

Town of Norwich Childcare Committee  
Draft Minutes  
January 7, 2021 Meeting

Members present: Rebecca Holcombe, Brian Loeb, Mary Layton, Neil Odell, Jamie Rosenfeld

Absent: Bob Haynes

Public present: Linda Cook, Brie Swenson

1. Agenda approved unanimously
2. There were no public comments during the allotted time
3. Officers elected:

Odell moved, second by Layton to elect Rebecca Holcombe Chair. Approved unanimously.

Odell moved, second by Rosenfeld to elect Mary Layton Secretary. Approved unanimously.

4. Layton moved, second by Loeb to approve minutes. Approved unanimously.
5. Layton moved, second by Loeb to receive correspondence from Rebecca Holcombe from December 21, 2020. Approved unanimously.
6. The Committee agreed to establish first Mondays 8 to 10pm as a standing meeting date with the exception of March when there is a conflict with Pre-Town Meeting. Mary will check with Miranda to see if March 8<sup>th</sup> is available as an alternate date.
7. The Committee reviewed the charge with special consideration of two questions:
  - a) What will it look like if this group is successful?
  - b) When will we agree that we have been successful?
8. The Committee considered the charge and key questions:
  - a) Should childcare be part of the core municipal funded activities?
  - b) What are the specific costs for significantly improving access to childcare in Norwich?
  - c) What is existing capacity or strength?
  - d) What gaps or weaknesses are noted?

It was agreed that question a) is a values driven question that is ultimately up to the Selectboard or voters to decide whereas b) is a concrete question for which the Committee can perform research using a number of information gathering options.

9. Information provided by Rebecca Holcombe provided a general background of supply and demand statewide and by county. The materials also provided background on subsidized childcare, the effect of increases of the minimum wage on benefits funded by the Federal Government, and the "benefits cliff" which affects families who make too little money to afford federal benefits but cannot easily pay for childcare based on their level of earnings. There has been a statewide decline in registered family day care. The county information included location maps. It was noted that more granular information should be found about particular needs and options of Norwich residents. The travel corridors to their work place, available employer provided care, the need to drive to

neighboring towns to utilize existing facilities, out of town families who take up spots in Norwich facilities, lack of a rental registry in Norwich, lack of a systematic way to know exactly what the demand is make defining demand challenging. In addition demand has varying characteristics by hours/days/types of care needed.

10. It was agreed that we will work on a research plan that includes the following themes, and we will all work to build out a “grid” to systematically build a framework for the report. Research will be assigned and individual results sent to Rebecca who will put it into a grid that we will review in our warned meetings via a shared Zoom screen. A letter describing progress will go to the Selectboard in March (by March 31 if included in quarterly committee report).

1. What formal or informal supply exists currently for Norwich resident childcare?
2. What is the demand and unmet need?
3. What are the barriers and demonstrated gaps?
4. What types of solution are possible?
5. What can the Committee recommend in reference to the question about funding aspects of childcare as a core municipal activity?

The Committee is considering who the stakeholders are that would populate the grid. A list includes parents, teachers, providers, businesses, schools, the Town of Norwich Zoning and Recreation Departments, Selectboard, the Norwich Public Library. Members will send Rebecca their lists, she will put them in the grid and eliminate duplicates.

11. Next Meeting February 1, 2021, agenda to include review of grid and strategies for information gathering.