



Minutes

Citizens League City of Saint Paul Community-First Public Safety Commission

Wednesday, January 13th, 2021

9:00 am – 12:00 pm

Virtual meeting via Zoom video

Commission Members present: Co-Chair John Marshall, Co-Chair Acooa Ellis, Councilmember Mitra Jalali, Ramsey County Board Chair Toni Carter, Ms. Sue Abderholden, Mr. Cedrick Baker, Mr. Sami Banat, Mr. Jason Barnett, Ms. Monica Bravo, Mr. Scott Burns, Ms. Chikamso Chijioke, Mrs. JoAnn Clark, Mr. Sam Clark, Ms. Sasha Cotton, Ms. Sierra Cumberland, Ms. Natalia Davis, Mr. Julio Fesser, Ms. Simone Hardeman-Jones, Ms. Suwayda Hussein, Mr. David Squier Jones, Ms. Laura Jones, Ms. Clara Juneman, Ms. Farhio Khalif, Ms. Suwana Kirkland, Ms. Wintana Melekin, Mr. Stephen Moore, Mr. Amin Omar, Ms. Maureen Perryman, Ms. Amy Peterson, Dr. Suzanne Rivera, Mr. Mark Ross, Mr. Garaad Sahal, Hon. Nicole Starr, Mr. Mario Stokes, Ms. LyLy Vang Yang, Mr. Teshite Wako, Mr. Jai Winston, Ms. Heather Worthington, Mr. Pheng Xiong, and Mr. Otis Zanders.

Members not present: Ms. Chauntyll Allen, Mr. Ahmed Anshur, Rev. Dr. Ron Bell, Mr. Ameen Ford, Ms. Alicia Lucio, Ms. Anna-Marie Foster, Mr. Frank Ortiz, and Ms. Olyvia Rayne Taylor.

Special guests: Ms. Kelly Mitchell, Ms. Jamie Jackson, Mr. Elliot Karl, Mr. Andrew Bentley, Ms. Kailey Burger, Ms. Sophia Thompson, Sgt. Jamie Sipes, and Mr. Roger Meyer.

Staff & staff support present: Ms. Kate Cimino, Ms. Amanda Koonjbeharry, Mr. Jacob Taintor, and Ms. Madeline McCue.

Citizens League members: None.

Proposed outcomes for this meeting

- State commission charge and proposed goals.
- Approval of January 6th, 2021 meeting minutes.
- Small group discussion time.
- Understand response models and response model gaps for persons in crisis.
- Review subcommittees.
- Time for questions.

Minutes

Co-chair Marshall called the meeting to order at 9:01 am.

Opening and Approval of Minutes

Co-chair Marshall welcomed the commission and reviewed the proposed outcomes for this meeting (*see above*). He also reviewed the commission's charge, as specified by the City of Saint Paul, to make recommendations to the Mayor and the Saint Paul City Council regarding:

1. Alternative first response options to low-priority calls for service;
2. Approaches for ongoing community involvement in the City of Saint Paul's Community-First Public Safety Framework; and,
3. Consideration of the creation of a city-staffed office to integrate the initiatives and strategies of the Community-First Public Safety Framework.

Co-chair Marshall continued to the approval of the minutes of the previous meeting. He noted that the commission would only be voting on the approval of the minutes, not the addenda, and that commissioners could email the Citizens League staff if they had concerns about the addenda. A motion to approve the minutes as written passed with 25 votes.

Co-chair Marshall invited a commission member to lead the group in a moment of mindfulness, and then invited commissioners to contact Ms. Amanda Koonjbeharry if they were interested in leading future mindfulness moments.

Chat and Connect

Co-chair Ellis introduced the next activity, in which members would be split into small breakout rooms to discuss what stood out to them from the last meeting and what thoughts they were bringing into this meeting.

Co-chair Ellis sent members to breakout rooms at 9:18 am.

