



Council Worksession
January 10, 2023
5:00 pm

Present: Mayor Kari Niedfeldt-Thomas
Councilmember Abdullahi Abdulle
Councilmember Graeme Allen
Councilmember Emily Dunsworth
Councilmember Pam Axberg (arrived at 5:42 p.m.)

Absent:

Staff in Attendance: Devin Massopust (attending remotely), Jennifer Fink

Guests in Attendance: Angie Lewis-Dmello, Northeast Youth and Family Services

Update from Angie Lewis-Dmello, Northeast Youth and Family Services President and CEO

Massopust stated Angie Lewis-Dmello was in attendance to provide the Council with a presentation from NYFS.

Angie Lewis-Dmello, Northeast Youth and Family Services President and CEO, introduced herself to the Council and stated she has been with NYFS since June of 2022. She discussed work history and explained she was pleased to be working with this organization. She reviewed the services offered by NYFS and how they were benefiting the communities youth. She believed the core part of her mission was financial access to care. She commented on the relationships she has with the three school districts, five law enforcement agencies and 15 municipalities that were invested in her organization.

Ms. Lewis-Dmello reviewed the number of individuals that were served in 2021 and 2022, noting she had 21,696 appointments. The programs offered by NYFS to serve clients included a diversion program, elderly services, community advocacy, school based, clinic based, and the NETS day treatment program.

Councilmember Abdulle asked if income verification was required before individuals could set an appointment with NYFS. Ms. Lewis-Dmello reported this was not required. She commented further on her organizations sliding fee scale.

Ms. Lewis-Dmello discussed the state of youth mental health in Minnesota. She explained one in three youth now have a diagnosable mental health condition which was a significant increase since COVID. She commented on how there had been attrition in the mental health field, especially among non-profits and how this was impacting the services that are being provided to youth that are struggling.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas stated she appreciated how youth are more comfortable talking about their mental health challenges and were more comfortable asking for help. Ms. Lewis-Dmello reported this was a positive change.

Councilmember Abdulle asked if NYFS could advocate for State funding. Ms. Lewis-Dmello reported she works with NOMI and other collaboratives in order to make system changes, however this was very slow going. She explained in community mental health most clients were on a sliding scale or MA insurance, which did not fully cover costs.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas requested further information regarding the NETS day program. Ms. Lewis-Dmello commented on how NYFS administered the NETS day program.

Councilmember Abdulle questioned how NYFS manages their wait list. Ms. Lewis-Dmello described how she and her staff triage and manage appointments for their clients.

Councilmember Allen asked if NYFS collaborates with CPY. Ms. Lewis-Dmello thanked Councilmember Allen for the suggestion and stated this may be a great organization for NYFS to work with in the future.

Ms. Lewis-Dmello commented on how NYFS would be innovating into the future by expanding community connections to general youth referrals, adding specialized advocates, and building and expanding the play therapy services. In addition, she would work to expand training for new therapists, offer more group therapy services and improving staff wellness and work sustainability for her staff members.

Fink commented on the tour she did with Ms. Lewis-Dmello at NYFS.

Councilmember Allen asked if NYFS offered any training for local law enforcement agencies. Ms. Lewis-Dmello discussed the mental health and trauma informed care she has provided to law enforcement individuals.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas questioned if NYFS had lost funding for any programming. Ms. Lewis-Dmello stated the only program she was not able to offer going forward was the senior chore program. She reported she was hoping to revision this program.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas requested further information regarding the demographics of NYFS's clients. Ms. Lewis-Dmello explained for the most part her clients were representative of the 15 municipalities. She indicated she had several bi-lingual staff members.

Councilmember Abdulle thanked Ms. Lewis-Dmello for her presentation.

Discussions on Tobacco Licenses

Massopust explained the City currently has five standalone tobacco shops. He reported a sixth shop will be considered by the Council this evening. He questioned if the Council wanted to set parameters around tobacco shops and then discussed how other cities in the region reviewed and managed tobacco licenses. He discussed how the sale of THC products was increasing the number of standalone tobacco shops. He stated the City limits the number of on sale liquor licenses in New Brighton and there were only four licenses administered. He questioned if the Council wanted to establish limits with respect to tobacco licenses. He commented another option for the Council to consider would be to put a moratorium on tobacco licenses.

Councilmember Allen requested further information on how a stand alone tobacco shop was defined. Massopust reported a stand alone shop only sold tobacco products. He explained the City had a total of 16 tobacco licenses when including gas stations, liquor stores and grocery stores.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas commented at the Eight City Mayor's meeting she expressed concern about the number of tobacco shops in the community. She noted she has had outreach from the Smoke Free Coalition and they were interested in speaking to the Council. She explained she was in favor of the Council putting a moratorium in place until this issue could be further discussed.

Councilmember Axberg stated her feelings were mixed on this issue. She understood smoking was not good for peoples health, but she also wondered if the free market should decide how many tobacco shops were located in New Brighton.

Councilmember Dunsworth supported a moratorium being put in place until the Council could further discuss this matter. She noted the City had a limit on liquor licenses and should perhaps have a limit on the number of tobacco licenses.

Councilmember Allen agreed a moratorium and a limit on the number of tobacco shops should be put in place. He supported there being restrictions in place on tobacco sales. He commented on how tobacco shops were now moving towards THC sales.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas questioned what role staff had in the sale of THC products. Massopust reported City staff had no role in the sale of these products. He commented on how other cities have put moratoriums or ordinances in place to regulate THC sales. He explained the Council could discuss THC products and tobacco shops at future workshop meetings.

Councilmember Abdulle stated he supported a moratorium being put in place, along with limiting the number of tobacco licenses as well.

Massopust reported a moratorium could be put in place for one year. He explained staff could draft an ordinance that the council could consider on Tuesday, January 24. He discussed how the State legislature would be addressing THC within their upcoming session. He asked if the council wanted to address THC or wait until the State has made a determination.

Councilmember Allen asked if the City was having any issues surrounding the sale of THC products at this time. Massopust explained he was not aware of any active problems.

Councilmember Abdulle supported the City waiting to address THC until action had been taken by the State.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas stated she supported a moratorium on the sale of THC products.

Worksession adjourned at 6:20 pm

Respectfully submitted,



Terri Spangrud
City Clerk