City of Jacksonville



*1st Floor - Council Chamber 117 W. Duval Street*

# Meeting Minutes

Friday, February 26, 2021

8:30 AM

Virtual Meeting

# Safety and Crime Reduction Commission

Meeting Convened: 8:30 am Meeting Adjourned: 10:36 am

**Attendance**:

Chairman: Mark Griffin; Vice Chair: Dr. Constance Hall, City Council Vice President:

CM Samuel Newby; Administrator: Dr. Nicoa Garrett

Commissioners: Camille Burban, Josh Cockrell, Larry Cook, Richard Danford, Frank Denton, Tom Geismar, Ellen Glasser, Shelley Grant, Ronnie King, Timothy Sloan, Vicki Waytowich, Shamika Baker Wright

Liaisons to the Commission: Assistant Chief Lakesha Burton, Julie Davis, Dr. Nicoa Garrett, Dr. Charles Moreland, Stephen Siegel, Jackie Simmons, Katoia Wilkins

Guest: CM Joyce Morgan, Kelly Coker, Jessica Denson, Saralyn Grass, Kendra Marvin, Tracy McGeathey Pat Medley, Carol McGrapth, Kimberly Miller Public: Stanley Scott

1. Call to Order – Chairman

Chairman Griffin convened the meeting thanking everyone for attending the meeting.

1. **Opening Remarks & review of the meeting agenda.**

Chairman Griffin thanked the Commissioners who volunteered to submit a SWOT Analysis. Chairman Griffin reminded the members, that the meetings are member to member meetings. He also reminded the commission of the restraints on voting or taking any form of formal action on agenda items, due to the need for a physical quorum required under the Sunshine Law. For now, the meetings are for discussions until the commission can meet in person.

Chairman Griffin thanked Dr. Nicoa Garrett for her hard work and dedication to the commission.

1. **Review of Minutes – 01.22.21 Safety and Crime Reduction Commission Meeting.**
2. **Administrator’s Report**

Dr. Nicoa Garrett reported that she has been spending time learning and understanding the Jacksonville Sheriff Office (JSO) Gang Unit Notification program which provides resources to individuals and families that have been or currently involved in gangs and need assistance to change their lives in a positive way. The program does not force individuals or families to accept the assistance. They must call Garland Scott (JSO Program Manager) and ask for the assistance which demonstrates their commitment to the program, as well as dedication to making a change. Dr. Garrett provided crime statistics for murders in Duval County for the past 10 years (2010-2018 via FDLE / 2019 to present from JSO). The chart showed numbers from 2010 thru January 2021. Dr. Garrett touched on the importance of completing the S.W.O.T. analysis, which can help to provide direction and immediate implementation of recommendations. After speaking about the S.W.O.T. analysis, she concluded her report. Chairman Griffin thanked Dr. Garrett for her report. Chairman Griffin also gave kudos to Commissioner Vicki Waytowich for making the Commission aware that a legislative bill was being passed for funding a Mental Health program. Through the Commissioner’s research, there is a bill circulating through City Council that would appropriate $200,000.00 that would support a cause not relating to what the commission is looking to do. This bill is looking to support those who are affected through opioid abuse and not those who are affected through Crime related issues and/or events. This bill, as it is written does not support efforts in the 32208 and 32209 zip codes. Chairman Griffin spoke during public time on Tuesday Night (February 23) against the bill that is currently circulating to the appropriation side of it. He expressed to the council that he had concerns about the entire $200,000.00 being given to an organization through a contract just for opioid abuse. Chief Burton (JSO) spoke on the importance of mental health services in the communities. Chairman Griffin recognized Vice-President Councilman Samuel Newby. Vice-President CM Newby explained the legislative process regarding the bill by stating that the bill is currently in the 2nd reading and moving towards 3rd reading which is being heard by the different committees. Vice-President CM Newby stated the only way to get amendments to the bill at this point is to have a discussion with the bill sponsor, Councilman Freeman. Commissioner Waytowich stated that she spoke to Councilman Freeman regarding the modification that they hoped could be implemented to the bill. Julie Davis (OGC) stated that it’s up to the council if they want to pan out the funds for a bill to 3-year threshold. Chairman Griffin gave Commissioner Glasser time to speak to the commission. She asks for the bill number and the specifics of the bill as it relates to the budget. She also asked, is it a benefit for the Commission to make the request to allocate the funds associated with this bill a certain way? Chairman Griffin responded it would not hurt. Chairman Griffin asked the Commissioners were there any further comments before moving on to the next agenda item. Chairman Griffin reiterated to the commission that the crime statistics which Dr. Garrett presented earlier in the meeting were based upon murders. Because the numbers from last year to this year are closer, this is something that needs to be watched by the commission.

