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OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL

SAFER TOGETHER WORKSHOPS Proposed Recommendation

These workshops will be fact finding in nature with the goal of fostering constructive dialogue about the challenges, successes, and opportunities available to us to make this a safer community for all our citizens.

- Council President Tommy Hazouri
Memorandum Dated: October 23, 2020

First let me assure all concerned the final report to the Council will include a summary of the various workshops and proper recognition of all the stakeholders who provided invaluable information and insight, both from within the JSO and the community it serves. What I am offering below are my thoughts and a singular recommendation to be included in that report.

Opening Comments

Prior to the start of the workshops, I did some research on just exactly what is the essence of community policing and the critical components of it that lead to it being a true practicing policy. As noted in Drs. Hodo and Van Brunt's report, the United States Department of Justice, in its published booklet titled **Community Policing Defined** (revised 2014), clearly delineates what those critical components to be:

- **Community Partnerships** – Collaborative partnerships between the law enforcement agency and the individuals and organizations they serve to develop solutions to problems and increase trust in the police.
- **Organizational Transformation** – The alignment of organizational management, structure, personnel and information systems to support community partnerships and proactive problem solving.
- **Problem Solving** – The process of engaging in the proactive and systemic examination of identified problems to develop and evaluate effective responses

As we continue our work in the coming months, I firmly believe we need to be diligent in our efforts to incorporate these components into the very fabric of our police force. To that end I am very encouraged by the work being led by Dr. Nelson, under the heading of the "Community Action Plan," and would look to use that end-product as essential resource for our work going forward.

Observation

The decision to retain Drs. Hodo and VanBrunt afforded CM Morgan and me the opportunity to play a more "reflective" role throughout the workshops...to truly listen and observe. Before offering my thoughts regarding what I heard and saw, allow me to share the statement below which I recently discovered in a reflection on the parable of the splinter in the eye of a brother. (Luke 6:39-42)

A critical and judgmental spirit crushes rather than heals, oppresses rather than restores, repels rather than attracts. "Thinking the best of other people" is necessary if we wish to grow in love. And kindness in judgment is nothing less than a sacred duty.

Realizing full well this applies to me as well, here are my thoughts:

- While certainly not a reflection on Director Bruno and the members of the JSO management team who presented at the various workshops, I fear that in some respects this was yet just another “exercise” in tamping down any effort to bring meaningful change to the police force. That was made clear to me during the ensuing presentation of the JSO budget when the JSO Undersheriff professed no familiarity with our many conversations (and the issues discussed therein). Further of evidence was the fact that the Sheriff did not actively engage in any of the discussions.
- If we truly are looking to find common ground between the JSO and the community it serves there needs to be some level of trust on the part of all stakeholders. Speaking frankly, I (also) fear that many of those from within the community see that as a risk they are unwilling to take, citing individual incidents as an indictment of the entire police force.

Proposed Recommendation

It is not at all surprising that journeys such as this one lead us down paths that were not specifically found in the charge of the Council President. Such was the case here as well. My singular recommendation here will not only allow us the opportunity to advance the many good suggestions offered by our facilitators but to serve as a bridge of communication and action between the JSO and the citizens it serves.

- **Citizens’ Policy Review Board** – I recommend we use the ensuing meetings of the **Safer Together Workshops** to develop the structure, role and responsibility of the Citizens’ Policy Review Board with the essential goal of advancing and sustaining the critical components of community policing.

In reflecting upon our work over these many months this was exactly the role we’ve been playing but without the oversight of implementation. I don’t think it’s my place right now to say what policies and practices the board should have a voice in determining. But many of the suggestions offered in the findings found in the facilitators’ report certainly warrant serious consideration...ongoing professional training, increasing the number of co-responders for mental health crisis calls as well as the re-allocation of funds within the department to help in creating solutions.

I will conclude with my position on a citizens’ *incident* review board, starting with the following quote from David A. Harris, John Murray Faculty Scholar and professor of law at the University of Pittsburgh, who specializes in search procedure law and police misconduct. *“The ground is littered with failed police accountability boards and citizen accountability boards.”* Legislative Services provided information regarding the limitation of such a board. It clearly delineates that Florida law provides that only the employing agency is authorized to investigate a complaint against an officer and if it is a criminal complaint it falls to multiple state and federal agencies to investigate. Frankly I prefer to see us putting our energies in proactively impacting policy and practices in order to minimize the number of such incidents we experience in the future.