

COMMUNITY JUSTICE TASK FORCE MINUTES**Monday, September 10, 2012****Shields Meeting Room****Brookens Administrative Center****1776 E. Washington St., Urbana****MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Scott Bennett, Lynn Branham, Mark Driscoll, Sheila Ferguson, James Kilgore, Julian Rappaport, Michael Richards (Chair), William Sullivan

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Benita Rollins-Gay

OTHERS PRESENT:

Pattsi Petrie (County Board Member), Linda Lane (Administrative Assistant), various members of the community

Call to Order

Richards called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

Roll Call

Lane called the roll. Branham, Driscoll, Ferguson, Kilgore, Rappaport, and Richards were present establishing a quorum.

Approval of Agenda

Motion by Driscoll to approve the agenda; seconded by Ferguson. **Motion carried with unanimous support.**

Sullivan and Bennett entered the meeting late.

Public Participation

Pattsi Petrie shared two items she learned at last meeting. One is to think about how an individual enters the system and asked the committee to think about that when making recommendation. Second is that various agencies are spread across the community and it is hard for low income individuals to get to those services. She asked that the committee consider how to offer these services through a central location.

Jerehme Bamberger mentioned the positive Access Initiative program and is proud our community offers such a program. Mentioned that African-American youth represent about 22% of the community but represent about 82% of the juvenile detention population. He asked that the committee ask the hard questions, even if they don't think they will like the answers.

Aaron Ammons stated concern about the issue of race, especially in the black community. He stated how simple it is for an infraction to occur, especially for a black male, and the effects it has for facing possible felony charge, facing the possibility of losing job and facing the possibility of being incarcerated for a long time. He referenced a quote about men and women lie but numbers don't. Mentioned that a large number of arrests were for jaywalking and most of those were people under 30 years old. Many of those arrests were in a neighborhood where there are no sidewalks and he feels that these people are being targeted. Ammons stated he would like to see the numbers.

Ken Salo grew up with apartheid and feels that race is a systemic issue that keeps repeating itself. He stated that race is an American obsession and anarchy an African obsession and it is difficult making the issue real to people. He mentioned that suicide is the

55 leading cause of death among African-American youth. Salo also stated that $\frac{1}{3}$ of black families
56 live below the poverty level and that $\frac{1}{2}$ of all African-American children will grow up poor and
57 remain that way. He urged that the committee to take opportunity to deal with the systemic, the
58 structure, the underground, the difficult and often invisible issues.

59 Martel Miller stated that race is an issue that needs to be part of the task force. He
60 mentioned that in the 1960's African-Americans were $\frac{1}{4}$ % of the local jail populations and 3-4%
61 in federal penitentiaries. He pointed out that this task force has no black male member. He
62 didn't understand how the Champaign County jail was too old when most of the jails in Illinois
63 are over 75 years old. He stated prison should have programs to get a college education. Miller
64 said doesn't want money but suggested free health care and free childhood education for 20
65 years. He feels the task force can't put what's important on the table. He feels that a new jail
66 isn't needed; what is needed is affordable housing, and skills.

67 Mark Leff stated he is on the executive board of the local ACLU and concerned about
68 racial disparities in arrest statistics. He has supervised a number of students and has a hard
69 time explaining the explosion in incarceration. Leff stated that can't talk about the jail without
70 talking about race. He would like to make sure that the County Board and the consultant are
71 aware of the disparity issue and move in a direction that addresses it.

72 Chris Evans asked the committee for a motion to suspend the 5 minute speaking rule.
73 **Motion** by Kilgore to allow, seconded by Sullivan. **Motion approved.** Evans stated he's been
74 looking at the justice system from all different angles for 27 years. Said he isn't here to insist the
75 committee talk about race. He feels that in his experience the justice system is being used to
76 control the job market, as an intimidation tool against black youth, as population control and to
77 make money off of poor people. He said jail should be a place of correction and rehabilitation
78 and suggested that everyone stay in jail for a weekend to know the experience. Evans then
79 talked about the high cost of fines, e.g. \$125 for jaywalking, that most 17 year olds don't have to
80 pay the fine when can't even get a paper route job. He stated that this criminal justice system
81 has lost credibility. He suggested that former and/or current inmates be asked what is needed
82 in the system. He stated that this committee needs meetings going into at least next summer.

83 Byron Clark stated that this is an emotional issue for the community and that don't have
84 the option of not dealing with race. He asked committee if slaves were treated well. He said that
85 if asked back at the time it was happening, whites would have answered yes. Looking back
86 now, it is agreed that slaves weren't treated well. He feels that building a \$20 million jail is an
87 act of aggression against blacks. He doesn't want to look back at this time and have the
88 answer be that black people still aren't treated well.

89 Jay Wright said he is a motivational speaker who started non-profit organization to help
90 youth. He asked what the community would be like if that \$20 million was spent on building
91 relationships within the community instead of on a jail. He felt that can't build relationships
92 without talking about race. He challenged the committee to consider strengthening
93 relationships.

