

**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

**RESEARCH DIVISION**

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**TASK FORCE ON SAFETY AND CRIME REDUCTION**

**SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRS’ MEETING MINUTES**

**Lynwood Roberts Room, 1st floor, City Hall**

**February 15, 2019**

**9:00 a.m.**

**Location:** Lynwood Roberts Room, City Hall – St. James Building; 117 West Duval Street

**In attendance:** Rev. Mark Griffin (Chair), Ronnie King, Frank Denton, W.C. Gentry, Michael Munz, Ellen Glasser, Sabrina Edwards, Joe Peppers, Jennifer Blalock (arr. 9:28), Lakesha Burton (arr. 10:06)

**Also**: City Council President Aaron Bowman, Jeff Clements – Council Research Division; Carol Owens, Jessica Smith and Crystal Shemwell – Legislative Services Division; Kirby Oberdorfer – Ethics Office

**Meeting Convened**: 9:02 a.m.

Chairman Griffin called the meeting to order and the attendees introduced themselves for the record, briefly describing their personal background and interest in serving on the Task Force.

Council President Bowman offered his services as an “enabler” to break down barriers, procure resources and assistance, and otherwise assist the Task Force in its work. He noted that legislation was approved by the City Council on Tuesday evening as a first reading emergency to alter the membership of the Task Force to designate some of the members as non-voting liaison members to enable them to avoid Government in the Sunshine Law restrictions in speaking to each other in their professional capacities. Chairman Griffin thanked President Bowman for his support for the Task Force’s work. W.C. Gentry related the history of the City and City Council tackling difficult and unpopular issues in the past (i.e. removing the odor problem in the 1990s) and the fundamental importance of leadership in making a difference for the community.

Kirby Oberdorfer of the City Ethics Office addressed several Government in the Sunshine issues including the ability of subcommittees to meet outside of City Hall (preferably should be in public buildings like libraries or community centers rather than in private facilities). Pastor Griffin noted that meetings must be recorded and minutes taken, so the ability of facilities to accommodate that fact must be considered. ADA accessibility is also required. Task Force members were cautioned to avoid talking about issues that are or may come before the task force outside of noticed meetings; multiple members may be in a context where they receive information, but are cautioned not to engage in discussion. Ms. Oberdorfer explained the impact of the City Council ordinance passed this week designating some members as liaison members, thus freeing them from the strict application of the Government in the Sunshine Law. The group asked Ms. Oberdorfer for clarification of the status of the liaisons. Mr. Gentry and Ms. Glasser said that if those persons are chairing subcommittees, it hardly seems possible that they could be construed not to be influencing the work of the subcommittees and the task force and therefore exempt from Sunshine Law restrictions; Ms. Oberdorfer agreed to do further research on the subject and report back. She reminded the group that exchanging e-mails among members on substantive task force issues is a violation of the Sunshine Law, and using “reply all” to respond to e-mails sent out as a permissible information transmission can lead to a violation. Extreme caution in replying to messages is always advised to avoid a problem.

Crystal Shemwell of the Legislative Services Division said that she is receiving replies to her query to the Task Force members about their availability for meetings and will compile the responses when most are received for the chairs to use in setting their meeting schedules.

Chairman Griffin said that he will be asking the Council Research Division and the Sheriff’s Office for research into shifting patterns in crime locations and spikes over time. He hopes that recommendations can be developed to deploy public resources for preventive purposes to areas where problems are beginning to develop to deal with crime in a way that is analogous to the JSO deploying extra enforcement resources to deal with spikes in crime on the enforcement side. A comprehensive inventory of already available programs and resources will be helpful in determining where there may be gaps in coverage.

Michael Munz said that he has explored what research already exists with regard to his subcommittee’s topic and distributed a document summarizing that research. He asked Dawn Lockhart of the Mayor’s Office to discuss the Mayor’s career pathways initiative (funded by the Kresge Foundation) to promote youth employment. That initiative is being imbedded in the Kids Hope Alliance’s work. She said that the engagement and investment of the private sector is crucial to success – government can’t carry the load alone and the business sector has a vested interest in helping produce the workforce of the future. The School Board and Chamber of Commerce have done considerable work on targeted industries and career academies, but additional private participation and investment is crucial. Mr. Munz said that this work has extended over several mayoral administrations and that continuity is vital. Jennifer Blaylock said that career pathway programs need to be long-term and continuous, not just one-time summer jobs with no connection to future career planning.

Ronnie King asked what kind of crime the Task Force is interested in tackling – is it just murder and rape, or all kinds of crime? He cautioned against a stereotypical assumption that young black males are the root of the violence problem and need to be the sole focus of the solution. Chairman Griffin said that the Task Force will be data-driven and will go where the data takes it, and will focus primarily on violent crime. He asked the committees to try to meet before the full Task Force meeting on March 8th to begin identifying issues in their particular study area. Joe Peppers urged a continuous focus on the causes of crime and urged the task force to hear directly from youth about their experiences and ideas. Mr. Griffin said that thought needs to be given to how to involve youth. Who should be involved? Youth who have already been involved in crime? How should they be recruited? When and where can they meet? Should they be full members or advisory members? A lot of considerations are involved. Michael Munz cautioned against stereotyping the causes and perpetrators of crime; Jacksonville has a violence problem that crosses all ages, genders, races, and geographic areas so the solutions are not just going to involve addressing just one of those factors. In response to a concern from Mr. Munz about the suggestion that the subcommittees should have something to report at the Task Force meeting of March 8th, Chairman Griffin said that he was looking for the subcommittees to begin organizing and to tell the task force what issues they intended to study and report on. Mr. Gentry said that a focus on youth makes sense because that’s how prevention efforts will work best, but that’s just one aspect of the group’s work.

Public Comment

A speaker asked for clarity on the Sunshine Law restrictions as they relate to liaisons and subject matter experts. She announced that a Black Youth Forum will be held this Saturday, which offers a great opportunity to hear a youth perspective.

Chairman Griffin asked staff to send out the link to the Task Force data web page again and encouraged members to consult it regularly.

A speaker said that the Task Force needs to follow where the data leads – identify where and who the problems are and dedicate the resources necessary to attack the problem. Deal with problems holistically and take advantage of the work that’s already being done.

A speaker said there’s no place for the public on the Task Force’s meeting agenda. She said that existing in-school and after-school programs are insufficient and don’t provide the services they’re supposed to be providing.

A speaker said that crime and violence issues have been studied for decades. We know what the problems are, what’s needed is leadership to actually do something with what we already know.

**Meeting adjourned:** 10:14 a.m.

Minutes: Jeff Clements, Council Research Division

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2.15.19 Posted 5:00 p.m.

Tape: Task Force on Safety and Crime Reduction subcommittee chairs meeting 2.15.19 – LSD