

**WORKSESSION OF THE ANOKA CITY COUNCIL
OFFSITE LOCATION
HOPE4YOUTH, 2664 - 4TH AVENUE NORTH, ANOKA
SEPTEMBER 26, 2016**

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Rice called the worksession meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Present at roll call: Mayor Rice, Councilmembers Anderson, Freeburg, Weaver.

Absent: Councilmember Schmidt.

Staff present: City Manager Greg Lee; Police Chief Phil Johanson; Police Captain Eric Peterson, Police Sergeant Andy Youngquist, Police Officer Pul Schley Schlay.

3. COUNCIL BUSINESS and/or DISCUSSION ITEMS

3.1 ~~Discussion; Downtown Security/City Wide Activity.~~

Item not discussed.

3.2 Discussion; Hope4Youth Operation and Facility Tour.

City Manager Greg Lee said the purpose of the worksession was to see how the City and Hope4Youth could work together to address some of the joint issues that have been occurring in the City with regard to youth homelessness. He introduced Lisa Jacobson, Executive Director of Hope4Youth (H4Y) to share more about H4Y's operations which will be followed by a tour of the facility.

Lisa Jacobson, Executive Director of Hope4Youth (H4Y), said she has been with H4Y for seven months during which she made changes with the Program Supervisor position and created a new position to oversee housing operations in Coon Rapids by hiring Sarah Kemp. She explained her strong work ethic and desire to help youth experiencing homelessness. Ms. Jacobson explained how H4Y was created by Brian Swanson with only volunteers over three years ago and while they grew they recognized the need to professionalize and hire a director. She shared how they worked to change the board into a governing board who could hire staff to conduct the day to day operations of almost a \$1 million budget. Ms. Jacobson shared her background in non-profits at the Greater Minnesota Council of Churches, adding she is a licensed minister and introduced Sarah Campbell of HFY.

Ms. Jacobson outlined the purpose of H4Y and explained how the clients have to meet with staff, not a mentor, for case management agreements that establish goals. She said some clients are placed on restrictions if they are not working towards their goals so they learn to take responsibility, adding H4Y focuses on youth in Anoka County but does see some from Champlin, Brooklyn Park, and Dayton.

Councilmember Anderson asked if clients can take advantage of donations from more than one facility. Ms. Jacobson said clients cannot use services in other counties and must use the one where they are being served and that the facilities work together to share their client lists in order to avoid receiving supplies from more than one location.

Councilmember Weaver inquired about the definition of a youth, stating concern about some who are really adults of legal age.

Mayor Rice said the focus was on 18-24 year olds and now is 16-24 year olds and agreed the City's concern was not towards the younger group but to those who were actually young adults.

Ms. Jacobson said the majority of their clients are legal adults and explained while an individual may be able to work hard without credit or rental history they often have nowhere to go so they utilize H4Y's shower and laundry facilities. She said many of their clients work hard but sometimes still need help, adding they may not have had a good parent or mentor in their lives and are just looking for a break.

Councilmember Weaver said it is important that we differentiate between legal adults and youth.

Mayor Rice agreed, stating the City received a lot of criticism for its concerns of the adult clients served by H4Y. Ms. Jacobson defined a youth, adding health insurance allows adult children to be included on a parent's health insurance until age 24. She said they are not hiding behind a definition and recognize they serve young adults but said they are very clear that when a client turns 24 they are no longer able to be served at H4Y as they age out.

Mayor Rice noted in this context youth is a better definition than kid.

Councilmember Freeburg asked where the clients go at night as well as when they turn 24 and leave. He said he appreciates the great work H4Y does but shared concerns about how they would provide tents and blankets in order for youth to live under bridges in the City. He stated 5-6 years ago Anoka did not have such problems and now something has changed with more people arriving from other cities and issues with vandalism, drinking and sex which unfortunately reflects on H4Y.

Ms. Jacobson said they have reached out to the Northstar Corridor as she learned there were some issues on commuter trains and shared how they are trying to create a relationship with Northstar to address these concerns. She said while they may not necessarily be their clients they want to address any issues as they affect their clients too as they walk by. Ms. Jacobson explained how they work with the police to help identify individuals who cause concerns and how they conduct street outreach from 11:00 p.m. to 1:00 a.m. to address youth who are not supposed to be on the streets, adding if one of their clients is causing issues they work intensely with them to address.

Police Chief Phil Johanson explained how Metro Transit receives the first call regarding an issue on the Northstar train which is then transferred to the City's police department.

Councilmember Weaver suggested the police share their list of people who are causing concerns with H4Y and if so will they be banned from services. Ms. Jacobson said they will work with them more to try to address these issues but said that if not successful then clients can be permanently banned from H4Y. She stated she believes in tough love even though it hurts her inside.

Sarah Campbell, H4Y, outlined their case management plan and restrictions and noted there are youth on the streets in Anoka and those who are over 24 years of age who cannot use their services that they cannot control.

