

Safe, Equitable and Thriving (SET) Communities  
Task Force  
June 2, 2016  
Meeting Minutes

SET TASK FORCE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Paul Hayes, Alphonse O'Bannon, Stacey Walker, Mary Wilcynski, Trace Pickering, Leslie Wright, Akwi Nji, Dale Todd, Dorice Ramsey, Rodrick Dooley, Ben Rogers, Karl Cassell, LaSheila Yates, Jenny Schulz

SET TASK FORCE MEMBERS ABSENT:

John Tursi, Okpara Rice, Gary Hinzman, Rafael Jacobo, Carlos Grant

CITY LIAISON PRESENT:

Angie Charipar

CITY STAFF PRESENT:

Police Chief Wayne Jerman, Sgt. Cristy Hamblin, Administrative Assistant Jean Novak

The meeting was called to order by Co-Chair Mary Wilcynski at 7:43 AM. Karl Cassell moved to approve the minutes from May 5, 2016. Rodrick Dooley seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

Stacey Walker introduced Ben Rogers with the Linn County Board of Supervisors, who is replacing Linda Langston on the SET Task Force.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Chief Jerman gave an update regarding the early morning drive by shooting on 17<sup>th</sup> St. SE. One woman suffered a gunshot wound, which is not life threatening, and she was taken to the hospital. Shortly afterwards, a male walked into Mercy Hospital also suffering from a gunshot wound. Because it is an active investigation, Chief Jerman can't get into many of the details; however, all the parties are known to the police department for being associated with or members of the gangs or groups that they have been dealing with. The Chief is not aware of any recent incidents to spark this shooting. The conflict is about relationships, and that is a tough obstacle to solve. What is building this dislike, hate, distrust to cause these feuds and the use of deadly force?

One reason people join gangs is because of what they are not getting in their home environment. The gangs/groups care about one another in their own way, provide protection, and give them a sense of belonging. When the Chief met with Dr. Peek-Asa

at the College of Public Health, one of the areas that she is studying is the connectedness that youths and others have when they are members of gangs. One of the techniques that the justice system employs is to disconnect them from their associates because when they get involved with the system, parole and probation will have a condition that they can't associate with them. That disconnects them from that network.

#### UPDATE ON REPORT WRITER:

Angie reported, as was previously discussed, the SET Task Force has requested to hire a report writer to compose the report that will be presented to the City Council, Linn County, and the Cedar Rapids School District. Request for Proposals were sent out, and only one proposal was received. Stacey and Mary have received a copy of the RFP for their review, and Angie has reviewed it. The three of them will discuss it tomorrow, and if we agree to proceed, a contract will be prepared to hire the report writer. If for some reason, in the review of the proposal, the company cannot perform the task, then we would have to make a decision as to whether we go back out for another RFP, which in terms of timing, could take three or four weeks. Angie had anticipated that several others were going to respond to the RFP, but they did not.

Dale suggested that when it is time to write the report, not to make it too complex so the public can better understand it. Jenny felt that the longer the report, the fewer people will read it.

Angie stated that if the task force does not want all the things that were put in the scope of work, and we don't need it to be so technical, potentially we could work with the report writer. Part of the scope of work is assisting in getting the data from the different subcommittees, rather than using this meeting to put all the data together.

Dale stated that he has confidence in the ability of the people on this task force to find enough time to compile five or ten recommendations and make them presentable.

Leslie felt that most of the members don't have time to devote to prepare a quality report. This report will become the foundation for pursuing grant opportunities. She feels that there is value in having someone who can produce this report. It needs to be a professional grade report, and it's worth having that expertise from someone who makes their living doing this.

Mary stated that there have been some different grants come through, and we are holding off on that because she feels that you don't find a grant and then write a proposal. We have to know where we're at, and what we would want, and then we can go out and pursue funding once we really know what we're pursuing.

## DISCUSSION:

During interviews at Washington High School, Dale had a very interesting discussion with students. Out of the group that he interviewed, four out of five kids were from Chicago, Austin, Inglewood, etc. They live here and in other communities, and they are going back and forth pretty regularly. They discussed gang structure, and they call Cedar Rapids fake gangs because they know real gangs are from Chicago, and they talked about the differences between those two. When asked about stopping the violence, three out of five of them said, they don't see it stopping. These kids are part of the Chicago culture. When they are going back and forth so much, they really don't have a sense of community here, and they don't really have any sense of ownership. Also, they talk on social media and Instagram, and Instagram is where a lot of things start. When he asked about guns, they said they can get a gun in an hour.

