

MINUTES

MANSFIELD ADVOCATES FOR CHILDREN

Wednesday, May 2, 2007

Mansfield Town Hall, Council Chambers

6:30-8:30 PM

PRESENT: K. Grunwald (staff), S. Baxter (staff), L. Oransoff, J. Stoughton (staff), C. Guerrerri (Grauestein), J. Goldman, S. Daley, Debbie Gianakos (guest, Willow House), L. Dahn, A. Bladen (Chair), D. McLaughlin, B. Lehmann

I. INTRODUCTIONS/MINUTES:

- A. **Introductions:** Anne Bladen stepped forward to serve as the new Chair; we are still seeking Co Chair. Debbie Gianakos was introduced as a potential new member.
- B. **Thank you** to members who helped with the Month of the Young Child events: Maria Dickson, Bethany Maines, Lisa Young (MDD), for collecting and displaying children's art. To the following people for being present to represent MAC at events: Joan Buck, Lisa Oransoff and her daughter Chloe, Katherine Paulhus, Judy Stoughton, Jane Goldman. For people who wrote 'letters to the editor': Joan Buck and Jane Goldman. For those who helped with the Denise Merrill event on 4/24/07 at MDD: Mary Jane Newman, Joan Buck, and Jane Goldman. Paul Vivian who led our 4/4/07 Retreat and to Jessica Bonfire for talking to us about Advocacy. Ariana and Chloe Oransoff for their help at the Preschool Family Fun Fair. Rachel Leclerc for taking minutes at the 2/7/07 meeting.
- C. **Adoption of minutes of February 7, 2007, and April 4th:** the minutes of these meetings were accepted as written.

II. COMMUNICATIONS (Consent Agenda, unless otherwise noted)

- A. **Letter to the Editor by Joan Buck**
- B. **Courant article: "New Education Chief Backs Exit Exam, Tighter Standards"**

III. **NEW BUSINESS - Small Groups - Sub-Committee**

Work: S. Baxter gave instructions for members breaking up into small groups. The groups are *Infant and Toddler Access, Membership and Recruitment, Parent Involvement*. Other small groups will be formed at a later date. The task for tonight was to

choose a Chair, list members, identify action items. These small groups can meet on alternate months when the full MAC council is not meeting. J. Goldman suggested that we evaluate this strategy after a few months to see if it is working for the members. K. Grunwald suggested that the small groups use the Discovery 2007 Action Plan to guide the work that they're doing and to integrate their activities with the larger initiative. There was some discussion about collaborating with other Discovery communities around parent training initiatives, perhaps using EASTCONN to coordinate this activity.

- A. Membership, Recruitment, Publicity: D. McLaughlin** suggested coming up with a new member packet for potential members. The feeling was that the bylaws need to be created first, to clarify for new members what the roles and responsibilities of members are. It would be important to list the functions of MAC, to clarify what this group is really about. This needs to be defined operationally for potential new members. J. Stoughton pointed out that it's easy for a group like MAC to broaden its function, and perhaps this needs to be narrowed; to be prepared to say no to some things. The development of bylaws is a precursor to this committee. It was suggested that potential ideas for new members would not include big events for recruitment, but more to find opportunities to talk to people: Know Your Towns Fair, Pre-school Fun Fair, etc. There was a strong suggestion that the next step would be the development of bylaws. Potential Time Frame: S. Baxter recommended that we have the packets completed by this Fall.
- B. Infant/Toddler Access: J. Goldman** reported that the group reviewed the Discovery Action Plan: the stated goal is to determine the need for care in this area. They will call all of the licensed providers to determine their perception of need and supply. B. Lehmann pointed out that some of the existing providers are considering going out of business. This is a question that will be asked during the calls. The group will then start with recruitment of family homecare providers; B. Lehmann will follow-up with Infoline. S. Daley will contact "All Our Kin" in New Haven. MDD has looked at expanding this capacity, but needs to know how they will pay staff. Someone will possibly explore the issue of pay for early care staff with the State's Early Childhood Cabinet. S. Baxter asked about approaching UConn for subsidies for parents. This is

already done through the funding that is provided to the Centers; they will not subsidize individual families. The unions do have some funds that can be used to subsidize families. This goal could expand into a larger policy initiative. J. Goldman will review the Provost Council's data. L. Dahn will explore what is happening in Massachusetts: the Department of Early Childhood? (Margaret Blood). C. Guerreri reported that the Research and Policy Council of DSS is looking at childcare issues for children age birth-3. Someone will follow-up next month.

- C. **Parent Involvement:** L. Oransoff agreed to facilitate this group. She raised questions regarding who are the parents we are trying to reach out to, and for what purpose? There are different needs based on how long they are intending to stay in the community, and how invested they are. The primary focus of this effort has been on international families, and the question was raised of how to combine the parent education piece with the larger focus on parent involvement? It was decided that before going too much further it would be helpful to talk to some parents to find out what their needs are. B. Lehmann pointed out that there are also married graduate students who do not fall into this group of international families. J. Goldman suggested that the International Student Association offers another potential point of contact for this objective. L. Oransoff also pointed out that the library offers a point of contact for these families. We want to figure out who it is we are trying to work with, to what end, and how we can be realistic about this. C. Guerreri stated that this is about identifying needs and helping parents to effectuate change on their own, and not about providing programs and services. J. Goldman pointed out that MAC is larger than Discovery, and may want to link some of these activities to the parent involvement initiative.
- D. **By-Laws:** C. Guerreri offered to work with a small group (3-4) for 3-4 sessions to formulate the bylaws. D. McLaughlin, S. Daley, and J. Stoughton agreed to work on these, along with S. Baxter. J. Goldman suggested that these should be as short as possible. Because we function as School Readiness Council, there is a legislative mandate to follow as well. The School Readiness program will be monitored by the State regarding compliance with grant requirements. To meet legislative mandates, we may

need to set up the School Readiness Council as a sub-committee of MAC. If we use the existing structure of the Task Force, then it needs to be designated as a committee, with co-chairs appointed by the Mayor and Superintendent of Schools.

IV. PROGRAM UPDATES

- A. School Readiness Update: no report.
- B. Discovery: the Town has received an incentive grant for this year.
 - MAC Retreat: no report.
 - Month of the Young Child: S. Baxter gave a brief update of activities. Need to publicize Community Center Tiny Tot classes better in the future. Early evening may also be another time to look at offering these classes. Outside activities needed to be cancelled due to weather. Three children attended the Story In the Park; maybe try to schedule this on a Saturday morning. 130 people attended the puppet show at the Library. The Denise Merrill event was very successful. The open house visits were poorly attended at the Centers, with the exception of MDD. No family homecare providers participated.
 - Sub Committees: see "New Business."

V. OLD BUSINESS

- A. MAC Calendar – the plan is for the larger MAC group to start meeting bi-monthly, with small group meetings taking place during the other months. We will probably start this schedule in September.

VI. NEXT MEETING: the next meeting will be a potluck in June. Sandy will notify members regarding the date.

- Meetings are held from 6:30- 8:30 PM at a location to be determined. Additional meetings may be scheduled as needed, or removed as not needed.

VII. Adjournment: the meeting adjourned at 8:35 PM

Respectfully submitted,
Kevin Grunwald