

**MINUTES OF BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF GUILFORD COUNTY
JOINT WORK SESSION**

Greensboro, North Carolina
May 7, 2019

The Guilford County Board of County Commissioners met in a duly noticed Joint Work Session in conjunction with Greensboro City Council in a duly noticed meeting at 3:30PM in the Guilford County BB&T Conference Room located at 201 W. Market Street, Greensboro, NC.

PRESENT: Guilford County Board of Commissioners
Chairman Alan Branson, presiding; Commissioners Kay Cashion, Carolyn Q. Coleman, J. Carlvena Foster, Justin Conrad and Melvin “Skip” Alston.

Greensboro City Councilmembers
Mayor Nancy Vaughn; Mayor Pro-Tem Yvonne Johnson;
Councilmembers Sharon Hightower, Tammi Thurm, Justin Outling,
Marikay Abuzuaiter, Michelle Kennedy and Nancy Hoffman.

ABSENT: Vice Chairman Jeff Phillips; Commissioners Hank Henning and Alan Perdue; and City Councilmember Goldie Wells.

ALSO PRESENT: County Manager Marty Lawing; City Manager David Parrish; Deputy County Attorney Matthew Mason; Assistant City Attorney Polly Sizemore; Deputy County Manager Clarence Grier; Assistant City Manager Barbara Thomas; Robin Keller, Clerk to Board; Angela Lord, City Clerk; Ariane Webb, Deputy Clerk to Board; Tebony Vincent, Deputy City Clerk; members of the staff, community and media.

I. WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Branson called the meeting to order at 3:37PM and welcomed those present. He introduced the topic of Cure Violence and invited Councilmember Sharon Hightower to begin her presentation of the program.

II. NEW BUSINESS

A. REVIEW PROPOSED AGREEMENT AND SCOPE OF WORK FOR CURE VIOLENCE PROGRAM

Councilmember Sharon Hightower expressed her appreciation for the discussion and spoke to the rising trend in homicides within the City of Greensboro since April 2018. She noted the national model of Cure Violence was presented to the Council by a community group. The program approaches violence utilizing a model comparable to that used by Public Health when addressing epidemics. Hightower shared that the key to a successful program was community

involvement and engagement. She shared that the City of Greensboro's Cure Violence program will not be implemented using the Public Health model, but noted the urgent need to introduce this program to the community.

Commissioner Alston shared homicide statistics and spoke to the rising trend in violence, specifically violence involving African-Americans. He noted Durham County's implementation of the program has reduced violence in the targeted areas and reiterated the need to implement this program as a potential solution to the problem of violence within the community. He expressed his appreciation for the level of cooperation between the City and the County, and noted the willingness to work together to provide a solution.

Chairman Branson introduced the Cure Violence program draft agreement and scope of work and shared the need for additional discussion between both entities.

Mayor Vaughn shared her attendance at the Safer Cities Summit and spoke to the presence of City of Greensboro police and their ongoing efforts throughout the community. She stated Cure Violence will be another tool that can be used to address violence.

Councilmember Hightower clarified the program is not a City of Greensboro police initiative, although the police and Guilford County Sheriff's Office will share data related to homicides.

Mayor Vaughn stated Cure Violence representatives initially recommended implementing the program through county government and the local Public Health department, and noted Cone Health had expressed interest in participating in the program at a later date. She shared the community organization, One Step Further, was initially disqualified as a potential option due to the involvement of Mayor Pro-Tem Johnson. Vaughn confirmed that, over time, the agency was identified as a best fit to implement the program, due their history and experience within the community.

Mayor Pro-Tem Johnson confirmed she would not vote on the item nor would she receive a salary from the program. She stated she will utilize program travel funds to oversee the program and introduced Guilford County's version of Cure Violence as the Gate City Coalition of Guilford County. Johnson indicated two (2) target areas to be addressed through this program: the Smith Homes neighborhood and the neighborhoods surrounding Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd. in Greensboro. She noted these areas had high levels of violence, but were close enough in proximity to warrant a single office space for staff.

Johnson reviewed the criteria for identifying target populations and staff recruitment. She stated they would hire a site director, outreach supervisor, two (2) outreach staff and three (3) violence interrupters. Johnson noted the total budget is \$406,804 annually, with costs split between both entities. She spoke to the importance of public education regarding the program.

