

**New York State**

**Temporary Commission to Prevent Childhood Drowning**

**September 6, 2024**

**Minutes**

**Opening:**

- Meeting called to order by Marrick McDonald, retired CEO of Upstate Aquatics LLC.

**Introductions:**

**Commission Members**

- Marrick McDonald
- Kevin Clark
- Kathryn Colglazier
- Kate Kraus
- Brian Tobin

**Commissioner Absent**

Heidi Reiss, Gwen Mcnamara, Mike Switalski

**Additional**

- Gerard Bryant
- John Kolodziej
- Brianne Keefe
- Caitlin Smith
- Kamilla Harris
- Karen Hollowood
- Michael Bauer
- Rich Alden
- Steve Henshaw

**Reminders:**

- Commissioners must be on camera, unmuted, and have their full names displayed.
- Use chat for conversations and raise hands to participate.

**Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes:**

- Motion to approve by Kevin, seconded by Brian.
- Motion carried unanimously.

**Discussion of Meeting Dates:**

- Upcoming meetings: September 20, October 14, October 18, November 1, November 15, December 6, December 20.
- Governor extended the commission's mandate; goal to finish the report by January 1.

**Assignments and Responsibilities:**

- Specific assignments given to commissioners based on expertise:
  - Kate and Gwen: Summary of WHO research and National Water Safety Action Plan.
  - Casper: Volunteer management job description.
  - Mike: Finance-related tasks.
  - Kevin: Recommendations on rock jetties.
  - Heidi to finish the parent section and another unspecified task.

**Overview of Work Done:**

- Reorganized content for flexibility in recommendations.
- Moved some items from Goal A to general information.
- Added recommendations based on the August 9th conversation.
- Synthesized bios to 1-2 paragraphs, except for Dr. Langendorfer (3 paragraphs).
- Dr. Langendorfer to provide a summary title for his bio.

**Topics Discussed:**

- Adding definitions for: puddle jumpers, arm floaties, water wings, jetties, pre and post-season beach safety.
- WHO National Water Safety Action Plan.
- Adding a glossary of abbreviations.
- Document intended for non-aquatic people (legislators).
- Aim to support water safety legislation for school districts.
- Need to distinguish between aquatic and non-aquatic settings for education.

**Goal B Review:**

- Confirmed progress on Goal B.
- Discussion was had regarding the need to emphasis on the need for clear and consistent interpretation of state laws and organizational rules.
- The importance of ensuring that state laws are not open to interpretation to maintain consistency.

**Operating Costs:**

- Programs struggle with operating costs due to low revenue and high staffing requirements.
- Additional costs from district overhead, administrative presence, and custodial requirements can be prohibitive.

**Lifeguard Recruitment and Certification:**

- Difficulty in locating, hiring, and retaining certified lifeguards.
- Barriers include certification costs, time constraints, and limited course availability.
- Local governing agencies or facilities may have restrictive policies on certification validity periods.
- Instructor Certification Challenges:
  - Potential instructors face obstacles such as class costs, time constraints, and limited course availability.
  - Requirement to pay for courses upfront raises concerns about affordability and passing rates.
  - Difficulty in finding trainers for swim instructors due to limited access to instructor trainer courses, which often require travel and multi-day commitments.

#### **Compensation Issues:**

- Lifeguard pay scales do not significantly increase compared to other low or minimum wage jobs, affecting job attractiveness and retention.
- Competitive job market where other jobs with similar wages do not require extensive training or life-saving responsibilities.
- Administrative Constraints:
  - Organizing and supervising swim lessons require substantial time from administrative staff, diverting attention from other programs.
  - Lifeguard and swim instructor positions are often mispriced, viewed as minimum wage or entry-level jobs despite requiring significant skills and responsibilities.
  - The disparity between the cost of certification and the minimal pay increase discourages investment in certification.
  - High school students face restrictions on serving as lifeguards during the school day, adding complexity to staffing arrangements.
  - Confusion exists around whether students can lifeguard during study halls.
  - Certain counties have curfews that may restrict high school students' availability for lifeguarding.

#### **Goal C**

- Postpone detailed discussion of Goal C to a later meeting.

#### **Goal D Discussion:**

- The Commission shall develop an implementation plan to ensure water safety education programs are available in underserved communities.

Definition of Under-Resourced Communities:

- Communities lacking institutions, community cohesion, leadership, physical and financial resources, political will, and power.
- Includes socio-economically disadvantaged individuals, limited English speakers, geographically or educationally isolated people, people of color, ethnic and national origin minorities, women, children, people with disabilities, and others with access and functional needs.
- Next Steps:
  - Add definitions of “under-resourced” and “underserved” to the glossary.
  - Ensure congruency in terminology throughout the document.
  - Ensure consistency in terminology, using “water safety education programs” throughout the document.
  - Changed “swimming safety programs” to “water safety education programs” for consistency.
- Factors Impacting Participation:
  - Consider income levels, access to transportation, language barriers, cultural considerations, and other relevant factors.
- Develop Partnerships:
  - Identify and collaborate with local community organizations, schools, places of worship, and other stakeholders serving both underserved and under-resourced communities.
  - Establish partnerships to leverage resources and networks for promoting water safety education programs.
  - School Collaboration:
    - Collaborate with local schools to integrate water safety education into physical education curricula or after-school programs.
    - Support for legislation to mandate water safety education from pre-K through 12th grade.
- Outreach, Education, and Promotion:
  - Develop a comprehensive outreach plan using community events, social media, flyers, posters, PSAs, and local media.
  - Translate promotional materials into multiple languages to overcome language barriers.
  - Offer incentives such as discounted or free classes to encourage participation from underserved and under-resourced communities.
  - Utilize local leaders and influencers to promote water safety education within the community.
- Classroom Education on Water Safety:
  - Educate on the nature of water related to climate, environment, and home.
  - Identify dangers in the home and beyond.
  - Understand water behavior, risk mitigation, and response strategies before and after incidents.
  - Learn about weather-related aquatic emergencies and appropriate responses.
- Financial Assistance Program:

- Establish scholarships or discounts for individuals or families from under-resourced and underserved communities facing financial barriers to participating in water safety education programs.
- Scholarships could be based on enrollment in various assistance programs, such as:
  - Aid to Families with Dependent Children
  - Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
  - Section 8 Public Housing
  - Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)
  - Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program
  - Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP)
  - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
  - Medicaid
  - Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP)
  - Other relevant assistance programs
- **Terminology and Language:**
  - Update terminology to reflect current usage, such as using “SNAP” instead of “food stamps.”
  - Ensure politically correct and inclusive language, such as reviewing “Temporary Assistance to Needy Families.”
- **Meeting Adjournment:**

Meeting concluded with a reminder to stay on track and a note of appreciation for everyone’s efforts.

