

Alexandria Gang Prevention Community Task Force

Minutes

Wednesday

March 20, 2024

6 p.m. – 8 p.m.

Charles Houston Recreation Center

901 Wythe Street, Alexandria, VA 22314

- ❖ Please advise Chairman Dillon of any discrepancies regarding attendance. It is respectfully noted that Task Force members are expected to attend at least 75% of scheduled meetings. Please advise Chairman Dillon if you need to be excused.

Task Force Members Present: Jim Dillon (Chair, Business Community), Dana Wedeles (City Manager's Office), Timothy Beaty (Alexandria School Board), Rachael Dischner (Elementary School) Noraine Buttar (Department of Community and Human Services), Tim Brannon (Francis C. Hammond Middle School), Frank Broomell (Citizen At-Large), Steven Nelson (African American Community), Michael Burch (ACHS), and Brian Kirkes (Citizen At-Large)

Senior Policy Group on Gangs Members Present: Sheriff Sean Casey (Alexandria Sheriff's Office) and Mike Mackey (Alexandria Court Service Unit)

Guests/Staff: Michael Diggins (ACPS), John Contreras (ACPS), Cassandra Lewis (ARHA) Deputy Carlos Canas (ASO), Anggelo Suarez (APD), Richard Sandoval (APD), Michael Johnson (APD), Bennie Evans (APD), Lt. Tara May (APD), Linda Odell (CSU), Carlos Mendieta (CSU), and Liliana Jansen-Checa (Northern Virginia Family Service)

Alexandria Gang Prevention Community Task Force Members:

1. Councilman Canek Aguirre (Member, Alexandria City Council)
2. Councilwoman Alyia Gaskins (Member, Alexandria City Council)
3. Ms. Dana Wedeles (City Manager's Representative)
4. Mr. Timothy Beaty (Alexandria City School Board)
5. Mr. Michael Burch (Alexandria City High School Representative)
6. Mr. Tim Brannon (Francis C. Hammond Middle School, Middle School Representative)
7. Ms. Rachael Dischner (Elementary School Representative)
8. Mr. Steve Nelson (African American Community Representative)
9. Mr. Bryan Kirkes (Citizen Member, At-Large)

10. Mr. Jim Dillon (Chair/Business Community Representative)
 11. Ms. Marilyn Nevy Cruz (Vice Chair/Latino Community Representative)
 12. Reverend Anthony T. Oliver (Faith Based Community Representative)
 13. Mr. Roberto Gomez (Parent Representative)
 14. Mr. Mubashir Adelaja (At-Large, Representing Youth of the City)
 15. Mr. Everin Zelaya (At-Large, Representing Youth of the City)
 16. Mr. Frank Broomell (Citizen Member, At-Large)
 17. (ARHA Representative) – Vacant
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1. Call to Order and Roll Call: Chair Dillon called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m. All present confirmed their attendance. Chair Dillon announced filled vacancy for the school board, represented by Timothy Beaty.
 2. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes: There was a quorum to approve meeting minutes from January 17, and the minutes were approved.
 3. Our Lenses:
 - Focus on At-Risk and At-Promise kids, versus crew and gang members
 - Widen our age target, as early as 5th grade, while not losing site of the parents
 - Build opportunities and support outside of school and home
 - Look more critically at areas that face the biggest challenges
 - Advocate to support our partner efforts
 4. City Council Opening Comments: None.
 5. Public Comment: A member of the community raised a concern regarding an increase in crime in the City and was hopeful that the task force is working to address this increase.
 6. Partner and Task Force Member Updates:
 - Steve Nelson mentioned he became a mentor and emphasized the need to have mentors in the City.
 - Mr. Daniele shared data from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, as well as data from the Health and Safety Committee. Trends discussed included aggressive behavior, bullying, fighting, perception of gang presence and safety at schools, IPE data, and youth connectedness to positive adult figures.
 7. Sheriff Casey:
 - Sheriff Casey shared on OJJDP's (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention) five core strategies from the comprehensive gang model.

- The five strategies are community mobilization, opportunities provision, social intervention, suppression, organizational change and development.
- Chair Dillon asked about how we can continue to meet the strategies outlined in the OJJDP model.
- Ms. Buttar mentioned CADCA's seven strategies and how those seem to align with the five core strategies.

8. Chairman's Readout:

- Jim Dillon mentioned the ride along on February 28 with an APD Officer, Bryan Kirkes, and Luke Daniele.
 - Jim talked about the sectors in the City and the different trends and challenges within each.
 - Gang activity entails trafficking, drugs, and violence. Robberies also occur, which are connected to crew/gang activity.
 - Jim talked about resources needed and ideas for change such as implementing a curfew.
 - Jim mentioned the need for further collaboration with ARHA. At this time, a representative from ARHA introduced herself.
 - Jim mentioned the need to change the physical design of certain geographic areas.
 - Jim mentioned the need for a formalized Gang Unit.
 - Bryan Kirkes shared concerns including recently immigrated groups being harassed, and illicit activities taking place in ARHA controlled properties.
 - Jim announced the reinvigoration of the Senior Policy Work Group on Gangs and their plans to continue to meet to guide the direction of the AGPCTF.
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- Discussion took place about the need for more SROs.
 - Discussion took place about the need for a memorandum of understanding between the schools and SROs.
 - SRO Richard Sandoval reflected on some of the challenges he experiences at Francis Hammond Middle School.
 - Ms. Linda Odell talked about an idea for an SRO to present the history behind the SRO and school relationship.
 - There was discussion about the difference between school security officers and the SROs. A representative from the schools stated how security officers are "extra set of eyes" for school administrators and are responsible for monitoring the security of the school, whereas SROs are more for intervention, such as physical intervention.
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- Jim talked about disparate activities that we need to collaborate and bolster on, as well as the need to continue to advocate.
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- There was conversation around the APD sponsored community cookouts. Mr. Johnson will send list of dates and locations for these cookouts.
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- Mr. Mackey reminded folks about National Night Out in August.

- Mr. Daniele asked for volunteers to assist with Junior Academy, which begins on April 4 at City Hall.

9. New Topics:

- Officer Suarez talked about Futsal tournament set for 3/23 at the Chirilagua field, but it may be cancelled because of rain.
- Jim announced that final session of Pillars Series will be April 30.

10. Administrative Items:

- Task Force members shall attend at least 75 percent of the meetings of the bodies on which they serve each year.
- School Board member Timothy Beaty was recently designated to the Task Force. There is one remaining vacancy which is expected to be filled by ARHA Representative soon.

11. Next Meeting: Wednesday, May 15, 2024, 6 p.m. - 8 p.m. at Charles Houston Recreation Center.

Remaining 2024 Schedule

May 15

June 26

September 18

November 20

12. Meeting Adjourn: 7:49 p.m.