

Safe, Equitable and Thriving (SET) Communities
Task Force
July 11, 2016
Meeting Minutes

SET TASK FORCE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Stacey Walker, Trace Pickering, Akwi Nji, Dorice Ramsey, Ben Rogers, Jenny Schulz, Gary Hinzman, Okpara Rice, Leslie Wright, Rodrick Dooley, LaSheila Yates, Karl Cassell

SET TASK FORCE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Mary Wilcynski, Alphonse O'Bannon, Dale Todd, John Tursi, Rafael Jacobo, Carlos Grant, Paul Hayes

CITY LIAISON PRESENT:

Angie Charipar

CITY STAFF PRESENT:

Police Chief Wayne Jerman, Administrative Assistant Jean Novak

OTHERS PRESENT:

Jennifer Hemmingsen

CALL TO ORDER/APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

The meeting was called to order by Co-Chair Stacey Walker at 10:32 AM. Okpara Rice moved to approve the minutes from June 15, 2016. Karl Cassell seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Eric Holthaus, City of Cedar Rapids Sustainability Coordinator, presented various comments.

SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIR UPDATES:

Safety and Law Enforcement

Chief Jerman reported that the subcommittee has answered the first three questions, and at the last subcommittee meeting, there was extensive discussion regarding some

of the issues. Also, Pramod Dwivedi, who is the Director of the Linn County Health Department, is now a member of the Law Enforcement & Public Safety Subcommittee. The Chief and Pramod have been in extensive discussions about the request for the CDC study, and that Pramod is very familiar with the work done by the College of Public Health and Injury at the University of Iowa. Also, Pramod has done a lot of work with the CDC.

Stacey stated that Pramod will be a valuable addition to the subcommittee.

Education

No representatives from the subcommittee were present to give their update.

Community Outreach

Trace reported that they we have a punch list of things that need to get taken care of, and they will proceed as quickly as they can.

Programs

Dorice stated that they haven't made much progress from the last meeting. Again, the largest part of their work is auditing all the programs.

Housing

No representatives from the subcommittee were present to give their update.

Jobs and Employment

No update from the subcommittee.

DISCUSSION OF FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS:

Stacey stated that the summer months are hard to get everyone together. During the last couple of meetings, what we have been trying to do is nail down a series of fundamental questions. We started with Item 3 to identify what it is we want to change, identify what groups we want to change it for, and the purpose of having those conversations in subcommittees, as well as having it in this group. The purpose is so that the subcommittees can learn from other subcommittees as to how they are going about the work in their respective subcommittees. At our last Task Force meeting, there was an exchange about which groups are we really trying to serve, and the committee got into a constructive argument about the definitions of the groups, and are we focusing on one target demographic or not. Stacey feels that these conversations are constructive, because as you go back to your respective subcommittees, it can color your approach. Also, he reminded the group that addressing systemic issues is not

going to happen overnight. While he understands the urgency, particularly considering the events in this country in the past week, we have to be diligent in our approach and reminded everyone that we have to be very thoughtful and calculated in our work.

Once the committee gets through these next four questions, we will start to formulate the actual recommendations that we want our community leaders to take. These next questions are how will we do that? Is that a policy change, or is that a practice change? Do we have the people at the table who can help solve this issue? Now that we've identified the problem, we've identified whether or not is a policy or practice change; do we have the people who can most affect change on board with this effort? What works, and what evidence do we have that will help as we fill out this report to be able to substantiate the actions which we think we should take. As an example, Stacey mentioned the 21st Century Report on Policing that Chief Jerman provided to the group several months ago. How will we know if we are successful? Another way to look at the question is, we've identified the problem, we've identified our approach, now we want to figure out if there's a way in which we can measure our effectiveness. If these recommendations were put into place, how will we know a year from now, five years from now, or ten years from now, whether or not we are successful. Out of all of these questions, the things that Stacey is most interested in, is how will we change it, and how will we know if we're successful. When Stacey and Mary go before the Board of Supervisors, City Council, and the School Board, those pieces of information will be critical.

Rod asked for clarification of the question, "Do we have the people at the table who can influence or solve the issue?" He feels this is not just a yes or no answer, but the intent is who are the people that we need at the table? Are we looking at their readiness for the change, so it's not only do we have them at the table, but do they understand the depth of the issue, and their readiness to take it on.

Stacey said that maybe the question could be framed differently. Right now it reads as a yes or no question, but we certainly want to ask who do we have at the table, and are these the right people who are going to help us get the work done. This is very complex work, and we may be asking institutions or people who represent institutions to come to the table who may not be ready for the changes in which we may be seeking. We will have to be diplomatic.

Okpara asked if each subcommittee needs to report on how they going to measure that success.

Stacey said that is what we are asking. We figured out what we want to change. We need to figure out how we're going to change it, and then the subcommittees need to be prepared to talk about how and when they know they are successful. It may be different depending on what the mission of your subcommittee is. For example, for Programs and probably Community Outreach, those questions might be a little different. With Programs it is to come up with a comprehensive audit, so we know where the services are, or where the gaps exist. Those questions may not be relevant to this committee.

LaSheila discussed the re-entry of ex-offenders in the community. Possible partners would be the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District, also the Department of Justice, the Department of Corrections, and the Work Force Development Iowa Works. They are bringing in the EEOC to talk about various employments for ex-offenders on the 26th in Cedar Rapids. It may be important to bring them to the table as a partner. The existence of criminal background is a barrier to employment.

