



**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

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Memorandum  
September 13, 2021

**TO:** Honorable City Council Members  
**FROM:** The Honorable Joyce Morgan, District 1  
**SUBJECT:** CM Morgan and CM Boylan Safer Together RE: Final Report

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I am encouraged by the conversations we heard from the community. In many instances, the dialogue hit nerves that seemed tender to the touch, thereby illustrating the critical need for these workshops. The subjects discussed were certainly nothing new, but there was a new round of constituents who had an opportunity to speak face to face with the current administration of the Sheriff's department. Historically speaking, problems don't go away by themselves. Claims of police brutality and a lack of transparency are not new and neither are calls for citizen police review boards. Constituents asked for a more detailed look at police funding, specifically, ways to redistribute dollars to community-based groups and organizations. Our conversations revealed that definitions can be different based on who is offering the explanation. Police accountability is viewed as a problem, especially to those who have found themselves in confrontations with law enforcement. Unfortunately, all have not survived the encounters to tell their side of the story. Our mission was the conversation that could lead to positive action for the community by connecting directly with police to make Jacksonville "Safer Together". We are appreciative of Sheriff Mike Williams for allowing his staff to participate in this series of workshops and all of the many different conversations that are going on in a variety of venues across the city. We also appreciate Steve Zona and other representatives from the Fraternal Order of Police. And conversations could not have happened without the public. We certainly appreciate your input.

I believe the workshops proposed by former Council President Tommy Hazouri were a realistic introduction to long, overdue, and difficult community conversations and the next steps as directed by Council President Sam Newby could take the current dialogue and place it in a more permanent venue. I can also see opportunities for the sheriff's department to incorporate citizens ideas into the action that communities need and want from their officers. Other cities and regions have experienced the growing pains we feel here in Jacksonville. That's why continued research of what other cities are doing right and wrong within the legal confines of a permissible solution can also help Jacksonville avoid unnecessary pitfalls to achieving success for its citizens and police. Additional training as identified in the final report could be a valuable asset when it comes to bridging the gap between the community and law enforcement. Legislation cannot be ruled out as part of the greater mechanism to



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help stabilize the entire community, and funding remains a constant barrier to change but should be the conduit to creating a better Jacksonville.

When tackling the issue of making Jacksonville a community that is "Safer Together" parties must agree to disagree respectfully. Though this report identifies some areas of concern, this is not an attack on our police officers. Remember that our officers are also citizens and part of this great city. While a recent Gallup poll finds that overall trust in police officers is high compared to other professions, that trust is actually at a historic low, especially among Black Americans and other minority groups.

As the chair of this special committee, it is important to identify facts and present opportunities for the better of the whole. I recognize that every organization requires maintenance, attention, and sometimes change to continue being effective in its mission to the community. When we ignore signs and symptoms and are not willing to review internal and external controls, a sense of complacency can set in and even produce atrophy in an organization.

Fear can also cripple efforts by an organization to do a self examination and consider a path forward. For me, Jacksonville, as the largest city in the United States of America is stronger and "Safer Together" when we continue to work on eliminating the fear and differences between us. Consider our similarities: the pursuit of happiness, safety, social and economic prosperity, and education.

### NEXT STEPS

- 1- Continue the "Safer Together" workshops to ensure a direct line of communication with the community and our law enforcement officials. Take time to celebrate the successes within the department even while working toward areas that need more attention.
- 2- Conduct a much deeper evaluation of the Florida models already in place that we can emulate to make a Citizen's review board a reality in Jacksonville.
- 3- Review the Sheriff's Department budget focusing on funding already in place for other organizations.
- 4- Take steps to elevate Community Policing in our neighborhoods.

I advocate moving forward with a sense of urgency. Change has come so many times in America only after the voices of the disenfranchised and those left behind are heard and issues are brought to light. We are good in Jacksonville. Can we be better? I say YES!!!!