coordinator, West Suburban YMCA (YCAB member); Devin Shmueli, Director of Family and Community Ministries, FUUSN & Member, Newton Interfaith Clergy Association (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); Delia Walsh, Newton North Freshman (YCAB member)

- I. Meeting began at 6:35pm
- II. Vote: Approve minutes from December YCAB Meeting
 - a. All present YCAB members voted to approve December minutes, no abstain, no edits
- III. Presentation – ENGIN, Ana Ciric, YCAB Member
- IV. Presentation – Youth Substance Use Prevention – Amanda Decker, Bright Solutions Consulting
- V. YCAB Subcommittee Discussions

- a. Youth Substance Misuse – Discussed rolling some substance use prevention conversation into the Parent Step-Up Day that is being planned. Acknowledged that supporting families to support their incoming high schoolers is prevention (protective factor)
- b. Youth Opportunities – Discussed speakers for upcoming meetings, including inviting Laura Berman and Cheryl Lappin from the City’s Department of Economic Development to speak about youth opportunities in Newton. Group discussed the idea of YCAB members speaking to their career offices at the high schools they attend. Plan to compile a list of opportunities, to hang up at high schools on bulletin boards, in homerooms, etc. Group plans to research jobs and volunteer postings to put on a communal google drive. LinkedIn posts for local youth opportunities is not feasible for City staff to maintain.
- c. Newton Civic Spotlight – Discussed hosting the upcoming event in late March on a weekend, perhaps a Sunday afternoon starting at 2pm (considering religious schedules), avoiding Wednesdays and Fridays (because of sports). Spoke about the event focusing on civics through the perspective of youth opportunities, highlighting ways Newton youth can volunteer, engage in local organizations and municipal government. Talked about hosting the resource/opportunities fair for the duration of the event in the War Memorial, having one to two rounds of tours of City Hall focusing on the “secrets?” of the building (run by someone who knows the building well (Josh from Buildings? Historic Newton?). Discussed how to engage attendees on their way to the resource fair... prime them for what’s coming... perhaps dot voting? Something interactive. Hosting a keynote speaker(s) near the end of the event in the Council Chambers. Real youth commission and advisory board presence. Invite ideas (in addition to long list from last year) NexGen, CCES at NNHS, State Reps (Amy, Greg, John, and Cyndy), NewTV?, vote16). Need to ensure that folks at the resource fair know what we want them to talk about. Ask them to focus on answering 2-3 questions at their tables related to youth and opportunities.

VI. Announcements, Upcoming Programming

- a. Youth opportunity available at Tango Mango! They are looking for young people to perform, present, utilize their newish space in Newton Centre. It was built for young people to use. Please email Meri Haas at mhaas@newtonma.gov if you are interested.

- b. Newton's Coalition for Community Wellness, the local substance use prevention coalition is always looking for more members – especially youth! If you are interested in learning more or joining, please email Meri Haas at mhaas@newtonma.gov
- VII. Meeting ended at 8:03pm

Next meeting – Wednesday, February 4th, from 6:30 – 8:00pm (in person at the Newton Free Library, Druker Auditorium).

IMPORTANT - March meeting has been moved to **Tuesday, March 10th, from 6:30 – 8:00pm** (in person at the Newton Free Library, Druker Auditorium).