

**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

**ZOOM VIRTUAL ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING**

**(NO PHYSICAL LOCATION)**

**CM JOYCE MORGAN CM BOYLAN**

**SAFER TOGETHER MINUTES**

**JANUARY 28, 2021**

**6:00 pm**

Meeting Convened: 6:01 pm Meeting Adjourned: 7:46 pm

Attendance: CMs Morgan, Boylan, DeFoor, Priestly Jackson, and Salem

Also: Peggy Sidman, Office of General Counsel; Richard Distel, Council Research; Dr. Tammy Hodo and Dr. Brian Van Brunt

CM Boylan started the meeting and talked about the struggle of tackling the issues of community policing, and law enforcement policies, procedures, and budgeting by having important conversations. CM Boylan reiterated the statements that Council President Hazouri made regarding the bringing the community together and the goals of these workshops. CM Boylan talked about the need for understanding individual citizens’ stories and the difficult work done by the police. CM Boylan said it is about having empathy on both sides. CM Boylan said the discussions will cover community policing, the Sherriff’s’ Office budget, hearing stories from the community, diversionary programs and the recruiting and hiring process at JSO.

Pastor Mark Griffin talked about his work as the chair of the Safety and Crime Reduction Commission, the history of the commission and what work they have been doing regarding employment, mental health and other factors in order reduce crime issues in the city. He emphasized that the commission members are very diverse and with funds in this fiscal year budget, they have been able to hire their first full time administrator to help manage the workload.

CM Salem talked about overdoses and mental health issues that are being worked on by the Opioid Epidemic, Vaping & Mental Health Resources Special Committee. First, he talked about Project Save Lives, an opioid program that provides services for the treatment of drug addiction and is focused on reducing overdose deaths. PSL is now in operation in 6 different emergency rooms across Jacksonville. After the patient is stabilized from their drug overdose, they are asked if they would like to go into treatment (traditional residential treatment and/or peer specialist services). This program has had roughly 1,800 patients join the program and there have only been 8 overdose deaths among participants since the program's inception in 2017. CM Salem also talked about an awareness initiative to educate teens and parents on the dangers of vaping, funded by the City in partnership with Daily’s. The campaign will feature a website, VapingGetsUgly.com, along with public service announcements, signs inside stores and social media accounts.

CM Salem detailed the Mental Health Offender Program. This is a partnership between the City, Sulzbacher Center, and the Sheriff’s Office which will target misdemeanor arrests by persons that have mental health problems. This will create an alternative to jail which offers wraparound services to assist with housing, jobs, mental health care and other services as needed to help them be productive members of society. This kind of program has been very successful in Miami.

CM Priestly Jackson, Social Justice and Community Investment Committee Co-Chair, talked about the charges of the committee. CM Priestly Jackson said that this committee is mostly focused on social injustice, law enforcement and economic development.

Kendra Mervin, Mayor's Community Based Crime Reduction Program, talked about the overarching goals of the program and that it is focused on crime reduction. This program needs feedback from the community to be beneficial to reducing crime.

CM Morgan introduced Dr. Tammy Hodo, diversity consultant and President of All Things Diverse LLC., as the facilitator for upcoming workshops. CM Morgan detailed Dr. Hodo’s background and explained how it matches with the goals of this workshop. Dr. Hodo talked about the current work she is doing for social injustice, and said that the slogan “Defund the Police” is really about the need for mental health work to be done in the community and other alternatives to policing. Dr. Hodo talked about the process of community policing and said that it is built on mutual respect and there needs to be buy-in on both sides. Dr. Hodo also talked about the segregation in housing that still exists currently.

Dr. Hodo introduced, Dr. Brian Van Brunt, a consultant and mental health provider who will be the second facilitator for these workshops. Dr. Brunt talked about his history with marginalized populations. Dr. Van Brunt talked about the rise in mental health issues that have increased due to the pandemic. Dr. Hodo and Dr. Van Brunt submitted a proposal which outlined how they would help as facilitators.

CM Boylan said due to the timeline that the aim should be to focus on community policing in the workshops. CM Morgan said that there can be many different definitions of community policing and the workshops are about discussing those visions and having difficult conversations.

Director Mike Bruno, Director of Investigations & Homeland Security at the Jacksonville Sheriff’s Office, said he looks forward to working with the community and said the important part is listening to the community.

Carnell Oliver talked about citizen complaints and issues in getting a response from the Sheriff’s Office. Mr. Oliver talked about police officer recruiting in minority communities, so police officers could serve in the communities in which they live.

Stanley Scott said his concern is about the leadership in the city and that we do the same thing with these meetings and nothing gets done. He said he is appalled that JSO speaks before members from the community. Mr. Scott wants empathy for the African American community. Mr. Scott said he is against the message of Defund the Police.

Bobbie O’Connor said that structural racism is alive and well in Jacksonville.

Dr. Hodo said we need to recognize structural racism as a reality and work within that framework. Dr. Hodo asked about the demographics of the police force in Jacksonville and wondered if it matches the population demographics. She said she would like those statistics from JSO.

Dr. Kimberly Allen, CEO of 904WARD, talked about unpacking the hurtful and racist history in Jacksonville and thanked Dr. Hodo for her work.

Lorne Richardson emphasized the need for education between the community and the police. He talked about the historical racial anxiety that exists in Jacksonville and about how policing is so different in each part of the city.

Mr. Oliver said it is about policy and accountability. He said that lack of education leads to distrust in the community that an officer serves. Dr. Hodo reiterated the feelings of Mr. Oliver and spoke about the trauma and stress from living in lower income areas. Dr. Hodo talked about the history of Jacksonville. Dr. Brunt said he would like to follow up calls to listen to the concerns and that this is about listening.

Wendy Byndloss, Human Rights Commission, talked about the importance of education on this issue and the need for transparency in the actions from these workshops. She talked about reinstituting study circles for small group dialogue about racism. CM Morgan talked about getting community engagement and young people getting involved. CM Morgan and CM Boylan talked about possibly holding a news conference or putting out a press release to help get the word out about the workshops.

Minutes: Richard Distel, Council Research

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Posted 2.1.2021 5:00 pm