

City of Jacksonville

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



Meeting Minutes

Thursday, June 10, 2021

2:00 PM

Council Chambers 1st Floor, City Hall

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: 3:18 pm

Attendance:

Council Members Salem, Priestly Jackson, Freeman and Boylan

Excused: CMs White and Pittman

Also: Kealey West, 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

CM Salem welcomed the group and said that at future meetings there will be updates from CM Freeman regarding the mental health resources/awareness campaign with Hearts 4 Minds.

2. Harm Reduction Subcommittee Report - Council Member Boylan

CM Boylan provided an update on the Harm Reduction Subcommittee and SSP legislation. 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. Kealey West, OGC, said that the legislation is in the drafting phase. Chief Rowley, JFRD, spoke about the stakeholders who have been working diligently to prepare for a SSP program, if the bill passes, including logistics, funding and data management/sharing. CM Salem suggested that CM Boylan hold a series of noticed meetings so as to inform colleagues about the program and benefits/risks to make it less controversial.

3. 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 nine known drug-related deaths among program participants (one recent participant who may have left the program and reportedly overdosed in a nursing home). Dr. Pomm said that PSL is busy in Baptist Main ED now, and that some COVID restrictions are easing up which will mean more capacity in treatment/detox centers. Dr. Pomm spoke about the effects of the pandemic - a large increase in alcohol abuse and multi-substance usage, in addition to opioid misuse - and the manner in which mental health issues can be confused with substance abuse issues in patients. Dr. Pomm spoke about fentanyl tolerance, which has increased in users and the use of straight fentanyl, which he has never seen in his many years of practice. He also mentioned the shortage of peer specialists, the corner stone to the PSL program, and that the services may eventually be funded by the hospitals.

CM Salem asked what can be done, as the data trend does not look good and it seems to be another public health emergency.

Chief Rowley mentioned that SSPs can increase the rate of treatment participation five fold.

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

Chief Rowley spoke about JFRD data trends, which are moving in an upward direction. He noted the disparity between Narcan given and overdose dispatches, which is due to the potency and developing tolerance to fentanyl and the need for multiple Narcan doses. Chief Rowley shared data related to overdose location, and said that more than half occur in residential settings, 19 percent in cars or roadways, 9 percent in hotels and 5-6 percent in businesses or retail locations. There was some discussion as to if these locations will shift as more folks return to the office after working from home during COVID, and also about the posting of signage in public spaces about recognizing signs of an overdose.

Laura Viafora Ray, JFRD, provided an update on the Safe Healthy Neighborhoods grant, which enables JFRD to distribute Narcan and training to individuals and organizations for free. Since the grant program began, more than 80 training sessions have occurred, and 4000 kits have been given out. Anecdotally, there have also been 27 voluntary reports from those who have used the Narcan to stop an overdose death, including one recently used by a hotel security guard. Ms. Ray said that they have a new community partner, Healthy Start Market Street for Narcan distribution. She also said she has continued discussions with pharmacies (Walmart) about distributing Narcan to patients who are on medically assisted treatments (MATs) such as Buprenorphine, when they come in for their prescriptions. CM Boylan suggested bringing free clinics into the discussion as well. Dr. Pomm mentioned coordinating with Jax Chamber to prepare businesses who may have to address overdoses in the workplace. Dr. Pomm also spoke about getting pregnant women into treatment before birth, and Ms. Ray talked about the Azalea Project, which provides outreach, education and support services to substance-using pregnant women. The Azalea Project CEO may be asked to come speak to the committee at a future meeting.

TJ Ward, Jax Chamber, talked about an upcoming webinar on June 25th, to discuss Project Opioid - a collaborative effort among the business, faith and philanthropic communities to address the opioid epidemic.

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

Not present at this meeting.

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

No update at this meeting.

7. Report from Sheriff's Office - Eric Redgate, JSO

Asst. Chief Gallaher, JSO, spoke about enforcement aspects and said the newly formed squad at the Sheriff's office that just focuses on overdose homicides. He also 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 May 2021, 40 in May 2020. To date in 2021, there are 71 active cases under investigation, and 26 have been cleared through arrest (18 for drug charges, 8 homicide/manslaughter). Asst. Chief Gallaher was asked about the route for smuggling, and he replied that most contraband comes from cartels across the border from Mexico, then through Texas, to Georgia and Florida. Dr. Pomm asked if JSO is seeing pressed fentanyl pills, and Asst. Chief Gallaher said yes they are seeing fake Xanax pills on the streets. Asst. Chief Gallaher said that JSO coordinates with federal agencies on the trafficking aspects.

8. Report from State Attorney's Office - Linzee Ott, State Attorney's Office

Mr. Quick, SAO, said that his office is seeing opioid case numbers increasing similarly to JSO. He also said that he will bring prosecution data from 2017-21 to the next meeting.

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

No update at this meeting.

10. Mental Health Pilot Program - Cindy Funkhouser, Sulzbacher

Judge Mahan was in attendance to speak about the MHOP program and expressed thanks for council funding. Dr. Bell, Sulzbacher, said they have 12 participants in the program currently and 7 more being assessed. Dr. Bell shared some data related to cost savings through the program, by decreasing habitual arrests. She also noted the harder to measure data points of success - individuals developing trust, stabilizing through medications, communicating, wearing shoes, moving into housing. When asked about a potential housing shortage, Dr. Bell replied that it is a big concern now and going forward.

CM Freeman update on Hearts 4 Minds

CM Freeman provided an update on Hearts 4 Minds, a campaign to raise awareness about the importance of mental health, break down the stigma of mental illness and connect people to providers. The first mural was finished in May at the 121 Financial Ballpark (Jacksonville Shrimp), and is of a dragonfly made of handprints with QR codes to connect folks to resources if needed. The handprints are intended to be a reminder that everyone has the power to change in the palm of their own hand. CM Freeman also mentioned that Baptist Health now has a support counselor for mental health patients, just like it does for patients with physical illnesses.

The Hearts 4 Minds campaign will move next to social media, student and school groups, promoting mental health campaigns throughout the city. They are also looking for more locations for murals. Chief Rowley suggested partnering with fire stations and CM Freeman liked the idea.

11. Comments from the Public (time permitting)

Melissa Salazar, Underground Recovery Jax, spoke about the challenges with helping people get treatment when there are no beds available, and when folks lack insurance. Dr. Pomm offered to speak with her afterwards about possible options.

12. Adjourn Meeting

CM Salem said that this committee will continue in the new council leadership term if that is the will of CP Designate Newby. If/when that occurs, the next meeting would be in August 2021.

Meeting Minutes: Colleen Hampsey, Council Research
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