While members were in breakout rooms, Ms. Kate Cimino greeted presenters and representatives from the city and county.

Co-chair Ellis welcomed members back at 9:34 am and invited them to share their reflections.

A commission member shared that their group was appreciative of the openness of the commission's environment, the diversity of thought represented by the members, and the sense of imagination in the commission's charge.

Another member shared that their group had agreed on the importance of the commission's understanding of the response to high-priority calls if they were to suggest changes the response model for low-priority calls. They also wanted to understand the reasons why this commission had been charged with addressing only the response to low-priority calls. Multiple commission members voiced their support for these ideas.

A commission member shared that their group had expressed interest in how the experience of young people, particularly those involved in interventions, intersects with the response model for low-priority calls.

Co-chair Ellis added that her group considered their own biases and the roles of current and historic trauma on how the commission would create recommendations. They noted the relevance of the commission as an active demonstration of democracy in light of the events at the US Capitol last week.

Co-chair Ellis thanked the commission members for their input.

Introduction of Commission Partners

Co-chair Ellis invited guests from organizations that would be supporting the commission to introduce themselves. She introduced Ms. Kelly Mitchell, the executive director of the Robina Institute of Criminal Law and Criminal Justice at the University of Minnesota Law School.

Ms. Mitchell introduced herself and the work of the Robina Institute. She explained their objective of using data to understand and address challenges in the criminal justice system. They are the research partner analyzing 911 call data from Ramsey County and Saint Paul for this project.

Co-chair Ellis thanked Ms. Mitchell. She then introduced Mr. Elliot Karl, Mr. Andrew Bentley, and Ms. Kailey Burger from the Harvard Kennedy School's Government Performance Lab (GPL).

Mr. Bentley introduced himself as the project leader at the GPL. He lives in South Minneapolis with his partner and two children. He spent the bulk of his career doing social responsibility work at Google to address the digital divide.

Ms. Burger introduced herself as the managing director of the GPL; she leads their work on procurement, economic mobility, and reimagining policing. Prior to joining the GPL, she worked in the New York City Government to support the individual needs of families as they interacted with the child abuse response system.

Mr. Karl introduced himself as a GPL fellow and Chicago native. He has worked in municipal government in San Francisco and Oakland, where he oversaw department budgets and community outreach. He has worked as a community organizer focusing on racial & economic justice.

Mr. Bentley introduced the GPL and its work to help governments implement research-backed solutions. In the past, the GPL has assisted the City of Saint Paul with service matching. On this project, the GPL will explore the idea of a city-staffed Office of Violence Prevention. They will conduct a landscape analysis to assess design and impact of such Offices in other jurisdictions around the U.S., and if the commission so chooses, the GPL will help the commission explore logistics and potential implementation plans for an Office of Violence Prevention in Saint Paul.

Co-chair Ellis thanked the members of the GPL and welcomed Ms. Cimino to discuss the community report.

Community Report

Ms. Cimino noted that the Citizens League had not yet received any comments from the public regarding the commission. She encouraged the members to share the link to the comment form and the dedicated email address and voicemail line.

Ms. Cimino thanked the members of the Robina Institute and the GPL and asked the commission members to email the Citizens League if they had any questions for the representatives of these organizations.

Ms. Cimino dismissed the commission for a five-minute break at 9:54 am.

Persons in Crisis Presentations

Co-chair Marshall welcomed the commission back at 10:02 am.

Co-chair Marshall highlighted the primary topic of this commission meeting: emergency response to persons in crisis (such as those experiencing mental health crises, substance abuse and addiction, and unsheltered homelessness). He suggested that commissioners hold their complex questions after all presentations had concluded, as the presentations would build on each other.

Co-chair Marshall introduced the first two presenters. Ms. Sophia Thompson is the Interim Division Director at the Adult Support and Mental Health Center of Ramsey County. Ms. Jamie Jackson is a supervisor at the Adult Crisis Response Team of Ramsey County.

