

Legislative Youth Advisory Council

Meeting Summary -- January 6, 2006

Youth Members and Legislative Members Present: Henry Beck, Colby College; Daniel Black, Waynflete School; Carolyn Boyle, Bowdoin College; Kala Clark, Mt. Desert Island High School; Ian Engdahl, Winthrop High School; Claire Howard, South Portland High School; Rep. Rosaire Paradis, Jr., Frenchville; Heather Pratt, Cony High School; Jennifer Thompson, Maranacook Community High School; Rep David Trahan, Waldoboro; and Grace Wright, Brunswick High School.

Ex-officio Members, Staff & Others Present: Janet Richards, Children's Cabinet Senior Staff and Executive Assistant to the Commissioner, Department of Public Safety; Susan Savell, Children's Cabinet Senior Staff and Executive Director, Communities for Children; David Stockford, Children's Cabinet Senior Staff and Director of Special Services, Department of Education; Phil McCarthy, Legislative Analyst, Office of Policy & Legal Analysis; Alison Ames, Legislative Researcher, Office of Policy & Legal Analysis; David Heidrich, Jr., former LYAC Youth Chair and Hillsdale College student; and Cory True, former LYAC member and St. Anselm College student.

1. Call to Order

Rep. Paradis convened the twenty first meeting of the Legislative Youth Advisory Council ("LYAC" or "Council") at 9:07 a.m.

2. Welcome and Introductions

Rep. Paradis, acting Legislative Chair, welcomed the Council members; and invited LYAC members, staff and other individuals present to introduce themselves. Phil McCarthy and Alison Ames, Council Staff, reviewed the agenda and expectations for the day.

3. Overview of Council Duties and Operations

Cory True, former LYAC member and St. Anselm College student, presented a PowerPoint presentation titled "Reconvening the Maine Legislative Youth Advisory Council" (PowerPoint was adapted from a presentation created by Nathaniel Yellis). Cory reviewed the legislative history and background of the Council and described the membership, functions and duties of the Council; and he pointed out the need for the LYAC to establish an agenda of "key issues" for Council consideration, research and debate. Cory also emphasized the need for LYAC members to meet with Legislative leadership to restore the LYAC as an effective "advisory council" within the legislative policymaking environment.

Phil McCarthy and Alison Ames, Legislative Staff, previewed the "Rules of Procedure" that were adopted by a previous Council; and suggested that the Council should discuss the election process for the LYAC Youth Chair.

4. Nominations for the LYAC Youth Chair

LYAC members discussed how previous Councils conducted elections for the Youth Chair. In accordance with the LYAC statutes, the Council shall elect a youth chair for a one-year term of office. The Council decided to take nominations, allow the nominees to address the Council, and then to have a secret ballot. Rep. Paradis opened the floor for nominations.

Motion: Carolyn Boyle moved, and Henry Beck seconded, the nomination of Jennifer Thompson. Ms. Thompson accepted the nomination; and the motion was accepted by unanimous consent.

Motion: Heather Pratt moved, and Ian Engdahl seconded, the nomination of Kala Clark. Ms. Clark accepted the nomination; and the motion was accepted by unanimous consent.

Motion: Henry Beck moved, and Heather Pratt seconded, a motion to close nominations. The motion was accepted by unanimous consent.

5. Review the Role of Council Staff

Phil McCarthy and Alison Ames, Legislative Staff, reviewed the “An Introduction to the Office of Policy & Legal Analysis: Service and Staff for the 122nd Legislature” including the policy analysis, research and legislative drafting assistance that they can provide to the LYAC. While LYAC statutes permit the Legislative Council to curtail staffing assistance to the LYAC during the legislative session, Mr. McCarthy indicated that staff from the Office of Policy & Legal Analysis would continue to be provided to support the work of the LYAC during the legislative session.

6. Group Discussions to Develop Goals, Objectives and Priority Policy Issues

Rep. Paradis invited Council members to identify their goals, including the issues of importance to Maine youth, that should be considered as the Council establishes a 2006 “work plan.” LYAC staff distributed a list of the 197 bills, (sorted by the likely committee of reference), that were approved for submission to the 2nd legislative session.

LYAC members shared concerns about a number of policy issues in the areas of education and health and human services, as well as several LYAC operational and internal concerns that they wanted to address this year. The following list summarizes the issues proposed by Council members for further discussion as part of the LYAC 2006 “work plan”(please also see the enclosed document “LYAC 2006 Topics” for a summary of flip chart notes).