Johnson shared the County Manager initially expressed concerns that the salaries of Cure Violence staff were higher than some staff within the Sheriff's department. She confirmed the salary issues have been addressed and noted the most successful Cure Violence programs develop relationships with local police departments to assist the team in identifying target areas.

Commissioner Alston questioned total training costs.

Mayor Pro-Tem Johnson stated total training costs are \$100,000, and amount that will be split between city and county.

Commissioner Coleman questioned if the program would address domestic violence incidents.

Mayor Pro-Tem Johnson stated the violence interrupters would attempt to intervene in situations where they were aware of the potential for violence.

Councilmember Hightower questioned the total number of hours the interrupters would work in the field.

Mayor Pro-Tem Johnson stated these staff would work at least eight (8) hours in the field, with the bulk of the work occurring in the evenings.

Councilmember Hightower spoke to the national model that encouraged the interrupter to work beyond the traditional outreach setting and to intervene in potentially violent situations. She questioned the anticipated field hours based upon this model.

Mayor Pro-Tem Johnson confirmed the higher salaries reflect the goal of the interrupter to go beyond their role and act in an outreach capacity in multiple neighborhoods.

Commissioner Cashion questioned Cure Violence models in other areas.

Mayor Pro-Tem Johnson noted other cities do not always develop relationships with the police, as they feel it discourages trust. She spoke to the need to develop this relationship to identify “hot spots” and target populations. Johnson stated the agency will work more with the police, than the interrupters, to ensure there is cooperation.

Commissioner Cashion questioned if the interrupters will report issues to the police.

Mayor Pro-Tem Johnson shared the interrupters will be trained to intervene in situations versus reporting the issue to the police. She confirmed there will be some follow-up with the police after the incident.

Commissioner Alston noted that in other models throughout the country, local police provide data and information. He stated the interrupters will be involved in de-escalating the situation because they will have direct contact with the community and will be aware of potential incidents prior to them occurring.

Councilmember Hightower reiterated Cure Violence is not a police program. She noted the need for interrupters to gain the trust of community members to ensure they can remain effective.

Commissioner Alston shared that the primary focus for the interrupter will be the identified target areas, but they will be trained to prevent retaliatory actions or other issues throughout the County.

Mayor Pro-Tem Johnson stated the interrupters will have uniforms identifying them as part of the Gate City Coalition of Guilford County.

Commissioner Conrad expressed his appreciation for the discussion and questioned if there is data available from other North Carolina cities regarding the trend of violence.

Mayor Vaughn spoke to increased incidents of violence observed in Charlotte and the difficulty in quantifying impact. She confirmed that, while there is an increase in violence in Durham, there is no way to determine if the rate would or would not be higher without the Cure Violence model.

Councilmember Kennedy spoke to potential issues with mapping violence within Durham and noted the core component of the program is developing trust within the community.

Commissioner Conrad shared his interest in viewing homicide statistics for peer entities throughout the state.

Councilmember Hightower confirmed there is an increase in violence throughout the state and noted that while there may be an increase in violence within Durham, incidents may have decreased in the target areas. She stated the most accurate data would be derived from the target areas.

Commissioner Alston shared that within Durham County target areas, the crime rate decreased by 40-50%.

Commissioner Conrad questioned the status of other non-profits considered and why they did not meet program criteria.

Mayor Vaughn noted the YWCA, UNCG and two (2) other non-profits were considered. She stated most did not have backgrounds in the medical and criminal justice systems.

Commissioner Conrad questioned the trainings or safeguards put in place to ensure certain incidents did not occur.

Mayor Pro-Tem Johnson shared her agency's experience with offenders and spoke to the benefits of hiring good personnel and properly training them.

Councilmember Abuzaiter questioned the potential liability if something happens to an interrupter.

Mayor Pro-Tem Johnson confirmed they have sufficient liability insurance for their employees and clients.

Councilmember Abuzaiter noted the first 48 hours are the most important during an investigation and questioned how the interrupters will gain information if they are not working with the police or involved in the investigation.

Mayor Pro-Tem Johnson stated the interrupters will be properly trained on how to gain information through community involvement versus involving themselves in police investigations.

Councilmember Abuzaiter questioned if interrupters would notify the police of potential incidents.

Mayor Pro-Tem Johnson stated the interrupters will intervene versus notifying the police of potential incidents.

Councilmember Thurm spoke to the need for updated data to ensure the target area has not shifted and if the identified target areas are still considered “hot spots”. She reiterated the need to take a second look at the data.

Mayor Pro-Tem Johnson noted the two (2) identified target areas have been places of concern for many years.

