

## **Alexandria Gang Prevention Community Task Force**

### **Minutes**

Wednesday

June 21, 2023

6:00 p.m. – 8:00 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: Mr. Jim Dillon Chair/Business Community Representative, Ms. Rachael Dischner (Elementary School Representative), Mr. Michael Burch (Alexandria City High School Representative) Ms. Noraine Buttar (City Manager's Representative/DCHS Representative), Ms. Fay Slattery (Member, At-Large), Reverend Anthony T. Oliver (Faith Based Community Representative), Mr. Tim Brannon (Middle School Representative), Mr. Steve Nelson (African American Community Representative), Everin Zelaya (At-Large Member From and Representing the Youth), Mubashir Adelaja (At-Large Member From and Representing the Youth)

Senior Policy Group on Gangs Members Present: Mr. Mike Mackey (Court Service Unit Director), Mr. Antoine Coleman (Commonwealth Attorney's Office)

Guests/Staff: Ms. Kate Reen, (Program Manager, Northern Virginia Family Service) Dr. Melanie Kay-Wyatt (Superintendent, Alexandria City Public Schools), Michael Diggins, (Alexandria City Public Schools), Pierrette Finney, (Alexandria City Public Schools), John Contreras (Alexandria City Public Schools), Ms. Kennetra Wood (Executive Director of Equity and Alternative Programs, Alexandria City Public Schools), Jacquay Plummer, (Director, Charles Houston Recreation Center), Laura Durham, ( Deputy Director, Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities), Sheriff Sean Casey (Sheriff's Office), Carlos Canas, (Sheriff's Office), Ian Torrance, (Alexandria Police Department), Michael Johnson (Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities) Michael Kutner

Alexandria Gang Prevention Community Task Force Members:

1. Councilman Canek Aguirre (Alexandria City Council)
2. Councilwoman Alyia Gaskins (Member, Alexandria City Council)
3. Mr. Willie Bailey (Alexandria City School Board)

4. Ms. Noraine Buttar (City Manager's Representative/DCHS Representative)
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. Mr. Khalil Coates (At-Large Member, Representing Youth of the City)
13. Reverend Anthony T. Oliver (Faith Based Community Representative)
14. Mr. Roberto Gomez (Parent Representative)
15. (Private Schools Representative) - Vacant
16. (Citizen Member, At-Large) - Vacant
17. (At-Large, Representing Youth of the City) - Vacant

1. Call to Order and Roll Call: Chair Dillon called the meeting to order at 6:03pm. All present confirmed their attendance.
2. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes: Ms. Buttar made a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded, and members approved.
3. City Council Opening Comments: None.
4. Public Comment: None
5. Partner and Task Force Member Updates:
  - Mr. Tim Brannon stated that a soccer tournament was organized and held at Francis C. Hammond Middle School.
  - Ms. Norraine Buttar mentioned that the Alexandria Youth Leadership Conference will be held at the First Baptist Church on August 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup> for rising 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> graders.
  - Mr. Steve Nelson spoke out about the drug activities and fights that continue to occur at the McDonald's in the Bradlee shopping center.

- Mr. Michael Burch stated that the SRO also ran a supplementary program at Minnie Howard for 37 students as they transition to a new academy and the students are currently on the graduation rate and are receiving academic support two days after school.
- Segreant Torrance stated that there have been large police presence at the Bradlee Shopping Center and that temporary cameras have been placed at the Bradlee Shopping Center.
- The SRO's will focus on Juvenile Crime Enforcement and will respond to calls relating to criminal activity. Currently, barring notices are being issued in order to cease repeated offenders from trespassing.
- Dr. Melanie Kay-Wyatt stated that the schools in Alexandria City are working to be proactive with conducting "walkabouts" in the community.
- Mr. Carlos Mendieta stated that the "Gang Resistance Education and Training" will be implemented locally in all court services.
- Ms. Kate Reen stated that the Alexandria Fund just released funding.
- Mr. Mike Mackey stated that there has been an increase in population at the Detention Center and Sheltercare. Mr. Mackey also mentioned that the Alexandria Court Service Unit is actively recruiting for the Gang Prevention Coordinator Project Manager.
- Pastor Anthony Oliver and Mike Johnson stated that there will be a community event held for the kids in the community on July 29, 2023.

#### 6. Chairman's Readout:

**Revisiting our lenses:** Chairman Dillon revisited the lenses and continued to focus on the target to best help:

- At-Risk and At-Promise kids vs. Crew and Gang members.
- Widen our age target, as early as 5<sup>th</sup> grade while also 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 partners efforts.

#### **Recalibrating/What I'm Hearing:**

- Level Set (Creating pro-social activity and advocacy)
- Everyone is stretched too thin (Continue to communicate)
- Assignments
- Collaborate (Bridging the gaps and not overlapping).
- Drugs connected with gangs (How to prevent from kids getting into gangs?)
- Chronic Absenteeism
- Truancy recently (Centered around mental illness, depression, drugs, etc.)
- Resources (How to get the kids back in school and keeping them there.)

## Efforts We've Completed

- The Annual Gang Prevention Soccer Tournament

## Initiatives in Motion

- Junior City Academy (The program will begin in Fall 2023)
- Sheriff's Cadet Program (The program will begin in Fall 2023)
- Pillars Round #2 (Possibly bringing the Pillars into the schools.)

### 7. Bradlee Shopping Center Brainstorm:

Chairman Dillon led a brainstorm presentation with potential ideas to help offset some negative behavior that is currently occurring at Bradlee Shopping center.

Suggestions included, site modifications, increasing awareness, creating incentives, and the addition of prosocial activities to deter our youth from loitering at the shopping center.

### 8. Ideation for New Programs:

- Year-Round Cross Recreation Center Competition/Activities.
- Fall Basketball Tournament
- Forum for older community members
- Social Voice – Weapons detection and Anonymous Notification Education
- Afterschool programs, financial literacy and work opportunities.
- Gang Prevention Task Force and Opioid Work Group Collaboration
- Public Art

### 9. New Business:

- Mr. Mike Mackey stressed the importance of becoming a Youth Mentor for 1 hour a week.

### 10. Administrative Items:

- Task Force members shall attend at least 75 percent of the meetings.
- **Gang Prevention Brochure** – Waiting on Internal City Communications for final draft.
- There is 1 vacancy currently open. (**ARHA Representative or ARHA Resident**)

- Backpack and School Drive (**August 19, 2023, at the Charles Houston Recreation Center, 800 backpacks will be distributed at Ramsey Elementary after the drive.**)

11. Next Meeting: September 20, 2023, 6:00pm-8:00pm at Charles Houston Recreation Center in the Preschool room.

**Scheduled Meetings for the remainder of the year:**

- September 20, 2023, 6:00pm-8:00pm
- October 18, 2023, 6:00pm-8:00pm

12. Meeting Adjourn: At 7:36pm