

City of Jacksonville

1st Floor - Council Chamber
117 W. Duval Street



Meeting Minutes

Thursday, May 13, 2021

2:00 PM

Council Chambers 1st Floor, City Hall (Streaming Viewing Options Only)

Special Committee on the Opioid Epidemic, Vaping & Mental Health Resources

CM Ron Salem, Pharm.D., Chairman

CM Michael Boylan

CM Terrance Freeman

CM Ju'Coby Pittman

CM Brenda Priestly-Jackson

CM Randy White

Legislative Assistant: Juliette Williams

Research: Colleen Hampsey

Meeting Convened: 2:01 pm Meeting Adjourned: 3:33 pm

Attendance:

Council Members Salem and Boylan

Excused: CMs Priestly Jackson, White, Pittman and Freeman

Also: Kealey West and Tiffany Pinkstaff, Office of General Counsel; Trista Carraher, Council Auditor's Office; Colleen Hampsey, Council Research

- 1. Call to order, Introduction of Committee Members - Council Member Ron Salem**
- 2. Introduction of TJ Ward and Daniel Davis (Jax Chamber) - Council Member Ron Salem**

TJ Ward, JaxChamber, spoke about Project Opioid which is a collaborative effort among the business, faith and philanthropic communities to address the opioid epidemic. JaxChamber is working in partnership with other regional entities to raise awareness, promote education and share data. The goal of the project is to develop innovative strategies in order to affect systemic change.

- 3. NE Florida Sober Living Alliance Grant - Council Member Ron Salem**

CM Salem spoke about the Opioid Trust Fund, which is being directed to the Jump Start program, a stopgap measure of daily living assistance/ housing administered by NE Florida Sober Living Alliance, Inc. which offers vouchers to individuals suffering from opioid dependence or addiction – many of whom face financial barriers to entering sober living due to disrupted income. Two representatives from Florida Sober Living Alliance were in attendance to speak about the project, and shared that they also acquired a grant to match the funds.

4. Harm Reduction Subcommittee Report - Council Member Boylan

Safe Syringe Programs (SSPs) are community-based programs that provide access to sterile needles and syringes, facilitate safe disposal of used syringes, and provide referrals for services as needed.

Chief Rowley, JFRD, spoke about the successes of the Miami program, the benefits of such programs for Jacksonville and the controversial nature of the debate regarding safe syringe programs. He went on to relay what scientific research indicates about SSPs: people who use an SSP are more likely to enter treatment for substance use disorder and stop injecting than those who don't because referrals and health care resources are available through the SSP; access to sterile injection equipment can help prevent infections like HIV, Endocarditis and Hepatitis C; SSPs do not cause or increase illegal drug use, and they do not cause or increase crime; SSPs protect the public and first responders by providing safe needle disposal and reducing the presence of needles in the community. Chief Rowley said that another harm reduction policy change would be to eliminate syringes from list of criminal paraphernalia permissible in drug arrests.

In 2019, Gov. DeSantis signed into law the Infectious Disease Elimination Act (IDEA) that allows county commissions to authorize sterile needle and syringe exchange programs for people who inject drugs. Disease prevention must be the goal of every exchange program. There are currently more than 200 programs in 34 states. CM Boylan is coordinating with Chief Rowley and other community partners on possible legislation regarding SSPs. CM Salem expressed skepticism and noted that such legislation may be controversial.

5. Update on Project Save Lives - Dr. Raymond Pomm, Gateway

Dr. Pomm provided an update on Project Save Lives, saying that to date there have been eight known drug-related deaths among program participants. Dr. Pomm said that PSL is up and running in Baptist Main ED now, and that participating EDs are seeing a drastic reduction in Baker Act orders (substance abuse disorder can present similar symptoms to other mental health issues). Dr. Pomm noted that one effects of the pandemic has been a large increase in alcohol abuse, in addition to opioid misuse. He also mentioned the shortage of peer specialists, the corner stone to the PSL program model. Dr. Pomm spoke about the issue of pregnant women with opioid addictions who are not being referred into the program or other treatment, and about the urgent concern about rising Neonatal abstinence syndrome cases as related to opioids.

CM Salem asked about financing and what portion participating hospitals pay for PSL services, Dr. Pomm said the hospitals are already responsible for the funding if they choose to participate.

6. Report on Overdose Trends/Narcan Grant - Chief Mark Rowley, JFRD & Laura Viafora Ray, JFRD

Chief Mark Rowley, JFRD, discussed the data trends for overdose responses and Narcan usage, which have increased during the pandemic though not as much as in other cities. Chief Rowley presented data that indicated JFRD treated opioid related overdoses: 301 in April 2021, 315 in April 2020, 204 in April 2019; patients transported as overdoses 423 April 2021, 401 April 2020, 300 April 2019; doses Narcan administered 446 in April 2021, 447 in April 2020, 293 in April 2019.

