

Alexandria Gang Prevention Community Task Force

Minutes

Wednesday

May 17, 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. Marilyn Nevy Cruz (Vice Chair/Latino Community Representative), Ms. Rachael Dischner (Elementary School Representative), Ms. Noraine Buttar (City Manager's Representative/DCHS Representative), Mr. Khalil Coates (At-Large Member Representing Youth of the City), Mr. Bryan Kirkes (Citizen At-Large), Reverend Anthony T. Oliver (Faith Based Community Representative), Mr. Tim Brannon (Middle School Representative), Mr. Willie F. Bailey (Alexandria City School Board), Mr. Steve Nelson (African American Community Representative), Roberto Gomez (Member, Parent of Youth)

Senior Policy Group on Gangs Members Present: Katherine Beye (Commonwealth Attorney's Office)

Guests/Staff: Michael Diggins, (Alexandria City Public Schools), Ms. Kate Reen, (Program Manager, Northern Virginia Family Service), John Contreras (Alexandria City Public Schools), Ms. Asia Jones (Outreach Specialist, DCHS) Officer Bennie Evans and Officer Anggelo. Suarez (Alexandria Police Department), Sheriff Sean Casey (Sheriff's Office) Michael Johnson (Recreation Department), Adie Adelaja (Youth community member)

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 6:05pm. 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 Updates: Officer Evans spoke about the recent shooting incident that occurred on Wythe Street and stated that there is no information to provide at this time regarding the shooting. The Alexandria Police department is in the process of putting more officers in the neighborhoods to patrol the areas.
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.
- Advocate to support our partners efforts.
- Build opportunities and try to create resources outside of school and home time, i.e. after school, weekends and summer.

- Widen our age target, as early as 5th grade while also not losing site of the parents.
- Look more critically at areas that face the biggest challenges.

Efforts We Have Completed:

- In partner with the CSU group, the Gang Prevention Task Force was able to supply 25 jerseys, uniforms, etc. for the SRO soccer program and also partnership with the Alexandria Police and the Sheriff's office potentially getting scrimmages on board.
- Pillar Series: In the process of concluding the first pilot round of the Pillar Series.

Initiatives in Motion:

- The Junior City Academy is tentatively set to begin in the Fall on September 11, 2023, for 7 consecutive weeks. The academy will be supported by ACHS, Teacher Administration, etc.
- Sherriff's Cadet Program. Currently in the process of finding ACHS students who are interested in a career in Law Enforcement. Sheriff Casey stated that the Sherriff's Cadet program will model the Metropolitan Police Department Cadet Program which will act as a full-time job with benefits.
- APD and Recreation Center Cookouts: Seven cookouts have been held and there will be 3 Community cookouts held for the remainder of this month: May 18, 2023, at the South Port Apartments, May 23, 2023, at Adkins Housing and May 25, 2023, at the Mt. Vernon Rec. Field.

7. Action Planning Readouts: Reverend Oliver stated that he is attempting to organize a block party and has gathered with other pastors and Mr. Mike Johnson to prepare to host this event.

Ms. Cruz stated that she would like to conduct a soccer program in the summer that will be centered around Mental Health Awareness, however, funding is an issue. Ms. Cruz is currently networking and reaching out to foundations in order to obtain funding.

Chairman Dillon, Mr. Coates and Mr. Bailey are closing out the pilot Pillars series held at Charles Houston Recreation Center.

A second session of Pillars series is in the works and the team is looking to partner with Casa Chirilagua. Tentative start time is Fall 2023.

8. Current Environment:

Chairman Dillon led a discussion to help generate conversation in the room regarding a variety of topics impacting our schools and community. The discussion included a generalization of attendance levels of different

students, where some of the current tension between youth members is occurring and pointed to potential solutions or needs in which the task force can focus. These items include:

- Additional IPE resources.
- Provide more activities/support of school hours.
- Begin to incent behavior.
- Reevaluate Truancy.

9. Bradlee Shopping Center Brainstorm:

Chairman Dillon led a brainstorm session 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.

10. Administrative Items:

- Task Force members shall attend at least 75 percent of the meetings.
- Gang Prevention Brochure (Still in progress/Waiting on internal City communications for final draft.)
- There will be 2 vacancies open. **(One youth At-Large Member and one ARHA Representative)**

11. New Business: None

12. Next Meeting: June 21, 2023, 6:00pm-8:00pm at Charles Houston Recreation Center in the Preschool room.

Scheduled Meetings for the remainder of the year:

- June 21, 2023, 6:00pm-8:00pm
- September 20, 2023, 6:00pm-8:00pm
- October 18, 2023, 6:00pm-8:00pm

13. Meeting Adjourn: At 8:10pm

