

**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

**ZOOM VIRTUAL MEETING**

**(NO PHYSICAL LOCATION)**

**CM JOYCE MORGAN CM BOYLAN**

**SAFER TOGETHER WORKSHOP MINUTES**

**MARCH 5, 2021**

**9:30 am**

Meeting Convened: 9:31 am Meeting Adjourned: 11:34 am

Attendance: Council President Hazouri and CMs Morgan, Boylan, Salem, Pittman, Carrico, and Freeman

Also: Peggy Sidman, Office of General Counsel; Heather Reber and Jeff Rodda, Auditor’s Office; Richard Distel and Yvonne Mitchell, Council Research; Dr. Tammy Hodo and Dr. Brian Van Brunt

CM Boylan went over the agenda for today’s workshop, and said the focus of the agenda is mental health. CM Boylan highlighted the work that CM Salem has done through the new program to assist those with mental illnesses who have been frequently incarcerated. CM Boylan gave an update for the April meeting which will cover the topic of the Civilian Review Board. CP Hazouri gave remarks about the importance of communication between the police and citizens. CP Hazouri said that he looks forward to seeing recommendations that come out of the Safer Together Workshops.

CM Salem detailed the Mental Health Offender Program. This is a partnership between the City, Sulzbacher Center, the SAO, the Public Defender and the Sheriff’s Office which will diverts 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. CM Salem said that 11 people have been entered into the program in the last month. The goal is to get 40 people into the pilot program that lasts until the end of the year, and then the aim is to find grants and other City funding to continue the program. CM Salem said that this helps to take the financial burden off the jail system.

CM Salem also said that there are 10 to 13 calls a day for opioid overdoses, and talked about the importance of Narcan training.

Dr. Hodo said that there will be a Safer Together Workshop meeting added on Saturday April 24th.

Dr. Van Brunt said that all mental illnesses are not the same but are on a spectrum. Dr. Van Brunt said that those with mental illness are 5 to 6 times more likely to be the victim of a violent crime. Dr. Van Brunt talked about the stigma in the African American community around mental health.

Director Mike Bruno introduced Chief George Pratt so he could discuss Department of Corrections programs. Chief Pratt detailed how the Mental Health Offender Program works with the Sulzbacher Center, and explained how it aims to curb offenders who are repeatedly arrested. Of the 2,466 individuals currently in the Pre-Trail system in County Jail, 119 (4.8%) have been deemed to have mental health issues. Armor Mental Health Facilities provides the mental health care for those in the jail. Chief Pratt talked about reentry programs that are available in the city.

CM Boylan asked if the jail mental health assessment those who are addicted when determining if they have mental health issues. Chief Pratt said it is self-reported and that many of those in the jail system are addicted to varied substances and also have mental health issues.

Wells Todd thanked the Council for having these meetings and talked about a story where a mother called the police for her son with mental health issues and the situation ended with him being shot.

Assistant Chief Adam Pendley, Jacksonville Sheriff Office, said that all officers go through 40 hours of crisis action training. Assistant Chief Pendley said that police patrol is the only 24-hour entity that can address mental health issues. This allows them to transport those that are suffering from mental health issues to the closest mental health center. Assistant Chief Pendley talked about the Co-Responder program, which addresses the issue of getting the person to reengage with caretakers, support networks and/or medication. The Sheriff’s Office oversees transport for ex parte orders (family caretaker) and physician orders. If the crime is a misdemeanor, they can be sent to a mental health facility, but if it is a felony then they have to go through the jail system. Dr. Van Brunt asked about the number of mental health arrests where that was the primary concern. Dr. Van Brunt asked about how the clinicians are chosen for hire in the program.

CM Morgan asked if there is an area for families to receive all the mental health services from the sheriff’s office. Assistant Chief Pendley said that the United Way has a clearinghouse of all services available. CM Morgan asked how many officers are being pulled away from work to cover these services.

Director Bruno said that from 2020 to present day there have been 17,000 calls for service regarding mental health. Director Bruno stressed the importance of making sure mental health issues are worked on before they escalate to a red zone.

CM Morgan asked if 40 hours of training is enough. Director Bruno said that this is one training in a toolbox of many to help diffuse situations. Director Bruno said they are always looking for more trainings. Dr. Van Brunt echoed the importance of having a competency in discussing topics, so as to not let it explode with someone that has mental health issues, and attempt to deescalate in stressful situations.

Ysryl Ysryl asked if there is an organization that can help the police office learn to diffuse the situations. Assistant Chief Pendley said that if family or friends that are close to the situation is the best opportunity to take the call first as a 3rd party. Assistant Chief Pendley talked about organizations that can give mental health support and the importance to get help before the issue moves from yellow to red.

Adrian Kelly said he served 16 years in federal prison and has been out of prison for the past 5 years and talked about his experience and difficulty finding assistance. He said that there have been issues with assistance coming from federal prison. Chief Pratt said that there are ways they can help with day to day needs through the Jacksonville Reentry Center. Director Bruno talked about the gap in services from county to federal jail.

Dr. Van Brunt asked the EVAC students about how mental health challenges impact the youth in Jacksonville. One of the students said they believe they do not have enough mental health resources available at school. The students said it is important that the person given help needs to have understanding and feel a connection to understand the person’s needs with mental health issues.

CM Pittman talked about the importance in finding funding to help youth issues. CM Pittman also echoed that 40 hours might not be enough crisis training. Assistant Chief Travis Cox said that the 40 hours is the foundation training given in the academy. Assistant Chief Cox said that there are yearly trainings and there is continuing education training. The continued education comes from the hours of courses from the Florida Department of Law Enforcement. Sheryl Johnson talked about her Hearts 4 Minds mental health awareness program.

Assistant Chief Travis Cox talked about the training and programs which police officers go through to continue their education on a variety of topics. Assistant Chief Cox talked about de-escalation techniques and training which very prominent in the 13-month program, and continued training through the police officer’s career. CM Boylan said what he is hearing from the meeting is that continued crisis/mental health education is a concern.

Ysryl Ysryl talked about what he does at the Jacksonville Youth Works, and his passion to work with youth. Adrian Kelly said he wants to be a part of the CURE Violence Program.

Vicki Waytowich talked about the CIT Coordinator in Miami which helped turn around the mental health review and the ability to refresh skills around dealing with those situations. Ms. Waytowich said that continued cultural competence is a journey and the need for education is very important.

The next Safer Together Workshop meeting will be on April 5th. CM Boylan clarified that the next meeting with be a continuation of these topics and discussions around the Citizens Review Board. Dr. Hodo said they are hosting a meeting from 10am to 12pm on Saturday April 24th.

Minutes: Richard Distel, Council Research

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