Health and Human Services Policy Issues

- The incidence of youth suicide, (Children’s Cabinet staff offered to provide a briefing on the new Maine youth suicide prevention plan)
- Low Income Heating Assistance Program also affects children and families
- Maine youth suicide prevention plan – mental health and mental illness and reduce rate

- Bullying in communities and schools
- Children’s Cabinet commission on gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth (“GLBTGQ”) and seeking engagement of, and guidance from, LYAC in nominating 3-5 youth to participate in this initiative
- Alcohol and substance abuse issues, including high school or college policies on underage drinking (in general) and for athletes (in particular), the effectiveness of “Project Graduation” programs, and initiative on alcohol and substance abuse in Archangel, Russia

Education Policy Issues

- Standardized testing, including replacing the 11th grade MEA with the SAT
- “Over-testing” and the stress and related impact on teachers and students
- Impact of No Child Left Behind Act (“NCLB”) requirements, (invite Congressional delegation to discuss NCLB)
- Civic education standards, including the elimination of social studies and civic education from the state and local assessment systems
- “Child protection” background check of public school employees
- Isolation and differential treatment of some special education students
- State Board of Education’s Select Panel recommendation to reapportion and reduce the number of school districts in the State
- Access to postsecondary education, including extending tuition waivers for certain youth who have resided in adoptive care or have had subsidized guardians
- The delay in implementing the tax credit enacted as part of legislation to support access to college and encouraging Maine youth to stay in the State, (tax credit was not funded)
- The growing “gender gap” between young men, who are falling behind young women, in the rates of high school graduation and participation in postsecondary education

Other Policy Issues

- Concerns with restrictions on the privileges of driver’s licenses for certain youth, especially those who reside in rural areas
- Changing the minimum voting age (England is considering a 16 year old voting age)

LYAC Operational & Internal Issues

- Relationship with Citizenship Education Task Force (“CETF”), including funding, to promoting public hearings, and opportunities to utilize CETF website to promote LYAC
- Using funding from CETF for breakfast meeting or public forum with Legislative leadership or legislators
- Greater exposure of LYAC to Legislature and legislative leadership
- Efforts to draw greater attention to the work of LYAC and engage the citizens and youth of State, including utilization of the Legislature’s “live” Internet feed, (to be activated by the end of January), and requesting the approval of Legislature leadership to address to joint convention of Legislature
- Invite the Youth Leadership Advisory Team (YLAT) to a meeting to hear their concerns

- LYAC appointment process and guidelines need to be revisited, including ways to ensure greater geographical representation of LYAC members and consideration of adding one youth member from each county, at-large members, and a secondary school social study teacher (or greater connection through the Department of Education to teachers)
- Need to reestablish and sustain the role of the LYAC
- Utilizing technology resources to remove the travel barrier from youth participation, (check with Paul Mayotte, Director of Legislature’s Information Systems Office, on the technology resources available to LYAC for creating greater access)
- Dialogue with international youth (initiative of former Michigan Rep. Doug Hart, who is working at a Quaker School in Ramallah with Palestinian high school students, to connect youth across the globe via Internet web logs, or “blogs”)

David Stockford, Senior Staff to the Children’s Cabinet reported that the Children’s Cabinet would like to brief the LYAC on the 3 priorities that the Children’s Cabinet have established for this year: (1) Postsecondary access and completion; (2) Early intervention; and (3) Adverse childhood conditions and implications for children’s health.

Mr. Stockford also submitted a Children’s Cabinet proposal to the LYAC that senior staff of Children’s Cabinet represent the respective Commissioners of the Children’s Cabinet agencies (who are “ex officio members of LYAC). These agencies include: Department of Education, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Public Safety, Department of Corrections, and Department of Labor.

LYAC members concluded their planning session by agreeing to sort these policy issues and the Council’s internal and operational internal concerns into three groups. The Council members also discussed organizing subcommittees to further address these issues once a “work plan” was established.

Lunch Break (Council members had lunch at the Cross Café)

7. Formal Convening of the Council

Rep. Paradis, acting Legislative Chair, convened the Council at 1:05 p.m.

8. Election of Youth Chair

Rep. Paradis invited Kala Clark and Jennifer Thompson, the nominees for Youth Chair, to address the Council regarding their candidacy. Following their remarks, an election was conducted by a “secret ballot.” Jennifer Thompson was elected to a one-year term as the Youth Chair of the Council.