Councilmember Hightower stated data analysis identified five (5) areas, however; to maintain cost efficiencies, two (2) target areas in close proximity to one another were identified. She shared the program’s goal is to reduce crime in the target areas, which will transcend into other areas throughout the city.

Councilmember Hoffman questioned the measures that would be used to benchmark program success.

Mayor Pro-Tem Johnson confirmed a team would create quantifiable benchmarks such as, decrease in violent crime, etc., to determine program success.

Commissioner Cashion expressed her confidence in One Step Further and their experience in working with the target population, along with the experience of their staff. She spoke to the ability of UNCG as an unbiased group to offer periodic evaluations of the program.

Doug Logan, Guilford County Juvenile Detention Center Director, spoke to the county’s prior administration of the Day Reporting Center and discussed the great work One Step Further achieved when they assumed control of the program.

Commissioner Foster discussed the homicide rate within City of High Point and noted they are not considering the Cure Violence program at this time. She questioned the hiring process for interrupters.

Mayor Pro-Tem Johnson shared that, in other cities, interrupters are prior offenders who have not returned to violence with the prior five (5) years. She noted their ability to involve themselves within the community, gain trust and interrupt potentially violent situations. Johnson confirmed she will hire people interested in working within the community and noted some will have a criminal history, but the requirement is that they will be without offenses for a certain period of time. She shared her staff are attuned to certain patterns of behavior and will conduct psychological evaluations.

Councilmember Thurm shared that Cure Violence staff in Chicago work with agencies to identify potential interrupters and questioned if One Step Further will utilize their recommendations when hiring site staff.

Mayor Pro-Tem Johnson stated she will conduct a local search for staff, but will work with the Chicago group to identify local candidates.

Chairman Branson spoke to the need for additional discussion within and between both entities, and recommended scheduling a work session prior to a vote by the Board or Council. He thanked the working group and staff for their efforts in researching the program and opened the floor to the City and County managers for additional input.

City Manager David Parrish noted Mayor Pro-Tem Johnson had covered a good deal of information and requested direction from the Board and Council regarding the program. He confirmed he will pull the requested data and make it available to both entities.

Chairman Branson reiterated the need for additional discussions within and between both entities, prior to final action.

Councilmember Hightower questioned the timeline.

Chairman Branson stated final decisions should be made within the next 3-4 weeks, with a vote made by the Council prior to the Board.

Councilmember Outling recommended a joint final vote with the City Council and Board of Commissioners to emphasize the partnership between both entities.

Deputy County Attorney Matthew Mason noted the vote must be conducted separately by each body, but can occur within the same location during another joint meeting.

Mayor Vaughn shared the need to schedule a follow-up joint meeting.

Councilmember Hightower expressed her interest in an immediate vote to move forward with the program.

Commissioner Conrad noted the Board of Commissioners only received this draft agreement and scope of work today, and the full Board has not had opportunity to consider the information.

Commissioner Alston expressed his appreciation for Councilmember Outling's recommendation but noted the Board of Commissioners may have a separate set of concerns. He recommended the Council and Board schedule votes during their separate regular meetings to give the Board time to review the draft documents and have their questions answered.

Councilmember Outling clarified that his request is designed to ensure a simultaneous vote that solidifies the partnership and noted the timeline for the vote is negotiable.

Councilmember Hightower shared the role of the work group, and spoke to the amount of work involved in developing the draft agreement and scope of work.

Commissioner Coleman recommended the City Council take final action on the item during its regular meeting scheduled for May 21, 2019 and the Board of Commissioners would take a final vote during its June 2, 2019 regular meeting, to ensure all questions are asked and answered.

Councilmember Outling clarified he would prefer both bodies vote together, in partnership, consistent with the outlined agreement during the Council's May 21, 2019 regular meeting.

The bodies discussed the meeting dates and Chairman Branson clarified the next regular meeting of the Board is June 6, 2019.

Commissioner Alston reiterated his desire for separate votes by both bodies during their regular meetings.

The Board discussed the program's scope and entity responsibilities.

Chairman Branson recommended staff return to the City Council and Board of Commissioners with potential dates for a joint meeting between today and June 6, 2019 to conduct a final vote and provide Board members opportunity to review the draft documents.

III. OTHER BUSINESS

None presented.

IV. ADJOURN

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned by unanimous consent at 4:49PM.

Chairman J. Alan Branson

Clerk to Board