Gary discussed the importance of adult mentoring, because it is very productive and produces positive results in kids. The WARN Program, which works with offenders coming back from prison, also has been expanded in the juvenile system. Particularly with adult offenders, there needs to be some mentors, whether it is group mentoring, or one-on-one, or two people with one offender. Some of the churches used to have Circles of Accountability and Support, where a community of people, including some of the friends of the re-offender, work together to keep that person on track. Having adult mentoring programs would be very beneficial to help these people in the community.

Ben discussed an organization in Johnson County called Inside Out that helps offenders. He felt it is important that offenders have mentors, whether they are correctional officers, former correction officers, or former offenders. Is there benefit either at the subcommittee level, or at this level to have representation from the actual people who live this, whether it is an ex-offender or someone who was in prison and is now transitioning back into the community who is now gainfully employed and lives on their own.

Stacey stated one of the benefits of having a subcommittee dedicated to Community Outreach and Engagement is that we can reach people through the subcommittee. The goal of Community Outreach and Engagement is to talk to as many people as they can to get a cross section of input. There is an on-going effort, and he has participated in a few of them, where individuals helped us get into the public school system. We talked to certain demographic youth, and we also have on-going Kitchen Table Conversations where we're bringing 9 to 10 people together throughout the community in the evenings or whenever people are available to talk about the issues that impact their lives. We need as many voices as we can to address the issues, but there is a subcommittee dedicated to that. Regarding ex-offenders and re-integration, there is an Economic Opportunity Subcommittee that has representatives from many agencies, and that's a topic of discussion for that subcommittee. How do we as a community welcome people who have paid their debt to society, and how do we help them become fully functioning and productive citizens? It has been brought up, not only in the Economic Opportunity Subcommittee, but also in the Law Enforcement & Public Safety Subcommittee, the issue with banning the box working to eliminate the barrier to entry into the job market by not having people who have been convicted of misdemeanor crimes list that when applying for a job. This is a topic of conversation in a few different subcommittees.

LaSheila mentioned that she did want to share with the appropriate subcommittee the information regarding the event on the 26th.

Okpara reiterated that the discussion around metrics may be a little premature. He feels that it should not be rushed to have people look at how they are going to apply it, when they haven't defined what the work is yet.

Also, Rod felt that not having the appropriate stakeholders involved would be a mistake.

Stacey mentioned that we are constantly balancing the need to move at a pace that satisfies a lot of people who want results, but we have to get it right, because it is a complex issue. We need to move forward with figuring out who we need at the table, figuring out whether it is a policy or practice change, and then coming up with metrics. It is likely that this is going to take several more meetings in the subcommittees. Mary and Stacey need to provide draft updates to the City Council, the Board of Supervisors, and to the School Board. The challenge is making sure the subcommittees are actually accomplishing what they need to accomplish in such a short period of time. Stacey expects another two to three meetings of the subcommittees to finish those last three or four questions.

Leslie's concern is that if we keep throwing stuff on the table, we're not going to make any progress. Is our target population returning offenders, or is our target population kids? We have to focus on our priority and narrow in for a while. She is not saying we are going to ignore everybody else that's outside of that group, but without a smaller group to help us get more concrete, we are going to be swimming in data and possibilities forever. We can't just throw a new thing on the table every time we come together; however, she feels one of the functions of this group is to be a clearinghouse for information, because there are so many issues that get connected.

Gary felt that whether you are talking about ex-offenders or at-risk children, through the subcommittees that we have developed, you are going to be touched by all of them. Employment, housing, public safety, nurturing, mentoring, and we have to be sure that our subcommittees aren't silos. They are woven together to solve the problems of the community. As far as metrics or measuring outcomes, it may or may not be too early for some of the subcommittees to start identifying outcomes. The simplest way to start measuring them is a time study, point in time. Where were we when we started? What happened six months later or a year later? See what's changing if we have something to measure. Has gun violence gone down? What can we show on a timeline as being effective?

Stacey said that the mission of the Task Force originally was to address gun violence, and how to make this community safer and equitable for all people. That in and of itself is a massive undertaking. The subcommittees are moving at different paces, and they are dealing with different fundamental problems. All of them are complex, but some of them are little more straightforward than others. It becomes important that these voices are represented at the larger Task Force meetings, because we can share information, and that's why the conversations at our meetings are so important.

UPDATE ON REPORT WRITER:

Stacey reported that they are working out an agreement with Jennifer Hemmingsen, who is with the Gazette, to dedicate her time and talents to the Task Force to write the report. Jennifer will attend as many Task Force meetings as possible, and subcommittee meetings when she can. Stacey would like the subcommittee chairs, when they are organizing their meetings, to include Jennifer on the emails and be willing to make time so we have some consistency in how our report looks.

UPDATE ON CHAIR'S REPORT TO CEDAR RAPIDS CITY COUNCIL, CEDAR RAPIDS COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT AND LINN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

Stacey reported that he and Mary are on the City Council agenda for July 26th to give City Council an update on the progress that the Task Force has made. Also, Stacey will work with Supervisor Ben Rogers to try to find time when they can update the Board of Supervisors, and he will be working with representatives from the School Board as well to give them an update. All Task Force members and community members are welcome to attend these updates as well.

Stacey has sent a Doodle poll to the members regarding the meeting date/time for next month's Task Force meeting. This should be the last meeting which will be scheduled this way. After the summer is over, we will go back to our regular meetings, which are the first Thursdays of every month, at the City Services Center at 7:30 am.

ADJOURN:

Karl Cassell moved to adjourn. Ben Rogers seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned at 11:20 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jean Novak