9. Discussion and Adoption of Council “Work Plan” for 2006

Chairwoman Thompson requested Alison Ames, Legislative Staff, to summarize the grouping of issues presented by Council members during the morning session on identifying issues of concern to Maine youth and the goals of the Council. LYAC members agreed to

sharpen the focus of the issues and debated the issues to arrive at a consensus of what issues and concerns should be priorities for the 2006 “work plan.” Council members discussed the following issue as part of their review:

- Supporting initiatives to decrease the out migration of Maine youth as outlined in the:
 - Report from “REALIZE! MAINE”: The Governor's Summit on Youth Migration, (held June on 2004), to understand the challenges and opportunities before the State and to create sustainable solutions to make Maine a viable, preferred option for youth;
 - “Final Report of the Presiding Officers’ Advisory Task Force on Creating a Future for Youth in Maine”, (transmitted January 2004 to the 121st Legislature), that recommended coordinating economic development, education and workforce development policies to retain and attract youth to Maine; and
 - Model created to develop the Maine winter sports center in Fort Kent.

Motion: Kala Clark moved, and Gail Wright seconded, a motion to include support of these initiatives, including sustainable solutions to make Maine a viable, preferred option for youth, a top priority of the LYAC in 2006. The motion was approved by a vote of 9-1.

In deciding on the “work plan” priorities for 2006, the Council members assigned the issues that were identified in the morning session to one of the following three categories, (please see the enclosed document “LYAC 2006 Topics” for a summary of these issues):

- LYAC Operational & Internal Issues
- Health and Human Services Policy Issues
- Education Policy Issues

The intent of the Council is to establish LYAC subcommittees to further address the issues included under these 3 categories. The Council began, but did not make any determination regarding the appointment of Council members to these subcommittees, but agreed that time will be set aside at the next LYAC meeting to organize subcommittees and develop plans to address the respective issues and concerns.

The Council members also agreed to add LYAC budget development as part of the “LYAC Operational & Internal Issues” category and agreed that the LYAC Chairs and staff will draft a budget for review at the next LYAC meeting.

10. Discussion and Adoption of Council “Rules of Procedures”

Rep. Paradis requested that Phil McCarthy, Legislative Staff, review the “LYAC Rules of Procedure.” Council member discussions centered on three items:

1. Amending the provisions in Section 1 “Chair Presides” to clarify that the Legislative Chair presides (rather than the “House chair”) since current law stipulates that the Legislative

Chair alternates between the first-appointed Senate and House member for a 2-year term);

2. Clarifying the procedures for advertising and providing public notice for public hearings in Section 4 “Scheduling of hearings and work sessions”; and

3. Clarifying the provision in paragraph G of Section 7 “Procedures for public hearings” regarding the consumption of food or beverages by Council members.

Council members consented to amending Section 1 and paragraph G of Section 7, but decided against revising the Section 4 provisions since the planning process for ensuring that the Council’s public hearings are well publicized and communicated to youth in the State is a separate issue from the “public notice” requirement for legislative public hearings. It was agreed that a packet similar to Michigan packet that Rep. Hart presented to the LYAC be created to introduce the history and purpose of the Council and to explain how to provide testimony at a public hearing. The Council also agreed that the topic of advance planning for public hearings should be addressed by the Council at a future meeting.

Following the review of the rules, Rep. Paradis entertained a motion from the Council to adopt the rules as amended.

Motion: Gail Wright moved, and Rep. Paradis seconded, the adoption of the “LYAC Rules of Procedure” as amended. The motion was accepted by a vote of 10-0.

11. LYAC Schedule for Winter and Spring of 2006

LYAC members discussed the need to schedule the next Council meeting, a meeting with the Legislative Council members, and two public hearings with the Citizenship Education Task Force. The Council members decided that the next LYAC meeting would be held on Friday, February 3, 2006 and to invite Legislative Council members to breakfast on that same date. Council members also agreed that the following agenda items will be taken up on February 3rd:

- Breakfast meeting with Legislative Council members
- Briefing from the Children’s Cabinet on current initiatives related to LYAC concerns
- Organization of subcommittees and subcommittee meetings
- Review of the “draft” 2006 LYAC Annual Report” (please see the enclosed document “LYAC 2006 Topics” for a tentative outline of the 2006 “LYAC Annual Report”)

12. Adjournment

Motion: Kala Clark moved, and Rep. Trahan seconded, a motion to adjourn. The motion was approved by unanimous consent. The meeting was adjourned at 2:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Phillip D. McCarthy, Ed.D., Legislative Analyst
Alison Ames, Legislative Researcher