

**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

**RESEARCH DIVISION**

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**CITY COUNCIL LUNCH AND LEARN MEETING MINUTES**

**SEX TRAFFICKING**

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

**February 3, 2020**

**12:00 p.m.**

**Location:** Lynwood Roberts Room, 1st floor, City Hall – St. James Building, 117 West Duval Street

**In attendance:** Council Members LeAnna Cumber (Chair), Matt Carlucci, Tommy Hazouri, Randy White, Sam Newby, Michael Boylan, Aaron Bowman, Joyce Morgan, Scott Wilson, Terrance Freeman (arr. 12:28)

**Excused**: Council Member Ron Salem

**Also**: Peggy Sidman and Paige Johnston – Office of General Counsel; Steve Cassada, Melanie Wilkes and Carol Owens – Council Support Services; Jeff Clements and Yvonne Mitchell – Council Research Division; Keith Powers – Fire and Rescue Department

**Meeting Convened**: 12:08 p.m.

Council Member Hazouri convened the meeting and introduced the topic. Jacksonville is one of the top 3 cities in the state for sex trafficking, and Florida is one of the top 3 states in the nation, so Jacksonville faces a very serious situation. Council Member Cumber thanked the subject matter experts attending the meeting today to share their expertise:

Kirby Wedekind – Protective Security Advisor, Department of Homeland Security

C.J. Goodman – FBI Jacksonville office

Toshua Williams – Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Department of Homeland Security

Jamie Rosseland – sex trafficking survivor and activist

Unnamed Jacksonville Sheriff’s Office officers via telephone

Ms. Cumber said that she had just returned from a trip to Washington and President Trump is focused on this issue and will be proposing hundreds of millions of dollars in the next budget to combat the problem of sex trafficking. The impact of the crime doesn’t end with the crime itself but has long-reaching effects on those involved. The issue has long been in the shadows and that needs to change.

Ms. Cumber outlined the contents of the Ordinance Code amendment she has just introduced. It incorporates: training for persons in the hotel industry; expanded signage requirements; adult entertainment establishment dancer training and a dancer identification card requirement; increase the minimum age for adult entertainment establishment dancers from 18 to 21; and creates a Sex Trafficking Survivors’ council to advise and report regularly to the City.

C.J. Goodman of the FBI’s Jacksonville office said that Florida has always been a top 3 state for human trafficking. The answer to the problem has to be partnerships among many agencies. Mr. Goodman addressed several myths that surround the subject of human trafficking. The majority of those trafficked are *not* illegal immigrants, they’re US citizens. The FBI has 1,900 pending trafficking cases nationwide, 44 in the Jacksonville office. Trafficking does *not* happen only in “seedy” industries – it’s in every kind of industry and workplace. Human trafficking is *not* usually perpetrated by strangers – mostly it’s done by people known by those being trafficked. He cited the Innocence Loss National Initiative (2003) which has resulted in over 3,600 children being recovered and 1,350 traffickers being convicted. The FBI works with many state and local agencies in this field. Mr. Goodman noted the Be Smart With Your Kids smartphone safety campaign; many trafficking cases start with cellphone contacts. He concluded by saying that human trafficking is a tremendous problem and it’s here in Jacksonville.

Tasha Weems of the Department of Homeland Security said that Florida has a huge problem with both sex trafficking and labor trafficking. Some of those exploited are illegal aliens and that’s a way that traffickers control them, by threatening them with deportation. The Blue Campaign is a national anti-human trafficking public awareness campaign, with informational materials available to anyone interested. The goal is to educate the public of what to be aware of and signs to look for in their everyday lives. Homeland Security works with international agencies and police forces and non-governmental organizations around the world. She echoed Mr. Goodman’s comments about being fooled by myths and stereotypes into thinking that human trafficking is foreign nationals tied up in in the backs of trucks; in reality it is regular American citizens going about regular activities who are often the victims. Homeland Security works to actively break up trafficking organizations and dismantle their operations. A victim-centered approach is important in their investigations, providing victims with all they help and support they need. Every special agent in charge office has a victim assistance specialist and a specially trained trauma interviewer on staff who know how to deal with these cases and their victims. Partnerships across agencies are vitally important to deal with the problem.

Two unnamed Sheriff’s Office investigators (an Integrity Unit sergeant and a Vice Unit sergeant) participated in the meeting via telephone to retain their anonymity due to their undercover work. They said the typical trafficking case starts with development of a relationship, often romantic, between the trafficker and the potential victim (Romeo syndrome), which then escalates into control of the victim by the provision of drugs. There’s a frequent transition from dancing in adult entertainment clubs to prostitution. JSO has inspected all adult entertainment establishments in the past year and has arrested many women under the age of 21, often with alcohol and drugs provided by club personnel. They see lots of 18 year old girls dancing in the clubs in the summer after they graduate from high school and before they start college or work. The age 21 requirement for dancers would be a big help in tackling that problem. Some other counties have the age 21 requirement, so Jacksonville attracts those under 21 who can’t work elsewhere. The majority of human trafficking cases in Jacksonville are through very sophisticated organizations, and those trafficked are usually housed in hotels (of all kinds, from very upscale to very cheap). A key component of the Cumber ordinance is training for hospitality industry personnel to let them know what’s happening, what to look for, and how to prevent it. The non-profit organizations working in this field are an invaluable help to JSO in dealing with victims’ needs.

