

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

MINUTES

March 22, 2016

In Attendance

Councilman Chip Henderson, Committee Chair, called the meeting to order in the Council Assembly Room at 3:05 p.m. A quorum was present, including Council Chairwoman Carol Berz, Vice Chair Moses Freeman and Councilmen Chris Anderson, Russell Gilbert, Larry Grohn, Yusuf Hakeem, Jerry Mitchell and Ken Smith. Also present was the assigned attorney, Shannon Harmon, and Nicole Gwyn, CMC, Council Clerk.

Approval of Minutes

On motion of Councilman Anderson and seconded by Councilman Gilbert, the minutes from the last meeting (January 5, 2016) were approved as published.

Panelists & Order of Meeting

Councilman Henderson introduced the following panelists:

- Chattanooga Police Department: Chief Fred Fletcher
- City of Chattanooga Public Safety Coordinator: Paul Smith
- Hamilton County Criminal Court: Judge Tom Greenholtz
- Hamilton County Juvenile Court: Judge Rob Philyaw
- United States Attorney's Office: Chris Pool, AUSA
- Hope for the Inner City: Paul Green, Executive Director, and April Boozer, Director, Father to the Fatherless program

Councilman Henderson instructed panelists speak from the podium to give a 5-10 minute presentation describing their role in public safety and their role, if any, in the Violence Reduction Initiative (VRI). After presentations, Councilman Henderson would open the floor for questions from the Council to the panelists. He instructed councilpersons to limit themselves during the Q&A session to one question and a follow-up, if needed.

Panel Discussion: Crime and Safety/VRI

Chief Fletcher responded to Councilman Hakeem's question on what needs to be done to build trust between law enforcement and the community. He informed the Council on why he considers VRI and focused deterrence to be the premier 21st Century policing philosophy. He also informed the Council of the weekly meetings to improve the process of VRI.

Councilman Gilbert commented on improving the consequences of gang member actions and giving alternatives for people committing crimes. His question:

- What can the city and its VRI partners do to work together?

Discussion ensued between Councilman Grohn and Mr. Smith on open records requests regarding data that either remained unanswered or took several months when answered. He also voiced concerns about emails to Mr. Green that were still unanswered.

Councilman Grohn had questions on the August 2014 contract with Hope for the Inner City and Father to the Fatherless that specifies that a database would be created. His questions:

- Where is the database on partners and services given? Is there a sufficient duration for classes?
- Where are monthly reports sent to the Finance Department?

Councilman Grohn voiced concerns about copies of invoices from Hope for the Inner City that took five months to receive. Mr. Smith responded to the questions on the invoices and the Service Point database utilized by Hope for the Inner City.

Discussion ensued between Chairwoman Berz and Judge Greenholtz about challenges with state law. Her questions:

- What changes need to happen at the state level relative to the most serious offenders to ensure that there is not a revolving door? (Judge Greenholtz responded)
- Should laws be addressed at the state level? (Chief Fletcher responded)

Discussion ensued between Councilman Smith and Attorney Pool. Councilman Smith's questions:

- How many cases have we been able to prosecute through the federal prosecutor?
- Is having a federal prosecutor funded by the City helping with VRI?
- What does the federal government lack in relation to VRI: number of good cases or a lack in prosecutors to process cases quicker?

Attorney Pool spoke on the types of crimes that are federally prosecutable and the benefit of having a city-funded prosecutor at the federal level.

Councilman Anderson commented on the fact that a key partner is missing from today's meeting. He informed the Assembly that the Council had received a letter from District Attorney General Neal Pinkston that raised many questions about VRI. He indicated that District Attorney would not meet with the Council today and would only engage the Council when compelled to do so. He informed the Assembly of Section 8.5 of the City Charter that states that the City Council may issue subpoenas and, after having consulted the City Attorney, **Councilman Anderson moved** to issue a subpoena to District Attorney Neal Pinkston to appear before this body in seven (7) days. He was seconded by Councilman Mitchell. The motion carried. Councilman Henderson stated that the Council would direct the City Attorney to issue the subpoena.

Councilman Mitchell thanked Councilman Anderson and all panelists. A discussion ensued between him and Ms. Boozer on the following questions:

- What are Hope for the Inner City's programs doing to break the cycle of drug abuse?
- Is there anything further that the city can do for those clients that must be referred elsewhere for drug abuse?

Ms. Boozer spoke about Hope for the Inner City's staff therapist and the need to refer some clients to other facilities.

Councilman Grohn followed up on his previous questions to Mr. Smith and Mr. Green about his open records requests. He also informed the Council of the initial meeting with Mr. Smith on October 29 and noted that the meeting led to his second open records request, which remains unanswered.

Councilman Henderson called a point of privilege to ask the following questions:

- Is there a way to partner with federal agencies to build cases?
- Is there a way to build federal cases with federal partners that get these cases into federal court with longer sentences?

Chief Fletcher responded to what CPD and VRI partners have already been doing to regarding federal cases.

Adjournment

On motion of Vice Chair Freeman, Councilman Henderson adjourned the meeting at 5:00 p.m.