March 9, 2023 Continuum of Care meeting minutes

The March 2023 meeting, which took place virtually, via a Zoom conference call, was called to order and began at 11:02 am. The minutes from the January meeting were reviewed and unanimously approved.

The meeting’s guest speaker was Windy White, Deputy Director of Parks and Recreation in Franklin Township and the site manager for the Franklin Township Youth Center (FTYC). The FTYC is open from 2:30pm-8pm on Monday through Friday and 12:30pm-8pm on Saturday.

Membership is free and open to all Franklin Township students in grades 6-12. They have close to 900 members, with 50-100 showing up on a typical weekday, and slightly fewer on Saturdays. Most students who come are in middle school. There are fewer students from the high school, in part because of the distance from the high school and the lack of transportation. The students generally come to decompress, enjoy some recreation, and socialize. While there are some academic programs, there was initially discussion about having more education classes. However, they found the students did not want that as much, since they just spent the day in school.

The FTYC has a kitchen facility on-site – the Snack Shack. They have developed partnerships with food banks to provide nutritious foods to the kids. Every Wednesday is “Snack Day” – the kids get “snack dollars,” which allows the Center to track how much is being eaten and to make sure everyone is getting something. They also hold at least one dinner every month.

In addition to their existing programs, the Center is looking into developing more programs specifically for girls. They have been holding focus groups to determine what they are more interested in. One area of concern is that girls would like the gym to themselves sometimes so they don’t have to play around the boys all the time. Another program area they are looking to develop is to have more integrated non-athletic programs, such as STEM and STEAM. They also want to increase Saturday programs to bring in more students on the weekend.

The Center is also actively involving the community through community engagement sessions. This is an opportunity for community partners to present to parents. They are always looking for new topics and presenters, so please reach out to Windy if you are interested.

The Center opened on May 14, 2022 and will be celebrating a “Year of Learning” at a special event on May 20, 2023 from 12-2pm.

After the “Safe Space” portion of the meeting, there was an update and refresher on the Coordinated Entry system. There are openings for units at Red Rock and Cornerstone. The County is required to certify that it will affirmatively further fair housing. Central Jersey Housing Resource Center (CJHRC) is engaged to educate people, but ultimately the responsibility lies with the County. Everyone needs to be, and is, treated the same – that is why the process is structured the way it is. Community Development staff does not certify people for these units – they simply refer potential residents. An applicant’s last permanent address must have been in Somerset County. There is flexibility regarding the homeless status, but documentation must be provided. Agencies are urged to remind their clients to be involved in the process. Approximately 2/3 of the people referred don’t call back.

If you/your agency has referred someone and you want to know the status, please contact Kim.

Agency announcements will be sent via e-mail after the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 11:55 am.

Attendees:

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| Jeremy Hirsch | Rheanah Johnson |
| Kim Cowart  Ed Prior  Mike Kane  Windy White | Paul Grzella  Carolyn Solon  Reina Garcia Perfecto  Linda Rapacki |
| Alyssa Martini  Kayla Ellis  Heather Pullen | Jay Weintraub  Gema Diaz  Zach Berliner |
| Alexis Williams | Jennifer Guyette |
| Susie Suter | Mike Frost |
| Lucy Sandler | Nadia Loiseau |
| Jillian Cullen | Carrie Ferraro |
| Jeff Phillips  Ana Diaz Lopez | Maria Marnell |
| Heather Bielefeldt |  |
| Dan Hohman |  |
| Ola Olorode |  |
| Corey Panati  Katelyn Ravensbergen |  |
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