1. **How We Started**

Chairman Mark Griffin gave a brief history on how the Safety and Crime Reduction commission was formed. Chairman Griffin stated that the commission is to have 20 voting members and a few non-voting liaison members to include: the Duval County School Board, Jacksonville Sheriff’s Office (JSO), State Attorney’s Office, Public Defender Office, and Kids Hope Alliance (KHA). Chairman Griffin shared and read to the commission members Section 78.102, which is the guiding force (mission statement) of the Commission. Chairman Griffin stated to the commission members that the commission was formed by Jacksonville City Council, and they have the authority if necessary, to dismantle the commission. Chairman Griffin suggested that the commission go back to the May 6th report to understand the pillars or areas that will build a safer community. Chairman Griffin asked the members if anyone wanted to add to what he stated as to how the commission started, no responses were recorded.

1. **Where We Are**

Chairman Griffin acknowledge the hiring of Dr. Nicoa Garrett as the Administrator of the Commission. Through the City Budget process, the commission was able to secure funding in the amount of $400,000.00, in addition to Kids Hope Alliance (KHA) normal budget was earmarked through efforts from the commission. Operation Boost was approved through the City Council. Dr. Garrett is now researching programs in Duval County that directly or indirectly reduces crime. Chairman Griffin asked if there were any responses or questions to what was stated, Councilman Joyce Morgan stated that she gave the information in the Chat feature for the next Safer Together meeting which is on March 5, 2021. Vice-Chair Dr. Constance Hall thanked Chairman Griffin for revisiting the mission of the commission as it was helpful. She further stated that she would like to review the process of the programs in Duval County that reduces crime. She also wants to watch duplication of services and ensure that each program is reaching the correct individuals. Chairman Griffin acknowledge that the Special Law enforcement trust fund just awarded an organization $40,000.00 for crime prevention. He would like in the future for the commission to know up front how funds are being disseminated in the realm of crime prevention. Commissioner Geismar wanted to add that he hopes as well that the commission will be kept in the loop before funds are being disseminated.

