

CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES COLLABORATIVE COMMISSION
MEETING NOTES – APRIL 11, 2018
CITY HALL, RM 3008

ATTENDANCE

Ronnie Campbell
Julie Crawford
Laura Durham
Kurt Huffman

Melissa Little
Jamica Littles
Mike Mackey
Michelle Smith Howard
Gwen Mullen

Edward O’Keefe
Stephen Parker
Malka Zeefe

Excused Absent

Robin Blair
Rose Dawson
Karen Graf
Kate Garvey

Tammy Mann
Brian Orenmaa
Isra Shuster
Kelley Organek

Councilman Will Bailey
Councilman John Chapman
Charlotte Loesch
J. Glenn Hopkins

Michael Suppa

Unexcused Absent

Joyce Rawlings

Staff

Chelsea Eickert
Jonathan Leonberger

Noraine Buttar
Stacey Hardy-Chandler

Guests

Sarah Bagley

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF DRAFT MARCH MINUTES

The minutes were reviewed and approved after correcting a mistype in Edward O’Keefe’s name.

OLD BUSINESS - CHAMPIONS OF CHILDREN AWARDS UPDATE

Eric Williams notified the Commission of the flyer’s completion, and asked the group to circulate the flyer and put forth nominations.

NEW STAFF INTRODUCTIONS

Introductions were made between the Department of Community and Human Services’ (DCHS) new Director of the Center for Children and Families, Stacey Hardy-Chandler, and the Commission.

NEW BUSINESS –PRESENTATION ON JUVENILE CRIME AND GANGS

Mike Mackey provided a brief overview of the work of the Court Service Unit (CSU), referring members to the Power Point presentation in their packets. The CSU is a state agency; comprised of about 80% State employees and 20% City employees The CSU serves the Juvenile & Domestic Relations Court, responding to juvenile delinquency matters (youth arrested for crimes) and civil matters such as custody, visitation and protective orders.

Juvenile justice has transformed across the country and across Virginia. In Alexandria, police data has shown all-time lows in the past few years, with a large drop in juvenile crime in the past ten years. Some of the decrease is attributed to controllable factors, while other factors are environmental. To give context to these improvements, Mike Mackey gave an example of how one youth died overnight at a correctional center. Due to this, along with the discovery of poor outcomes, DJJ was prompted to figure out how to improve services. There was justice by geography, meaning punishments were inconsistent in different areas (e.g., Charlottesville may apply different punishments than in Alexandria or Richmond). There was a need for equity across the commonwealth. The Department set forth a transformation plan.

The goal of prevention is to keep youth out of the criminal justice system and an element of that is gang prevention. The Regional Gang Taskforce was developed years ago, encompassing fifteen law enforcement partners; the City eventually built their own local task force. In 2007, there were twenty gang motivated incidences, and numbers have dropped significantly since. In terms of what the Commission can do, he suggested a referral to the gang-violence Intervention, Prevention and Education (IPE) program as critical, if a youth is thought to be at-risk. It was noted that the IPE prefers over-referrals it is preferable if the community over-refers to the IPE program, as opposed to under-referrals, and that the gang model also emphasizes discussing matters in the community. Another important activity people can provide is mentoring a youth for one to two hours a week; the Alexandria Mentoring Partnership (AMP) has recruited 1,000 mentors over 10 years.

Diversion works 80% of the time. This last year, there were 116 cases. The Code allows the CSU to offer diversion in many cases. However, if diversion is not an option or does not work effectively, the unit petitions cases, which then is heard by the Juvenile & Domestic Relations Court (Judges). The effort at that time is community safety, accountability, and an opportunity to get treatment. It was asked if a parent or guardian is with them throughout this entire process – for example, if a youth must be incarcerated. The parents are fully aware of every step of the process, although they do not go to the detention center at the time of incarceration (please note that family involvement is critical, and visitation is provided and encouraged). If the youth is found guilty of a crime, the unit will conduct an investigation. The youth often will be placed on probation. They follow a best practices model, one which uses an effective community approach, with the effort focused on getting a youth off of probation. In sum, transformation works. Over time, there have been 160 youth on probation; reduced to 65 youth over the last couple of years.

It was noted that ACPS plays a critical role in this process – see flow chart for details. A critical piece is transitioning out of detention. ACPS will do transition hearings, and have probation officers attend. For any questions about the Court Service Unit and intervention and presentation, contact Mike Mackey at mike.mackey@alexandriava.gov.

NEW BUSINESS – DISCUSSION ON NEXT STEPS FOR SCHOOL SAFETY

The question was asked about how the Commission can help in this capacity. In the next week, there will be information on A.L.I.C.E training and school safety information.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Advocacy

Stephen Parker will share the presentation he made at the Advocacy Committee meeting with the Executive Committee. A priority is to make sure Children and Youth Master Plan (CYMP) aligns with the budget.

Budget and Finance

Malka Zeefe expressed that Jamica Littles did a great job speaking at the budget hearing.

Outreach and Membership

The Commission has three vacancies.

Research and Data

Chelsea Eickert is training this Committee on executing their work.

Implementation Monitoring Committee

There is a progress report in the packet that the Commission may review.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Volunteer Appreciation Ceremony is on April 23rd at 6:30 p.m. All Commissioners are encouraged to attend.

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month. There are regular training in this area, such as the Stewards of Children training. Many additional resources are being promoted throughout April.