

City of Fort Lauderdale

*City Hall
100 North Andrews Avenue
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301
www.fortlauderdale.gov*



Meeting Minutes – DRAFT

Tuesday, January 20, 2016

12:00 PM

Joint Workshop – Juvenile Justice

City Commission Conference Room

CITY COMMISSION WORKSHOP

FORT LAUDERDALE CITY COMMISSION

***JOHN P. "JACK" SEILER Mayor - Commissioner
ROBERT L. McKINZIE Vice Mayor-Commissioner - District III
BRUCE G. ROBERTS Commissioner - District I
DEAN J. TRANTALIS Commissioner - District II
ROMNEY ROGERS Commissioner - District IV***

***LEE R. FELDMAN, City Manager
JOHN HERBST, City Auditor
JEFFREY A. MODARELLI, City Clerk
CYNTHIA A. EVERETT, City Attorney***

Juvenile Justice Workshop Meeting was called to order at 12:15 p.m. by Mayor Seiler.

ATTENDANCE ROLL CALL

Present: 5 - Mayor John P. "Jack" Seiler, Vice-Mayor Robert L. McKinzie, Commissioner Bruce G. Roberts, Commissioner Dean J. Trantalis and Commissioner Romney Rogers

QUORUM ESTABLISHED

Also Present: City Manager Lee R. Feldman, City Auditor John Herbst, City Clerk Jonda K. Joseph, and City Attorney Cynthia A. Everett

Overview:

City Manager Feldman gave the City Commission a brief overview of how the City attained the assistance of the Department of Justice's ("DOJ") Office of Justice Programming Diagnostic Center (the "Diagnostic Center") to address juvenile justice issues in the City. Back at the beginning of 2014, in response to increases in repeat offenders associated with juvenile crime, the Commission expressed concern and what could be done to address the problem of juvenile crime in the City.

Mr. Feldman said Commissioner Trantalis had organized a meeting of Juvenile Judges and invited both the State Attorney's Office and the Public Defender's Office. At that time, it was clear all parties had the same concerns but no solutions or the data to support solutions.

Commissioner Roberts and Mr. Feldman had the opportunity to attend a session at the National League of Cities where they heard a presentation on how the Department of Justice was embracing data and offering a program where they would provide support to local communities' municipalities to arrive at data-driven solutions for problems regarding juvenile justice issues. Mr. Feldman further explored this opportunity and submitted an application to the Office of Justice Programming's Diagnostic Center to ascertain if they could provide the City with a data-driven solution to the City's juvenile justice issues.

The City's application was accepted and beginning in late 2014. In early 2015, the City kicked-off this initiative with local partners. Those partners included the State Attorney's Office, Juvenile Judges, the local Department of Juvenile Justice, and the Public Defender's Office with the assistance of the DOJ's Office of Justice Programs Diagnostic Center.

This Workshop encompasses the Diagnostic Center's initial findings and recommendations for the City's next steps. City Manager Feldman requested the Commission's feedback after the presentation with the goal of coming back to the Commission with additional information, programs, and potential budget requests for the upcoming session.

Paula Romo, Senior Performance Analyst introduced Patty Dobbs-Hodges from the Diagnostic Center. Ms. Hodges explained their office was an assistance resource to help communities use their collected data to bridge the gap between evidence from research and evidence-based activities into practical solutions. Ms. Hodges further the ability of the Diagnostic Center to work across the criminal justice system on a long-term basis partnering with the City to bring forth recommendations and implementation of solutions and activities on the ground.

Ms. Hodges gave the PowerPoint presentation to the Commission, and *a copy of the presentation is attached to these minutes.*

Commissioner Rogers asked if any interviews were done as part of the data gathering. Ms. Hodges confirmed approximately 30 interviews had been done with the City Manager's office, the Police Department, the Public Defender's Office, the Courts, the State Attorney's Office, Children's Services and others.

Ms. Hodges noted the crime data was not looked at beyond the City stating that data sharing with neighboring areas could be a cumbersome process. She also emphasized it is important to partner numerous strategies to address the problem of juvenile crimes.