94 Johnnie Campbell told story of a young man, who had been in and out of jail since the
95 age of 15, that came to him after getting out of jail at age 22 with an idea for a rap video.
96 Campbell stated it sounded like he was glorifying where he was from, but the video says he
97 wanted to get out of jail and change the person he is. He was trying to become a productive
98 member of society but had no choice but to go back where he came from and who he was
99 because of the doors slammed due to his prison record. Campbell said the new racism isn't
100 you can't drink out of the same fountain but rather that you can't get a job. He also felt the \$20
101 million should be filtered throughout society.

102 Kilgore says committee should give serious vote of thanks to those who spoke. He
103 stated that have never received as much community input before tonight. He said that should
104 deal with race issue appropriately. He also said he has really listened to community concerns
105 about the system and hopes to be able to reflect on how to go forward.

106 Driscoll seconded the community recognition and how it points to how large the

107 disparities are. He recognized the racial issue but didn't feel that was the charge of this task
108 force. He thought maybe they needed to rethink that or that the County Board needed to rethink
109 that. He thought the charge of the task force was to look at resources already available and how
110 to fill the gaps.

111 Rappaport asked that the discussion continue while the community members were still
112 present so could have dialog with them. Richards said a motion to do so could be made after
113 the minutes were approved.

114

115 **Approval of Minutes – July 2, 2012**

116

117 **Motion** by Rappaport to approve minutes, seconded by Bennett. **Motion approved.**

118

119 **Public Participation Continued**

120

121 **Motion** by Kilgore to suspend rules to be able to have dialog with audience. Seconded
122 by Ferguson. Branham suggested having committee discuss using information from meetings
123 and feared the committee will keep talking and not get to any problem solving. Rappaport
124 suggested the discussion with the audience before the committee starts talking because he
125 doesn't want to lose the audience. Kilgore suggested maintaining a time-limited (20 minute)
126 dialog about whether race is something this committee needs to address. Felt that if it wasn't
127 addressed now, it would have to be sometime in the future. **Motion** by Kilgore of amendment to
128 suspend the rules for 20 minutes on the suspension of the rules. Seconded by Sullivan. **Motion**
129 **approved.** Richards stated back to original motion to suspend the rules. **Motion Approved.**

130

131 Ferguson stated to audience she is not shying away from race issue, but that if the task
132 force is to take on the race issue, she feels that the makeup isn't fitting. Branham stated there is
133 a movement in the community due to steamrolling effort to build a new jail. She is hoping that
134 everyone will come up with many ideas and throw them out there to present to the County
135 Board. She recommended a permanent committee with subcommittees. She is disturbed by the
136 racial disparity, but felt this isn't the committee to take it on. She thinks committee should fulfill
137 immediate charge and tend recommendations on the issues highlighted tonight.

138

139 Richards took a moment to let everybody know where committee stood. He noted that
140 the stated task force purpose is to gather information on current programs and costs to prevent
141 incarceration, reduce recidivism, and to promote rehabilitation and look for additional programs
142 and potential costs that the County doesn't utilize that may bolster current programs. Richards
143 stated that even though that is the stated charge, the committee can put anything in the report
144 that they want if the majority agree. Said anticipating work with IOPP will most likely continue
145 into the new County Board.

146

147 Kilgore asked the audience for suggestions to decrease incarceration, decrease
148 recidivism and promote rehabilitation and any additional programs. Rappaport feels have to
149 recommend explicitly that no way can the task force do its job if don't acknowledge race as part
150 of the issue. He would like concrete suggestions from the audience, ideas rather than
151 complaints. Several suggestions from the audience were: take the opportunity to broaden
152 dialog within the community; reduce incarceration by asking State's Attorney to look hard at how
153 she decides who to prosecute; there should be a different way of charging that should be made
154 public to hold elected officials accountable; that chiefs of police no longer engage in small-time
155 drug arrests, not saying ignore major kingpins, and not condoning drug dealing, but suggesting
156 go back to prosecuting important things such as rape, murder, burglaries and major drug cases;
157 research on how whites get charges dropped but blacks can't; research if it's the same officers
158 who do most of the arrests; think about the \$20 million instead of thinking of the jail; research
what the majority of people are in jail for; don't let people who run the jail be the experts on what
the jail needs but get input from community; widen communication to open spaces for other
voices

159 Branham mentioned that there are alternative resources that aren't available in this
160 community that are available in others, e.g. day reporting center. She suggested the task force
161 give its recommendations and add a recommendation of a second stage that be more
162 community based, to broaden the problem beyond the criminal justice system. Richards stated
163 that the 20 minutes was up. **Motion** by Ferguson to suspend rules for 10 more minutes.
164 Seconded by Kilgore. **Motion passed.**

165 More suggestions from the audience included: fund and resource local expertise; broaden
166 problem beyond criminal justice system; create jobs program; stop concentrating on poor
167 minority neighborhoods for policing; stop overcharging and pressuring plea bargains to get
168 reduced charges; release more people on their own recognizance; set realistic bail amounts.

