

Champaign County Racial Justice Task Force (RJTF)
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, July 28, 2016
6:30 pm

I. Call to Order

Facilitator Byndom called the meeting to order at 6:31pm.

II. Roll Call

Members Present:

M. Ar-Raheem, S. Balgoyen, L. Branham, S. Byndom, E. Dee, A. Felty, D. Harber, R. Hughes, A. James, E. Patt, C. Randolph, H. Ross, K. Schneider, S. Silver, D. Turner G. Walter.

Members Absent:

B. Butts, R. Byrd, A. Evans.

III. Approval of Agenda

Esther Patt moved to approve the agenda. Artice James seconded the motion. The motion carried.

IV. Approval of Minutes

Gerald Walter moved to approve the minutes. Esther Patt seconded the motion. The motion carried.

V. Public Participation

Stuart Levy – He presented a suggestion to initiate a publicly accessible comprehensive database that combines information on stops, fines, arrests, criminal charges and sentences, searchable by race, gender, arresting office, and residential zip code. It could be anonymized entries from both existing and future data. It is not easy for community members to track how individuals are trapped in the cycle of incarceration. Some questions he suggested considering would be who is paying the fines that the county is taking in as income in its budget, and is it a tolerable burden; how do individuals get to jail for having a suspended license; what sort of data has the task force received that it could do analysis on? He recommended creating recommendations that could be measured to see if changes are made. Demario Turner asked if there were examples of other databases similar to this one. He said there are bits and pieces of these systems currently. He does not know of a good model to follow.

James Kilgore – He wanted to reiterate the charge of the task force which is to focus on the criminal justice system from point of stop to being released on parole or probation. He stated that this is the area that the County Board has influence and budgetary power over. He also said that the working groups in the CJTF had very specific tasks and duties that were decided by the group in order to keep everyone focused. In the CJTF, there were two groups throughout the time

period. In the second phase, Carol Ammons became the chair and she was good at making sure meetings were used for getting business accomplished and moving the task force along. Lynn Branham asked what groups he would recommend. He answered that breaking up the process of the criminal justice system would be helpful.

Henry Ross noted that a lot of the discussion in the past few months about focus could have been eliminated with better information at the beginning of the task force.

David Sutton – He noted two links that he shared with Chair Byndom about racism. He also brought up a series of 1-hour videos from the Washington Regional Association of Grantmakers. He shared the links with the group and recommended that the group study them. He also recommended reading the Department of Justice Consent Decree dealing with Robeson Elementary, the report on Ferguson, and a third report. He also recommended that the City of Champaign hire police officers from within impacted neighborhoods.

Niloofar Shambayant – She is a Champaign resident who has been focusing on Pre-trial reforms. She commended the task force for its work. She discussed her research about what leads to success for task forces; what she feels important is to avoid digression trying to look at other factors that cause minorities that come into contact with the law enforcement. She feels some of the issues are too huge to be addressed by the task force. She recommended trying to find trust with the elected officials of the criminal justice system. She said that the whole criminal justice system is so huge that it has to be broken down into its elemental components; it all starts with how officers approach individuals who are suspected. A recommendation may come to study this interaction more closely. Other areas to study may be how the jail staff treats the arrestee, the state attorney's office, and public defenders. She believes focusing on these areas will yield results. Esther asked specifically what the task force should be looking for in the state's attorney's office. She responded to look at how much emphasis is put on taking plea bargains. She also said looking at how much influence the state's attorney has over the public defenders.

VI. Presentations

Shandra Summerville, Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services

She thanked the task force for promoting adaptive change. She was prompted to contact the RJTF after reading about the quality of care in the Champaign County Jail in the July 10 issue of the News-Gazette. She said that we need to be responding differently than we have been (punitively). She introduced standards created for health care organizations which have been adapted for community based organizations. She also defined cultural and linguistic competence. Cultural competency is being able to function and operate effectively in different cultural situations. Linguistic competency is the ability to effectively communicate to a diverse audience. She shared the values behind the standards and next steps on how CLAS could be implemented in local organization in the criminal justice system.

Sara asked if this training has been implemented in any local organizations.

Maryam Ar-Raheem noted that this particular training could not easily be implemented in the jail because the jail is not a service provider. She wants the group to keep that in mind. She does not feel it could be included in law enforcement or the criminal justice system.

VII. Volunteer Groups

Lynn asked about the groups and if the task force is going to reduce the list. Kevin noted that these are volunteer groups and not formal subcommittees. He also stated his agreement with Mr. Kilgore that the focus should be on the criminal justice system. A discussion regarding the appropriateness of different focus areas followed, including the influence of the County Board and the direction of the recommendations the task force will make.

The members of the task force shared the working groups they are most interested in working with:

Carolyn – Community Engagement; Police Practices

Sara – Juvenile Justice; Restorative Justice Group

Susan – Legal process (bail/bond); diversion programs

Demario – Legal process, Prosecution and defense, restorative justice/prevention, police practices

Ellen – Justice system involvement - healthcare; entry points (police, charging, arrests)

Esther – Bail/bond/fines/fees; Housing/re-entry

David – Community engagement (data collection); legal process (bail/bond)

Henry – Police practices; education and employment

Maryam – Police practices; Legal process

Kevin – Police practices; Legal process

Sam – Education/employment, community engagement

Ryan – Community engagement (data), police practices, data for other groups

Artice – Impact on CJ system of employment; fines and bails; traffic stops

Gerald – Community engagement (data); legal process

Lynn – Restorative justices/restorative practices; cash bail/pretrial

Amy – Education/employment; Juvenile justice

Alex – Juvenile justice, education/employment

A discussion followed regarding the best ways to split the interest groups and begin meeting together.

Esther moved to suspend the meeting to allow the Co. Chair to discuss Open Meetings Act. Artice seconded the motion. The motion carried.

The Co. Board Chair encouraged the group to follow Open Meetings Act for credibility and transparency. She said having meeting notices, creating agendas, and posting minutes can be easy.

Chair Byndom called the meeting back to order.

VIII. New Business

Sam will send out a group email about what we discussed for working groups.

Kevin noted that we should consider arranging a recommendation to the Co. Board to begin collecting data in a formal database. He asked to place an item on the agenda to discuss this.

Sara asked for help organizing presentations and data. Sara will send out the updated group list when she updates it. Amy asked that it be posted as a .docx. Kevin asked that Sara send it to Kay and have her post it.

IX. Task Force Member Comments

Artice asked if we talked about the budget at the previous meeting. Esther responded that we decided that working groups will decide what they need in terms of budget. Sam said that until we have a thorough idea of what we would request from them, we should not do that. Artice was concerned about the time frame of the budget discussions.

Henry Ross moved to adjourn.

X. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:36pm.