Al thinks that there is confusion among the kids distinguishing between a gang and a group. They don't know what being in a gang really is. Three weeks ago, a kid from Kennedy said something on Facebook and got beaten up pretty badly. They talk about it on social media and it escalates. He feels the transitioning back and forth to Chicago, is based on family members that they want to see, and that transitioning and never getting settled is hard for the kids. Most kids will tell you they are not from Cedar Rapids, even when they've been here for five or six years. That's an identity crisis, and we should welcome them to make them feel like they are a part of Cedar Rapids.

Mary also felt the kids are not anchored to Cedar Rapids.

Stacey stated that at the small group student interviews at McKinley and Washington, every student he talked to said if they wanted to get a gun, they could get one fairly quickly.

Akwi felt that social media is fueling all of the emotions that are very normal for this age. Kids this age from 12 to 16, especially bicker about relationships. What's different is that social media is on 100% of time on their phones, and it is fueling the violence. There is never that off time away from it, and there's never that opportunity for emotions to simmer down. Their solution is to find a gun, because they don't know how to resolve the conflict.

Leslie discussed the issues about belonging and transitioning and what can be done to make them feel like they are rooted here, and somebody cares about them. We need to wrap other things around it, because social media has normalized violence as a response. They see it and hear it so much that they think that is what you do. The priority words we identified back in December were about opportunity, participation, and inclusion.

Al commented that diversity is not about the way we look, it's about the way we think.

Rod agreed that it is hard for these kids going through so much transition. They think tomorrow they are going to be going back to Chicago, and they are in limbo all the time. How do we really help these kids learn how to make it through these transitions and adjustments?

LaSheila felt that there's something about a person feeling like they're connected with their home town, and you can't try to disconnect them from their home town. You have to figure out a way to reframe it in a positive way. What are the positive connections you made here?

Stacey said that he meets many people in the minority community who feel as though they are hardly connected to their culture in Cedar Rapids. Also, many larger employers for decades have been trying to figure out how to retain minority professionals in Cedar Rapids. Kids will say that they are not really from Cedar Rapids, and they try to wear it as a badge of honor, since we all are proud of where we came from. We need to find a way to be more welcoming to minorities.

Mary agreed we need to figure how to create a sense of belonging, worth, and value within the minority population.

Karl felt that if kids are witnessing the violence that happens from our leaders, and they are saying it is ok. Also, we keep calling them "at risk", and then we wonder why they are going in that direction. They should just be called children. Jenny felt that some children are at greater risk than others. Karl stated that maybe we should refer to them as kids of color, but not refer to them as "at risk".

### ECONOMIC SUBCOMMITTEE

No members of the subcommittee were present; however, Stacey presented information on their behalf.

Their purpose statement is as follow:

- Develop a comprehensive plan that connects individuals in an employment gap with resources designed to provide meaningful skills, training and certifications that lead to gainful employment in existing high quality jobs.

Conditions to Change are as follows:

- Employment opportunities exist, but there is a struggle in filling positions with qualified candidates.
- Current disconnect with job placement efforts, despite high wage options.
- Barrier with getting potential candidates through the initial screening processes.
- Teachers and school counselors are not familiar with resources...the KPACE (Kirkwood Pathways for Academic Career Education and Employment) and/or Industry Sector Boards.

- Need for paid apprenticeships for high school and college students.
- Mid-size companies need visibility; they need to market paid internships and apprenticeships to students.

For Who & How Many:

- High School Students
- Underemployed Adults
- Unemployed Adults
- Out of School Youth (age 18-25)

Much discussion was heard; however, Mary suggested that we need the subcommittee chairs present, because no one is at the meeting who authored this, and task force members were struggling with how to interpret some of the language.

### CLOSING REMARKS

Stacey said the work for the members to complete is to fill out the Worktable for SET Task Force, which is contained in a link that has been sent to everyone previously in two emails. Also, he will send out a Doodle Poll to the members to set up a meeting time in approximately two weeks. Once we find a meeting date, it will be posted on the website. When the group re-convenes, the first order of business will be devoted to discussing Purpose Statements, Conditions To Change, and For Who & How Many.

Discussion was heard regarding the public comment period, and if it should be moved to the beginning of the meeting instead of at the end of the meeting. Angie said that we can do it however we want. On the meeting agenda, she put it at the end of the meeting because the majority of the time, people like to comment on what they've heard at the meeting. Dale felt we could have one public comment at the beginning and one at the end. Jenny felt that we don't have time to do the work of the committee, and that we should keep it at one time, and make it either at the beginning or the end. Stacey felt that maybe we could alternate the times.

Jenny Schulz moved to adjourn. Karl Cassell seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned at 9:20 AM

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Jean Novak*