

Sept 25, 2024

Karen Parkinson, 55 Rose Hill Rd, Ledyard, Retired Licensed Clinical Social Worker

TO: Ledyard Town Council

Attention: Chairwoman Naomi Rodriguez

RE: Ordinance to Amend Youth and Social Service Board

I am speaking to you tonight to encourage you to “table” taking any action on the proposed Amendment to the ordinance to remove all reference to servicing youth by the present Youth and Social Service Board. I encourage you to consider that it is, as present, an essential tool for the Youth of Ledyard. The Board may need some assistance in becoming more active and vocal in addressing the needs of the youth in our community. And yes, there needs to be a “needs assessment” of the status of our youth before assuming that all needs can be met by the School based health clinics.

Most school based health clinics serve only students enrolled in the local school system. They do not serve the drop-outs, the home schooled, the students enrolled in magnet schools, foster children not enrolled, to name a few. They serve children during school hours, no evenings when working parents can be involved. There are no educational programs, drug awareness programs, after hours grief counseling, mentoring programs, parent education programs, early childhood programs, new mother assistance programs....the list goes on.

Funding for School based clinics is not permanent. And be assured that should funds shrink, Ledyard would be last in line as focus would be on inner city “deprived” communities. Already there was a decision not to provide services to Juliet Long, and that was restored with ARPA dollars for one year.....then what happens?

Yes, it is true that the youth services in Ledyard had shrunk to only doing direct clinical service by our last director. But that does not justify throwing out the POTENTIAL to rebuild a more comprehensive service. And yes, there are grants and monies to be found to do some of the above mentioned programs. Within the Community of Ledyard are a wealth of professional mental health individuals, retired and currently working that could be engaged as a “task force” or form a committee to review, evaluate, conduct a needs assessment, and make recommendations to you.

Our neighboring communities all are maintaining some form of “youth services.” Preston incorporates theirs in Parks and Rec; Groton with Social Services and Parks and Rec; East Lyme recently began a Youth Services, Montville has Youth Services.

It’s very perplexing that Ledyard wants to abandon our Youth.

Thank you for listening. I am available to assist with above.

