

Study Committee to Reduce Gun Violence
Minutes
Friday, December 11, 2020 – 10:00 am
Via Zoom

1. Welcome – Shakira Williams, Chair
2. Roll Call – Taisha Steele, Secretary

Present: Shakira Williams, Taisha Steele, Nicole Ross, Decca Knight, Rabbi Kathy Cohen, Bishop Jamaal Jackson, Stacey Sheppard, Hannah Oakes, Vice Mayor Joe Cobb

3. Approval of Minutes from November 13 meeting. Due to lack of quorum of the Study Committee membership, approval of minutes was tabled until the January meeting when both November and December minutes will be considered.
4. Update from RPD. Deputy Chief Chester Smith, Captain Adam Puckett, and Alisha Morrison, Senior Crime Analyst – I STAR Center shared updated data on violent crime related to gun violence. The data is included with the minutes for reference. Captain Puckett discussed efforts of the newly formed Gang Unit in both pre-empting and reducing gang activity. Mr. Lloyd Merchant also updated the Study Committee on his efforts as the new Community Mitigation and Volunteer Coordinator.
5. Update from Working Group Initiatives and Action Items presented to City Council on November 16. Vice Mayor Cobb gave an overview of the Study Committee priorities presented to Council and expressed gratitude to the Study Committee and Working Group members for their efforts on behalf of Council.
6. Working Group Break Out Sessions to continue work on priority initiatives, action items and budget recommendations for next six months to one year. Reports of working groups included:

Safer Neighborhoods (Nicole Ross, Rev. Tim Harvey)

Nicole Ross reported:

1. Update on *Little Blue Truck* audio re-recording
Nicole confirmed with Tommy Page and the video will be ready for review on Monday, December 14. We will review as a Team and then we will roll out to full study group once approved. After which we will sent to RCPS to share with K-3 classrooms.
2. *Bridging the Community Gap* completed
Event was a success! Very impactful. Rita Joyce from FEDUP spoke. YouthHQ and Nicole Ross led the pledge and youth hung our ornament on the tree crafted by Pastor Tim.

Vice Mayor Cobb opened and closed the event. Event did stream via Facebook Live on City of Roanoke's page. We were compliant with the under 25 persons for gatherings.

3. Update on visual art project (identified as our goal for the next six months in report to City Council) We will table this and revisit in March 2021 due to COVID restrictions
 - a. Our budget request is for \$2,000
 - i. \$1,500 for building materials for the mobile chalkboard (Phase 1 of the project)
 - ii. \$500 for resources related to the interactive GIS map (Phase 2 of the project)
 - b. Several resources/persons as possible contacts for help with the data collection/GIS phases of the project were mentioned.
 - i. The Opportunity Atlas: <https://www.opportunityatlas.org/>
 - ii. ArcGIS Story Maps: <https://www.esri.com/en-us/arcgis/products/arcgis-storymaps/buy>
 - iii. RPD GIS Team
 - iv. Someone from Virginia Tech with skills in this area
 - v. Dr. Liz Ackley from Roanoke College
4. **Meeting with Neighborhood group leaders virtually.**
 - We will work with the Roanoke Neighborhood Alliance (RNA) to get information on community association group leaders.
 - Ms. Amazetta will invite Nicole Ross to the next RNA meeting to share our ideas to assist the community leaders by offering 1-2 members of the Safer Neighborhoods team to join meetings and also work with Decca Knight to provide trauma trainings to empower the leaders of these groups.
 - We will work with the marketing team and Vice Mayor to see how we can begin a social media page possibly run by the Safer Neighborhoods Group and assist in getting a designated phone number that is not to the "police" or "crisis lines" that will promote our "If I see something, I will say something" component of our pledge.
 - Cherry Hill Neighborhood has organized and Daphney Grogan and Sharon Hardy are the leaders of that community group.
5. Upcoming events/meetings
 - a. Study Committee January Meeting: Friday, January 8, 2021, 10:00 am

Education (Taisha Steele, Decca Knight)

Decca Knight reported that "The education subcommittee preliminarily recommends using *Positive Action* in conjunction with *Communities that Care*. *Communities that Care* is a framework for collaboration among community partners that we will use to elevate community solutions to gun violence prevention in the Roanoke Valley. Positive Action outcomes regarding weapons can be found here (<https://www.positiveaction.net/research-outcomes#weapons>). It is our hope that this will also promote the healthy development of social-emotional learning and community

support for our youth in Roanoke City. This is being recommended to all organizations in Roanoke City that serve children.

We will pilot a program with Family Services in five organizations (West End, Presbyterian Community Center, Boys and Girls Club, Cultural Arts for Engagement, and Community Youth Program at St. John's) that support students in grades K-12. We will do this by facilitating a few lessons to verify that it is impactful. Upon completion of the pilot program, the education committee will gather feedback from participating organizations and stakeholders. The education subcommittee has researched and reviewed other programs that will be explored if we find the preliminary recommendation to be unsuccessful in the pilot phase.

If the recommendation *is* successful we are asking for assistance with funding for training staff as well as \$15 per student participant. We are in the process of gathering data to determine the final number of youth participants."

Reducing Gang Violence and Recidivism (Antwyne Calloway, Rabbi Kathy Cohen)

Rabbi Cohen reported that the group began in-depth work on engaging the five key strategies of a comprehensive gang violence reduction model. Those steps include:

- **Community Mobilization:** Involvement of local citizens, including former gang-involved youth, community groups, agencies, and coordination of programs and staff functions within and across agencies.
- **Opportunities Provision:** Development of a variety of specific education, training, and employment programs targeting gang-involved youth.
- **Social Intervention:** Involving youth-serving agencies, schools, grassroots groups, faith-based organizations, police, and other juvenile/criminal justice organizations in "reaching out" to gang-involved youth and their families, and linking them with the conventional world and needed services.
- **Suppression:** Formal and informal social control procedures, including close supervision and monitoring of gang-involved youth by agencies of the juvenile/criminal justice system and also by community-based agencies, schools, and grassroots groups.
- **Organizational Change and Development:** Development and implementation of policies and procedures that result in the most effective use of available and potential resources, within and across agencies, to better address the gang problem.

* Source: Spergel, 1995, pp. 171–296.

City Services and Rapid Response (Shakira Williams, Stacey Sheppard)

Stacey Sheppard reported that the Working group will:

- Create flyer with resources for coordinated response team members to enable direct resources for survivors and their families
- Ensure adequate and appropriate training is provided and help for team members who are responding to issues of violence within the community. (Trauma Basics 101, Role Playing 101, Mandated Reporter Training etc.)
- Ensure that victims who decide not to cooperate with law enforcement will still be provided services. In some instances, victims who refuse to cooperate with LE still have the needed financial resources to relocate as well as mental health.
- Complete the volunteer job descriptions for the coordinated community response member(s).
- Support FEDUP being a stand-alone 501-c3 and the continuation of them getting supports from the Council of Community Services.
- Support FEDUP having a cell phone, hotline to ensure community needs

Marketing and Communications (Courtney Penn): The Marketing and Communications Team will hold an initial strategy session on Thursday, December 4, 2020, 1:30-3:30 pm, facilitated by Chris Turnbull.

7. Next Steps and Meeting Dates:
Study Committee December Meeting – Friday, January 8, 2020 – 10:00 am
8. Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned by Chair, Shakira Williams.