169 Sullivan stated the Reitz would say the reason they concentrate on certain areas of the
170 community is because of complaints from citizens. He asked if it wouldn't be job neglect if didn't
171 protect citizens.

172 More audience suggestions were: information is needed from a group larger than a
173 focus group; taking that information to the general public and including the educational system,
174 mental health, and the churches; holding a series of workshops that must get overall input from
175 the community; develop preventive education program; create community youth project with
176 youth focused on drug prevention and activities that build up the family; the committee get an
177 overview from others who have accomplished what this committee is trying to do and that
178 whatever information is gathered should be shared with the community before presenting it to
179 the County Board.

180

181 **Establishment of Group Process for Development of Report**

182

183 Richards stated that brought the group back to the establishment of group process for
184 development of report. He asked for questions on the report or thoughts to be offered. Kilgore
185 asked how to deal with race and how to move ahead. He stated that the committee needs to
186 use some information from tonight in its recommendation. The committee has expertise in
187 mental health and pre-trial services. He suggested bringing in constituencies of each area.
188 Rappaport thinks should break into sub-groups to tackle certain issues and then come back as
189 group to discuss. It was stated that previous discussions determined the committee wasn't
190 subject to the open meetings act but Richards stated that is was. Ferguson thought maybe
191 should go to board with two activities to pursue: race as one and inventory of programs and
192 services as the other. Branham stated she would prefer concrete recommendations and would
193 like to hear everyone's ideas and then come to a consensus. She didn't think should go to
194 Board suggesting two groups, but rather suggest in their report the creation of a committee
195 dealing with race.

196 Ferguson asked for clarification on creation of subcommittees. Richards said committee
197 can do whatever as long as it is kept open. It was suggested to add one more appointee and
198 working in groups of three. Rappaport agreed, feeling it wouldn't be an impediment. Kilgore
199 disagreed stating it would be difficult due to schedules because of having to post the meetings
200 and minutes. Driscoll said prefers to keep with open meetings and be as open to the public as
201 possible. Bennett agreed. Discussion continued.

202 Rappaport wanted to know what is feasible from the people who actually deal with the
203 individual issues and how to move idea to action. Ferguson suggested starting with a meeting
204 where focus is one issue. Sullivan suggested the use of a white board and possibly dividing into
205 small groups. Kilgore asked if there was space to do workshops where discussion is circular
206 rather than going through a chair. He would prefer those with expertise to put their ideas
207 together then bring back to the whole group. Branham suggested circulating recommendations
208 between now and next meeting to see what is there and create a structure from there. Thinks it
209 is helpful to get as much information as possible in writing and then start talking about those
210 ideas. Discussion continued.

211 Richards stated that the ideas should be submitted by September 20. Ferguson asked if
212 there was a specific topic. Richards noted that it seemed people would prefer it be wide open.
213 Kilgore suggested that some would not be totally formulated but discussion will develop a
214 concrete recommendation.

215 Kilgore asked where the mandate to continue the task force stood. Richards stated it
216 would need to be on October agenda or it would have to wait until the new Board in December.
217 Kilgore asked if it could be made a priority since this group will cease to exist in October.
218 Richards stated he will mention it to the Board and went on to say that if task force is decertified
219 then two or three could continue to meet on their own.

220 Ferguson voiced concern over wide open discussion stating that the longer meeting
221 starts to break down and said committees tend to have better product when focus on a topic.
222 Driscoll agreed. It was suggested that some ideas will get lost if don't get all ideas out there up
223 front. A larger open ended discussion was suggested to identify the categories to be focused on
224 later. Discussion continued.

225 Branham noted that everyone's ideas will be written differently with some longer than
226 others, but can then take those to working groups. Bennett felt all need to get something in
227 writing and need to identify the larger subgroups before leaving the next meeting.

228

229 **Discussion – Next Steps**

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231 Richards noted this area has been covered already.

232

233 **Other Business**

234

235 Kilgore stated that Champaign Urbana Citizens for Peace and Justice is having a public
236 forum on alternatives to incarceration on Friday, September 21 from 6-8pm at the Urbana City
237 Council. It will be on UPTV, but wasn't sure if it would be live or re-broadcast later. He stated
238 that this event is open to the public.

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240 **Next Meeting Date**

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242 Richards reminded all that the next meeting would be Monday, September 24, 2012 at
243 6:00pm in the Jennifer K. Putman Meeting Room.

244

245 **Adjournment**

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247 The meeting adjourned at 9:25 p.m.

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249

250 Respectfully Submitted,

251

252 Linda Lane

253 Administrative Assistant