CM Boylan asked about place location of overdoses, whether it be residential, commercial, outside etc. Chief Rowley said he would gather that data and report back at the next meeting.

Laura Viafora Ray spoke about the Safe Healthy Neighborhoods grant, which enables JFRD to distribute Narcan and training to individuals and organizations for free. Since the grant program began, almost 4000 doses have been given out. Anecdotally, there have also been 25 voluntary reports from those who have used the Narcan to stop an overdose death, including one recently used by a lifeguard in Jacksonville Beach. Ms. Ray was asked about the impact of telehealth and the COVID pandemic on the program, and said that the trainings were adapted to be conducted online and the Narcan is then mailed to the participant. Dr. Pomm asked about pharmacies distributing Narcan to patients who are on medically assisted treatments (MATs) such as Buprenorphine, when they come in for their prescriptions. Ms. Ray said she has been in discussion with pharmacists on that topic, but talks had stalled due to the pandemic and vaccine distributions. CM Salem recommended she resume the efforts and focus on the large pharmacy chains.

7. Report on Data Collection - Lori Billelo, UF Health

Dr. Billelo spoke about data collection and the progress of a review of the death records from the Florida Department of Health Vital Statistics Office. She indicated that there would be more to report back upon at the next meeting.

8. Update on Opioid Lawsuit - Tiffany Pinkstaff, Office of General Counsel

Tiffany Pinkstaff, Office of General Counsel, provided an update on the City's opioid lawsuit. Ms. Pinkstaff said that the settlement arrangements are still in negotiations, but an agreement is expected very soon.

9. Report from Sheriff's Office - Assistant Chief Steve Gallaher, JSO

Lt. Eric Redgate, JSO, spoke about enforcement aspects and said that there is a newly formed squad at the Sheriff's office that just focuses on overdose homicides. Lt. Redgate said that the highest amount of overdose death responses occurred in 2021 so far in zones 2,5 and 4. There were 36 OD death responses in April 2021, 29 in April 2020. To date in 2021, there are 69 active cases under investigation, and 22 have been cleared through arrest (15 for drug charges, 7 homicide/manslaughter).

10. Report from State Attorney's Office - Tim Quick, State Attorney's Office

Ms. Ott said that there was nothing new to report, but that the SAO continues to collaborate with JSO on opioid related cases. She also expressed the SAO's support for the MHOP and said that a letter of support for the program would be forthcoming.

**11. E-Cigarettes and Vaping Initiative - Vaping Campaign Update
Cantrece Jones, Acuity Design Group**

Ms. Jones provided an update on the anti-vaping public awareness campaign, and said that the initial results are favorable with more than 22,000 visitors in April. They are also conducting a usage/nicotine awareness social media survey. Kealey West, OGC, noted that a bill passed through the Florida Legislature to raise the nicotine age to 21, and it is awaiting the governor's signature.

12. Mental Health Pilot Program - Cindy Funkhouser, Sulzbacher

Cindy Funkhouser, was in attendance to speak about the Mental Health Offender Program (MHOP), a pilot program that received \$200,000 in City funds, with a match from JSO, and was designed in response to the burden that mentally ill offenders place on the criminal justice system. MHOP is a jail diversion program for mentally ill misdemeanor offenders, intended to break the cycle of repeated misdemeanor arrests for mentally ill individuals and provide them the wrap-around support they need to successfully treat their mental illness and reintegrate back into the community. Wrap around services include: medical, dental, behavioral health, substance abuse, housing and intensive case management that connects them to stable income through either job counseling and training or SSI, SSDI, Medicare/Medicaid and other community services. After 3 months in operation, MHOP has nine participants in the first cohort, and nine more in the pipeline. Many of the participants have acute mental health issues and require stabilization prior to being placed in housing. One individual was arrested 25 times in 2020, and 97 times since 2017. Ms. Funkhouser has submitted a request for additional funding from the Social Justice and Community Investment Committee, \$133,800 to go towards 5 stabilization rooms at Sulzbacher, 4 MHOP offices and necessary furnishings, cell phones/laptops, a passenger van/fuel, travel training, and additional hours for psychiatry and case management staff. Ms. Funkhouser indicated that they are also pursuing funds from JSO and DCF, and gathering letters of support from community partners.

13. Comments from the Committee – Strategic Plan from UCF Students

The strategic plan will be discussed next time, as the UCF students were not able to stay until the end of the meeting.

14. Comments from the Public (time permitting)

One attendee spoke about distributing Narcan to those living on the streets. Two students from UNF spoke about the need for harm reduction measures and safe syringe programs.

15. Adjourn Meeting

CM Salem said the next meeting will be held in June, and then afterwards it will be at the discretion of the new council president as to the continuation of the committee.

Minutes: Colleen Hampsey, Council Research

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Posted: 5.19.2021 5:00 pm