



**JACKSONVILLE CITY COUNCIL  
RESEARCH DIVISION**

Special Committee on the Opioid Epidemic  
Meeting Minutes

Thursday, May 14, 2020  
2:00 PM  
Virtual Meeting via Zoom – No Physical Location

**Special Committee on the Opioid Epidemic**

**CM Ron Salem, Pharm.D., Chairman**

**CM Michael Boylan**

**CVP Tommy Hazouri**

**CM Brenda Priestly-Jackson**

**CM Randy White**

## **Meeting: Special Committee on the Opioid Epidemic**

**Meeting Convened: 2:02 pm**

**Meeting Adjourned: 3:26 pm**

Chairman Salem welcomed the group, reviewed the agenda and mentioned a potential future collaboration between the City's opioid program and Florida Blue.

### **Project Save Lives Update - Dr. Raymond Pomm**

Dr. Pomm provided an update on Project Save Lives: since it began in November of 2017 there have been 6 participants who died from opioid related causes; there are currently 299 actively engaged (48 who are in residential/outpatient treatment and 251 who are working with peer support specialists). Dr. Pomm also spoke about the impact of the COVID 19 health emergency on the program, and the strain current conditions put on those struggling with opioid addiction. Dr. Pomm discussed what may be an increase in overdoses due to deaths of despair, enhanced by health concerns and job losses. Gateway has had to decrease capacity to keep patients safe and healthy, but this also decreases services available to those in need. There is the possibility of rolling out a coronavirus antibody screening for patients which would allow them to share inpatient rooms.

### **Report on overdose trends – Asst. Chief Rowley & Chief Castleman, JFRD**

Chief Castleman, JFRD, spoke about the twenty percent increase in overdose responses since February. Reviewing the data from the same two month period in 2019, some zip codes have seen decreases in OD responses and some have seen increases as compared, possibly related to the pandemic and stay at home restrictions (32218 and 32254 are down, 32219, 32210 and 32250 are much higher). Chief Castleman also said that all contracts between the City and UF Health related to Project Save Lives are finalized.

Asst. Chief Mark Rowley, JFRD, spoke about overdose data trends since the safe at home order in Jacksonville on March 13, 2020. From March 13 to May 13, there were 36 percent more calls for overdoses, roughly 15 calls per day. Asst. Chief Rowley and Dr. Pomm commented on the increase in alcohol use during this period also, as well as domestic violence and child removal due to endangerment.

Ms. Viafora Ray, JFRD director for the Safe and Healthy Neighborhood project, spoke about sober living homes, which are under capacity due to individuals' inability to pay because of pandemic related job losses. Ms. Viafora Ray also discussed the federal grant funds awarded to Jacksonville to expand access to, and increase education about, Narcan. The distribution plan for the Narcan doses is city-wide, but targets those with the greatest risks in the highest impacted areas of Jacksonville. It was said that there will be virtual Narcan training sessions and open air distribution centers in response to the coronavirus.

### **Update on Opioid Lawsuit - Tiffany Pinkstaff, Office of General Counsel**

Tiffany Pinkstaff provided an update on the City's lawsuit against opioid pharmaceutical companies. Settlement discussions are currently stalled, with hopes for some action this summer. Ms. Pinkstaff said that there is no set structure for the distribution of settlement funds in Florida but that in Ohio they plan to give 30 percent to localities.

### **Report from Sheriff's Office - Steve Gallaher, JSO**

Steve Gallaher, JSO, provided an update on enforcement strategies as related to the pandemic and the increase in overdose death/homicide investigations. The pandemic has somewhat slowed the supply chains from Mexico and China. JSO responded to 27 overdose death calls in April 2020 and 19 calls in April of 2019. Patrol Zones 2, 3 and 4 have the highest frequencies of OD deaths. There have been 4 homicide arrests in 2020 for OD deaths.

### **Report from State Attorney's Office**

Tim Quick, State Attorney's Office, conveyed Melissa Nelson's commitment to the opioid epidemic issue.

### **Report on data collection - Dr. Lori Billelo, UF Health**

Dr. Billelo, UF Health, spoke about data collection methodologies and how they are attempting to track outcomes for patients who refuse services from Project Save Lives.

### **E-Cigarettes and Vaping Epidemic Discussion - Council Member Ron Salem**

CM Salem talked briefly about the public awareness campaign to inform residents, especially youth, about the dangers of vaping. This campaign is the result of a public-private partnership with \$100,000 from the City and \$100,000 from private donors. The City issued an RFP to solicit bids from advertising and public relations firms to put together a campaign to have in schools this fall.

Beth Payne, CEO of NEFL Regional Council, spoke about regional collaboration in the opioid epidemic and possible upcoming online symposiums.

CM Priestly Jackson reiterated the concerns about deaths of despair and recommended the book, *Deaths of Despair and the Future of Capitalism* by Angus Deaton and Anne Case.

CM Hazouri mentioned the opioid trust fund and his hopes that local companies will start to donate.

### **Comments from the public (time permitting)**

None

With no further business, Chairman Salem adjourned the meeting at 3:26 pm.

Minutes: Colleen Hampsey, Council Research

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