Naheel Baker, Crime Analysis Supervisor, Fort Lauderdale Police Department addressed the Commission regarding the gathered data stating the data initially used the City's old records management system and there were some issues with multiple names having different variations. Ms. Baker stated the data was subsequently submitted based solely on fingerprints.

It was also stated there are some areas in the City that are unique to juvenile crime most notably around schools pointing out that in high crime areas there are both adult and juvenile offenders. Additionally, focusing on the street level analysis of where crimes are occurring allows the coordination of the stakeholders at the location and law enforcement to address remedies for juvenile crime. City Manager Feldman said that it would be important to work with school resource officers to address juvenile crime in the areas around schools.

An important point was made regarding the great length of time for juvenile offenders to get through the entire process from arrest to adjudication. Furthermore, in order make a real difference in repeat juvenile offenders, it is important for the juvenile offender to make the connection from the time of being arrested to understanding the consequences of committing a crime that court adjudication provides. When this does not happen in a reasonable timeframe, the juvenile offender often repeats the crime not having had the opportunity to understand the consequences of their behavior.

One of the Diagnostic Center's recommendations is there is more opportunity to marry all of the recommended strategies together. This problem solving is based on very specific information at very specific locations to identify and tackle the problems, solutions, and resources that can go to a particular location focusing on a particular criminal activity.

Commissioner Trantalis asked about the continuum of oversight to try to ensure juveniles do not commit a crime. Ms. Hodges said the oversight needs to be much more systematic and coordinated at the City level for things that are in the City's purview and responses unique to the particular situations. An ongoing strategy should include a framework of having a coordinated effort on the City level with other partner agencies and stakeholders who need to come to the table to address the juvenile crime issues in the City.

Commissioner Trantalis noted that enforcement measure is at odds with rehabilitation efforts from different areas of the community. Ms. Hodges acknowledged there was a need to do both.

Recommendations and Solutions

Ms. Hodges stated activities to address the juvenile crime problem include bringing technical assistance and training to both City focused activities and system-focused activities. The recommendation for City-focused activities includes coordinating a group across the City comprised of people who are decision makers who can bring the resources of their agency to the table.

From a strategic perspective, the objective is to bring forth the goals and action items to develop particular strategies to address police enforcement, mentoring activities, and youth-focused types of activities that keep kids out of criminal activity.

The Diagnostic Center can assist the City in developing and coordinating a youth mentoring program for at-risk juveniles that is an across-the-board, City-focused group consisting of both City personnel and community people addressing the City's issues encompassing the at-risk kids who live in Fort Lauderdale.

The Diagnostic Center can also assist in developing a consistent City-wide strategy to identify the required training and background, and developing consistent, focused messaging to address the problem of at-risk juveniles. This will allow all participants to be on the same page and talking about this issue from the same perspective so as to identify and solidify what the strategy in a manner everyone can clearly understand the common goals and desired outcomes.

This project also provides an opportunity for the identification of legal, policy, and cultural hurdles and provides an opportunity to work through these challenges. The Diagnostic Center can facilitate these discussions and help the City do things differently in the community. This process will also allow for an opportunity for all to reach a consensus with which to move forward; one that is worked out and agreed upon by the entire community and all stakeholders to prevent roadblocks from occurring as has happened in the past. An example of the need for this was given by City Manager Feldman stating that in the past, there seemed to be resistance from the Public Defender's Office on having police officers work with probation officers or doing any sort of social work with juveniles. This was due to the fact that the Public Defender's Office did not feel that it was an appropriate role for police officers as it may lead to the intimidation of juveniles.

This program provides an opportunity at both the policy level and the case management level to coordinate services and strategies. An example of this would include a more holistic approach of services, i.e., potentially serving the entire family, if necessary, to result in a more successful outcome. An important point was made regarding after a juvenile's arrest, the police department should hand-off the situation to the next step in an agreed upon, developed and stated process based on a consensus by all stakeholders ensuring that the needs of the offender are addressed to prevent repeat offenses from occurring.

The Diagnostic Center also offers youth-focused policing strategies and new training developed by the International Chiefs of Police. This latest research indicates the approach to youth is very different and needs to be thought about and addressed. As an example, Ms. Hodges emphasized there is new information and research regarding youth brain development including: how youth perceive authority; how they interact; how they want their voices to be heard; and, their need to perceive things as fair. The Diagnostic Center can offer the opportunity to do training and information sharing that imparts this latest research information to the people who deal with juveniles, i.e., recreation staff, volunteers, mentors, and school personnel to ensure they have the latest information and tools when it comes to

dealing with and communicating to juveniles.