1. **Where We Are Going**

Chairman Griffin thanked those who turned in the SWOT analysis. Dr. Garrett gathered the information from each submission and put together a summary for the commission to review. Commissioner Richard Danford made a comment that he would like to know what the Mayor’s Community Based Crime Reduction Program is working on and how the commission can be of assistance. Dr. Charles Moreland and Kendra Mervin were available for comment on this subject. Kendra Mervin stated that the C.B.C.R. is in the planning phase of a strategic plan that will be submitted to the Department of Justice for approval by the deadline date April 15, 2021. There are seven subcommittees that have been working to identify crime prevention strategies that have worked in other cities. The C.B.C.R. is working with the research firm which is Justice and Security strategies. Chairman Griffin asked when the C.B.C.R. gathers all the information and the research is complete if members of this commission can be a part of implementing the plan. Chairman Griffin stated that he and Dr. Garrett will have a conversation with Dr. Moreland and Ms. Mervin regarding the commission’s involvement. Commissioner King asked Ms. Mervin what information they are requesting from JSO because the Commission asked JSO for some data needed to complete a report and the Commission was referred to a website instead of a live person. Chairman Griffin asked Dr. Garrett was she having any issues with receiving information from JSO, she replied that she was not. Chairman Griffin moved ahead in the meeting to have Dr. Garrett share with the commission the results of the SWOT analysis. After Dr. Garrett shared with the commission her report, Chairman Griffin gave the Commissioners the floor to discuss the results. Commissioner Geismar asked if the terms of the Commissioners can be extended since time was lost due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Chairman Griffin stated that the term of each commissioner is a two-year term and most commissioners’ terms will not end until 2023. Commissioner Danford wanted to make notice of engaging citizens with the Neighborhoods Bill of Rights. Commissioner Danford stated that the commission made an inquiry regarding the validity of the Neighborhoods Bill of Rights. The committee received a response back from the Inspector General office (IG) stating that the Bills of rights was not codified. Meaning that citizens do not have the rights that they thought to engage with City government. Commissioner Danford suggested that the commission have conversations with City Council to get the Neighborhoods Bill of Rights codified. Chairman Griffin thanked Commissioner Danford for the work that was completed and stated that even if the Bill of Rights does not get codified the commission should ensure that the community involvement aspect stays before the Council. Commissioner Sloan made a statement to agree with Commissioner Danford and Chairman Griffin to get more community involvement. Commissioner Sloan ask a question to Ms. Julie Davis, how can the funds be used for community involvement? Ms. Davis asked that Chairman Griffin answer the question because there are several ways to go about it. Chairman Griffin suggested that the commission gets with KHA concerning the need for public involvement. Commissioner King agrees that the commission needs to have goals with a timeline attached to it. Setting goals will help the commission figure out what is in our control and what is it we are trying to strive for. Chairman Griffin stated to Commissioner King that the commission is responsible for submitting an annual report which is due March 1, 2021. The commission has asked for and was approved for an extension to the submittal of the report for 45 days. The report will continue the goals of the commission. Commissioner Larry Cook is asking to get clear instructions/directions on what he needs to be doing as a commissioner. CommissionerShamika Baker Wright asks what the next step for the commissioners after status report of SWOT analysis is. Commissioner Ellen Glasser agrees with an earlier statement that if a bill goes forward that has to do with crime prevention/reduction, that this commission should be a stopping point for approval. Chairman Griffin addressed all previous questions from al the commissioners who spoke. Chairman Griffin asked Dr. Garrett to send out the list of the different subcommittees and asks of the commissioners to acknowledge your preference of which one to serve on. Chairman Griffin asks that the entire commission will meet every other month. Chairman Griffin will have a conversation with Vice-President CM Newby on how the commission can be a part of any bill the has to do with crime prevention/reduction. Chairman Griffin made known that the commission is set to be a 20-member commission, currently operating with 16 members, so there is a 4-commissioner vacancy. He also made known to have a quorum and make voting decisions, 11 commissioners must be in attendance in a meeting. Chairman Griffin asks how many commissioners are willing to meet in person for the commission business to go forward. Chairman Griffin asked the voting commissioners to raise their hands if they are willing to meet in person, the results: 11 commissioners accepted. Chairman Griffin asked the commissioners if they know if persons who would like to serve on the commission to submit their information to Dr. Garrett, so the vetting process can be started. Chairman Griffin addressed all chat questions/comments before moving to public comments.

**Public Comments – 3 Minutes Each**

Mr. Stanley Scott-African American Economic Recovery Think Tank organization was recognized by Chairman Griffin to give his comment.

1. **Wrap-Up and Adjournment**

With no further business, Chairman Griffin adjourned the meeting.

Minutes: Tanya Washington-Pressley - Neighborhood Director’s Office - [tanyaw@coj.net](mailto:tanyaw@coj.net) - 904.255.7242