Jamie Rosalind, a trafficking survivor and anti-trafficking activist, told the story of her situation in 2013, which took over 2 years to recover from after her exploitation ended, to find a decent job, to find people who wanted to help her directly with housing, transportation, etc. A lot of her recovery was luck in finding the right people, including the Rethreaded organization, which helped her develop good work skills and find good jobs. She’s involved in the anti-trafficking movement through several organizations and has spoken at several national events to tell her story. A big part of her problem was not being seen as a victim but as part of the problem. It took her 4 years to get her criminal record expunged. Victims have not been at the forefront of the anti-trafficking movement and have not had a seat at the table in Jacksonville. There has been a lot of movement and improvement in the situation in Jacksonville in the last 5 years – Rethreaded and the Delores Barr Weaver Policy Institute in particular – but there’s much further to go. Society needs to attack the demand side of the equation rather than the supply side.

Council Member Hazouri said the signage element of the bill is not new, but is expanded to more locations. He thinks restaurants need to be part of the signage initiative as well in addition to hotels. The Florida Legislature has passed a data dashboard system to go into effect in 2021 to track people involved in the trafficking industry.

Council President Wilson suggested adding a requirement for signage at gas stations, especially those that have restrooms accessible from outside the building. Ms. Cumber agreed that was a great idea. Mr. Wilson asked about the possibility of amending Ordinance Code Chapter 150 to provide for suspension of licenses for violations of that chapter in the context of human trafficking enforcement. Ms. Cumber will explore that option with Jason Teal of the General Counsel’s office. She also noted the importance of the Survivors Council as a key feature of the bill.

In response to a question from Council Member Boylan about how trafficking happens in non-sex industries, Toshua Williams gave examples of a woman brought in from another country on the premise of being a nanny who was forced into sex work. Labor trafficking is often for purposes of agriculture in rural areas (victims are threatened with ICE deportation if they talk). She offered several tips for the average person to look in spotting a potential trafficking situation. Very subservient behavior is often a sign of a trafficking victim (not making eye contact with anyone in public, not speaking to anyone, walking a step or two behind their companion, nervously waiting outside a business establishment when the companion goes inside).

Council Member Bowman returned to the idea of controlling the demand side of the sex industry equation. He knows that Houston has adopted an innovative program and he’s talked to the Sheriff and wants to explore options. He may schedule a noticed meeting for anyone interested in the topic. Ms. Cumber said she has talked to businesses in her district about holding lunch-and-learns to train their employees about trafficking and about declaring their businesses to be zero tolerance companies for trafficking – any employee caught at an adult club or procuring sex during the business day would be automatically fired.

Council Member Morgan said the demand for the sex trade is huge and that side of the equation has to be attacked. She asked for more details about who pays for the required signage and ID cards. The hotel or club is responsible for posting required signs; the dancer pays for the via the dancer identification card via their application fee. Ms. Morgan asked why the JSO keeps the names of the clubs confidential and doesn’t publicize them when arrests are made at those establishments. The JSO officers said that the arrest report is all a matter of public information, but they don’t actively disseminate it. In response to a question from Ms. Morgan about whether prostitution is considered as trafficking, Ms. Cumber said it is if the person involved is being handled by another person or if the worker is under age 18 (that’s automatic). Jacksonville is one of the last of the big cities in the state that doesn’t require dancer ID cards. A violation would accrue to both the dancer and the club for allowing a dancer to perform without a card.

Council Member White suggested designating firehouses as “safe spaces” for trafficking victims to turn themselves in and training JFRD on how to handle those situations.

Council Member Newby advocated for stronger penalties for the men who procure prostitutes and big fines for clubs that use dancers without ID cards. The JSO officers said there is a $250 fine for each dancer without proper documentation and fines for the club owner and manager as well. Mr. Newby felt those fine amounts were too small to be truly deterrent.

Public Comment

A speaker who works in the health care field asked about the health care aspect of trafficking – what can health care professionals do to help attack the problem? Jamie Rosseland said that some states in the western U.S. have peer specialists (survivors) who work with health care systems to be a liaison to connect victims with needed services. C.J. Goodman said most of the federal agencies have personnel who are happy to come out and provide training to groups and businesses; they’ll come if invited. Tasha Williams said the Blue Program has a pamphlet specifically designed to inform health care providers.

Council Member Hazouri said the City hasn’t yet addressed anti-trafficking programs for restaurants and farms on the local level and that needs to be done. The school system does have a trafficking information program for schools.

Council Member Cumber announced the she and Mr. Bowman will be having a future Lunch and Learn on the subject of election security with Kirby Wedekind from Homeland Security.

**Meeting adjourned:** 1:25 p.m.

Minutes: Jeff Clements, Council Research Division

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