Ms. Hodges also recommended the City establish a Youth Group to give the City a voice from youth to provide input and information as to what works and what does not work. Good examples of where these recommendations have worked include the City of Boston where there is a partnership between the police department, the city and community resources. Another good example is the City of Hampton, Virginia, which has a Youth Council allowing the youth to have a voice enabling dialogue between youth and the City as a whole, not just the police department and youth.

The Diagnostic Center can also provide an opportunity for the City to do some peer exchanges to and to visit other communities who have implemented these strategies successfully. They can also provide assistance with communication messaging noting that the City currently has "facts" in their research but not many "messages" (heart centered messages) to demonstrate to the community that juveniles are important.

System focused resources the Diagnostic Center can additionally provide include focused coordination, training and problem-solving with key partners that can be a collaborative effort with stakeholder members of the community. An example of this is a homeowner associations and the police department in a particular neighborhood instituting a pilot program to address a particular juvenile crime issue. If that pilot program is successful, it could then be implemented City-wide.

Mayor Seiler stated he felt this is the direction the City needs take.

Commissioner Rogers said the dynamic he struggles with is the human nature aspect of the youth in that juvenile offenders seem to be aware that until they turn 18, there is no impediment to continuing unlawful acts and this needs to be addressed at the State legislative level. He also stated that he is very impressed with the demeanor, mindset, and professionalism of the young officers in the City's Police Department and believe they could have a big impact on at-risk juveniles.

Commissioner Roberts reiterated his concern with the lag time between arrest and adjudication and how we address this interim time to prevent continued unlawful acts. He would like to see a strategic plan in place including work with probation and parole departments. He was anxious to move forward with action plans and the possibility of a juvenile unit within the City's Police Department. Ms. Hodges noted information sharing regarding juvenile offenders within the police department is necessary and should be expected. She stated this should be an easy process to accomplish and suggested perhaps having an individual to oversee the juvenile process within the police department as an effective way to share this information and to hand-off the information to the next stakeholder in the strategy to address the needs of at-risk juvenile offenders. Discussions ensued on this topic.

Mayor Seiler wanted to make it clear repeat offenders should be the focus and is where the disconnection seems to occur stating he is for leniency for first-time offenders and consistent enforcement for repeat offenders. Additionally, he was concerned those serving on a youth committee are not those that participate in the juvenile crime. Ms. Hodges wanted the City to be thinking about how to have the appropriate interaction and discussion to deter at-risk-youth, so they are part of the solution.

Mayor Seiler asked about the NAACP Youth Council. Vice-Mayor McKinzie stated that it is a cross-section of youth that is reflective of the community.

City Manager Feldman said the next step is for City Staff to come back to the Commission with an Action Plan on where they think the next pieces need to be and what additional work needs to be done in terms of developing or researching what has been successful in other areas of the country that the City can duplicate in addition to what the City can initiate on our own. Mr. Feldman also stated it is integral that City Staff can rely on the Mayor and the City Commission to assist other partnerships and stakeholders' cooperation.

Commissioner Rogers stated it was an opportunity to come up with a message to the community on this subject. Commissioner Roberts concurred adding it needs to be unified message from all partners and stakeholders involved.

Vice-Mayor McKinzie noted that Gordon Meeks was in attendance and would be a good resource for input on this program as well as dialogue with the community on this topic. Mayor Seiler asked that Mr. Meeks be given a full copy of the DOJ's Office of Justice Programs Diagnostic Center Report.

Mayor Seiler asked for coordination from all partners and stakeholders for an efficient, effect way to handle this issue. It was agreed that City Staff would work with the Diagnostic Center to move things forward and will come back to the Commission with an implementation plan.

Mayor Seiler requested this be back on the Conference Agenda for discussion before the April/May timeframe to identify all interested parties, stakeholders, and partners to ensure the cooperation of all parties involved and inviting everyone involved to be at the table.

A complete copy of the presentation is attached to these minutes.