Councilmember Weaver said the businesses are not happy with the issues that arise. Ms. Jacobson said she wants to meet with those businesses, adding they are being blamed for clients that are not theirs. She said they no longer supply tents or sleeping bags and that most couch hop at a friend's house instead of staying outside.

Councilmember Weaver suggested creating a satellite office to help spread the services so they are not centered in Anoka. Ms. Jacobson said they are working with the State Offices to end homelessness by 2020 by creating safe housing options such as host homes.

Mayor Rice said hopefully Alexandra House and other similar places will work themselves out of a job, adding it is a generational problem.

Councilmember Freeburg explained how offering options for youth who are just upset with their parents can sometimes cause more problems.

Ms. Jacobson said they are happy having to be here and stated they have a strategic planning committee to end this problem. She said they are working together with the State and many others to close their doors when they are no longer needed because there are enough housing options for youth. She said we cannot build enough spaces and are exploring other options like they are doing in

Duluth. Ms. Jacobson outlined funding and financing for the Coon Rapids facility and how they want to work in partnership with cities. She explained how they do not allow youth under 16 years old in the facility with older youth to avoid possible sex trafficking and how they do not want to harbor runaways but instead all the police. She said we are in this together and explained how they require identification by clients after visiting three times.

Jeri Lynn, Anoka, asked how they screen youth from substance abuse. Ms. Campbell said they ask their clients if they have a substance abuse problem but said they are not always honest.

Ms. Lynn asked about the other reasons clients come here for. She shared truancy reports from the Coon Rapids police and explained a whole other layer of activity is going on run by adults who are enabled to continue these activities by staying in the community with no consequences. Ms. Lynn said the cycle of homelessness coincides with the epidemic of meth and heroine.

Mayor Rice said they are trying to identify who the problem is and who H4Y is working with and differentiate between the two, which is H4Y asked for this meeting.

Ms. Jacobson said they have placed limits on the amount of donations to clients and are tracking items so they cannot be traded for drugs or other things. She explained how clients are allowed to visit the food and hygiene center eight times per month with a limit of two bags and timed for 10 minutes and how certain items such as clothing have limits to help address this concern.

Ms. Jacobson shared their statistics, stating they served 369 youth in 2015 8,352 times with 776 food pantry items to 40 clients with no housing options. She said the problem is high but noted their numbers are going down because of more case management and limits placed; they want to help the ones who are trying to help themselves. Ms. Jacobson stated Mr. Swanson will be stepping down in December and shared how she has worked with the City to get to know police and staff and outlined a partnership example with Anoka Police and how she wants that to continue to grow. She said while she is sorry they are located in Anoka she is doing the best job she can with what she was given and stated she was hired to make changes which is what she is doing.

Chief Johanson inquired about the 12 apartments in Coon Rapids and once opened how long can a youth stay. Ms. Jacobson said these units will be transitional housing, not a shelter, and clients will be allowed to stay 12-24 months. She said they have contracted with YouthLink for case management and CommonBond Communities to manage the property and hopes to contract with Anoka County Work Force Center onsite as clients will be expected to work towards a career, as an entry level job will not help them afford their own apartment.

Chief Johanson asked if they work with County case workers. Ms. Campbell said they do and explained coordinated entry of 5 of 12 beds are banked beds with \$891 federal funding available.

Ms. Jacobson said clients have to pay a portion of their income in order to live there and shared how they are partnering with Financial One to create savings account in order to have first and last months' rent and security deposits in place for when they leave.

Captain Ericson said he will meet and share their list information with Ms. Jacobson.

Councilmember Freeburg credited H4Y for the work they do and said they know not all concerns stem from them but from outside youth doing dumb things which affect our City.

Ms. Jacobson said they want to know what is wrong that they still need to change, stating they no longer let clients loiter outside the facility before they open.

Councilmember Weaver said that is good but said the concern is where the clients go when they leave. Ms. Jacobson said many go to a friend's house or Stepping Stones.

Mr. Lee said the concern before was no limits on the amount of donations as well as offerings of blankets and sleeping bags which has since helped.

Mayor Rice inquired about the blueprint for goals for individuals. Ms. Campbell said they work with a case manager with the first step of obtaining IDs to help address some of these concerns.

Mr. Lee suggested partnering with the City for employment for seasonal work so clients are cleaning parks instead of creating graffiti in the parks.

Mayor Rice said many City employees started as temporary employees and said this might be a good way for H4Y's clients to start.

Councilmember Weaver shared how a local business owner offered jobs for H4Y's clients and how no one called. Ms. Jacobson said she was not aware of such an offer and asked for more information on that statement in order to follow-up. She said she conducts many tours to the area businesses in order to show them truth, stating the view from the sidewalk is different than what actually occurs inside the facility.

The Mayor recessed the meeting at 7:____ p.m. to tour the H4Y facility.

4. OTHER BUSINESS

4.1 Staff Update.

None.

5. COUNCILMEMBERS COMMENTS

None.

6. ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Rice adjourned the Regular Worksession meeting at ____ p.m.

Submitted by: Cathy Sorensen, *TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.*

Approval Attestation:

Amy T. Oehlers, City Clerk