

Vermont Drug and Alcohol Coalition

Wednesday, June 23, 2010 Minutes

Present: Christine Peterson, Pat Martin, Ann Gilbert
Guest: Virginia Renfrew of Zatz & Renfrew Consulting
By Phone – Andy Hauty

Action Steps:

- Virginia will email the Challenges for Change Human Services and Corrections information to Christine.
- Andy will find connections in Rockingham and in Chittenden County to help do polling. Perhaps someone from the Senior Center or from the Community Action could help volunteer to do a 30 second survey. He will talk to Ginny about speaking with Janet Ancel in Calais.
- Group will talk further about Virginia's suggestions.

Review Minutes from May 26 meeting

Treasurer's Report: Kim is away, Ann reported that 3 new memberships have brought in \$150 so there is now \$1,610.96 in budget.

Membership Report: New members to be added: Southshire Partnership for a Healthy Community, United Counseling Service of Bennington, and Rural Partnerships. Also, Pat mentioned that Wit's End should be added as well.

Discussion: What is happening with raising the Beer Tax in Vermont and where is it going? Guest Virginia Renfrew: Virginia reported that due to the 130 million deficit in the 2012 budget (mostly in healthcare), revenue is needed. She stressed the importance of keeping our youth out of the system, decrease the prison population—recognizing that currently, 1 out of 7 male Vermonters under the age of 25 are in the system. Legislators want this number to drop. Corrections and Healthcare costs are going up and important programs are getting cut. One way to increase revenue would be the Excise tax on beer and wine. This taxes the wholesaler—it is not a sales tax. The increased cost will result in the wholesaler passing it on to the consumers. It is proposed that beer would be taxed 26.5 – 31.5 cents per gallon and wine at 55 – 60 cents per gallon. Beer taxes haven't been raised since the 80's. This tax increase will result in \$810,000 for beer and

\$120,000 for wine, equaling close to 1 million dollars. Questions: If beer costs 5 cents more per 6 pack, would people stop buying it or would they travel over the border to buy it somewhere else? She noted that when the cigarette tax went up, people said they would buy from other states but that is not really happening. New York has passed a Soda and Candy Tax. Money will all go to healthcare.

Suggestions to Coalitions:

- Identify members on the House, Ways and Means and the Senate Finance committees.
- Coalition members to call representatives and tell them what we do in prevention and our feelings about the tax. Come as a force.
- Look at other states raising taxes and what their research shows.
- Talk to residents of towns on the NH border to see if they cross the border to purchase beer and wine or do they support their local stores.
- Poll people to find out if they would choose to increase property tax, sales tax, or a beer/wine tax for wholesalers.
- Contact Coalition for Tobacco Free Vermont and find out what their research shows about how many Vermonters actually buy cigarettes out of state (this information will emphasize that the tax will not impact small businesses but will help reduce the amount that young people are drinking).
- Have a conversation with Senator John Campbell and Kevin Mullen.
- Find out if there is presently a significant difference in prices of beer and wine from NH stores.
- Prepare Talking Points to distribute, and draft a one page Legislative brief with a simple message--an education piece-- about prevention and demonstrated research based strategy and why this tax is needed. Virginia will help us ask people to come and testify since we cannot lobby.

Next Meeting: August 25th 12:30 – 2:30 at DLC, Guest: Kelly Ault
September 22nd 12:30 – 2:30 at DLC – FALL RETREAT
October 27th 12:30 – 2:30 at DLC
Nov/Dec meeting TBA

Save the Date- April 19th, 2011, Awareness Day at the State House

Adjourned 2:00

Respectfully submitted: Ann Gilbert