Ms. Thompson and Ms. Jackson presented about Ramsey County's mental health services and mobile crisis teams. *See Addendum A for details.*

Co-chair Marshall thanked Ms. Thompson and Ms. Jackson for their presentations.

Co-chair Marshall introduced the next speaker, Sergeant Jamie Sipes, the Program Coordinator of the Community Outreach and Stabilization Unit (COAST) at the Saint Paul Police Department.

Sgt. Sipes presented about COAST. *See Addendum B for details.*

Co-chair Marshall thanked Sergeant Sipes for his presentation.

Co-chair Marshall introduced the next speaker, Mr. Roger Meyer, the Project Director of the East Metro Crisis Alliance.

Mr. Meyer presented about the work of the East Metro Crisis Alliance. *See Addendum C for details.*

Co-chair Marshall thanked Mr. Meyer for his presentation. He noted that the final speaker, Mr. Chris Michels, the Director of Housing Stability and Opportunity at Catholic Charities of Saint Paul and Minneapolis, would be unable to join the meeting today.

Co-chair Marshall invited any commission members who have experiences of working with someone experiencing a crisis to speak.

A commission member shared their family's experience with interfacing with Ramsey County's array of agencies charged with addressing mental health. They shared an incident in which police arrived at their home for a wellness check on a family member who struggles with mental health and has a history of trauma and substance abuse, and the situation escalated. The commission member felt that by retaining a model in which the police would be the first responders to a wellness check, Saint Paul was missing an opportunity for creating a modern, healthcare-minded approach.

A commission member shared their frustrations with HIPAA, which has prevented medical professionals from providing information to the member's family about an adult sibling who has a history of crisis situations and who has now been missing for over five years. Commission members shared their sympathies.

A commission member shared their experience of working with police and shared their concern that officers are not sufficiently equipped with practices to prepare themselves for traumatic situations. The member suggested that proactive mental preparations could help keep officers calm in stressful situations and avoid responses arising from fear and stress. Commission members agreed that officers' mental state of being can make a difference in the outcomes of calls for service.

In response, a commission member expressed their frustration with a public safety system in which public servants in roles in which they are responding to traumatic situations would have to be taught self-awareness. This member felt that the priority should instead be reducing the likelihood that people in crisis would have to interact with law enforcement.

Co-chair Marshall invited the commission members to ask questions. *See Addenda A, B & C for details.*

Co-chair Marshall thanked all presenters for their work and thanked the commission members for engaging in this conversation in an authentic and vulnerable way. He invited Ms. Koonjbeharry to introduce the subcommittees.

Subcommittee Selection

Ms. Koonjbeharry greeted and thanked the commission. She explained that subcommittees would meet for the first time at the next commission meeting on January 27, 2020.

Ms. Koonjbeharry encouraged members who had not indicated their subcommittee preferences to complete the survey. Members may also express interest in positions as subcommittee co-chairs.

Questions and Comments

Co-chair Marshall mentioned the structure of upcoming meetings and the eventual timeline of drafting recommendations. He invited members to share their thoughts.

Co-chair Ellis reflected on how the commission has been building a sense of community and thanked members for the grace they have extended to each other. She also implored members to complete the survey to select the preferred subcommittee placements.

A commission member shared a personal story: they have a family member who has struggled with mental health, and the commission member and their family are part of a culture that does not recognize “mental health” but speaks more of spirituality and other ways of understanding the mind and behaviors. The member connected their personal and professional experiences with mental health interventions. They noted the struggle of addressing mental health with non-English-speaking communities of color and highlighted the need for education and outreach in these communities. Others agreed.

A commission member noted the need to provide mental health services outside of the 9-to-5, Monday-Friday schedule.

Close

Co-chair Ellis thanked the commission for their time and engagement.

Co-chair Marshall concluded the meeting at 11:52 a.m.