

Roanoke City Gun Violence Commission

**Meeting Minutes**

11-9-21, at 5:33 @ Berglund Center

Commissioners Present: Joe Cobb, Stacey Sheppard, Tim Harvey, Kathy Cohen, Nicole Ross, Taisha Steele, Shakira Williams, Elliot Major, Decca Knight

Topic (Agenda Item)	Notes from Discussion
Roll Call	See roll call above Quorum present
Approval of Minutes from October 12, 2021	Motion to adopt minutes: Tim Second: Elliot
Roanoke Police Dept. Report	Joe Cobb iSTAR Report with Roanoke Police Department <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● See attached report</li> </ul> Focused Concentration report <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● See attached report</li> </ul> Analysis of which hours gun violence occurs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● See attached report</li> </ul>
Working Group Updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Safer Neighborhoods: Tim and Nicole           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Connecting with neighborhood groups and churches to consider environmental factors</li> <li>○ Conducting interviews with neighborhood groups</li> <li>○ Sign in sheet if you want to get in touch with the Safer Neighborhood group</li> <li>○ Updates to public spaces such as adequate lighting, etc.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Education: Taisha, Decca, and Kathy           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ FSRV SEL Curricula               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The Pilot is almost finished and the staff is loving it</li> <li>■ It has sparked great convos with the teens</li> <li>■ Finishing up the curricula this week</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Parenting Video Proposal               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Proposed ten 30-minute parenting videos recorded for partner agencies</li> <li>■ Recording partners being sought</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Reading Program               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Piloting program at Lincoln Terrace with 100 students and 100 volunteers</li> <li>■ Still looking for another 50 volunteers to volunteer 30 minutes a week</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>● Gang Violence Reduction and Incarceration Recidivism: Joe           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Two fold effort               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Secured grant to do a youth and gang violence community assessment</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● If you want to learn more about the assessment process you may touch base with Princess in audience</li> <li>■ Grant to hire personnel Youth and Gang Violence Prevention Coordinator and outreach coordinator <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Two hired to be introduced later</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ Initiative programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Violence Prevention curricula</li> <li>● Trauma-Basics training</li> <li>● Trauma-counseling w/o barriers</li> <li>● Conflict Resolution training with 100 volunteers</li> <li>● Urban Farm initiative</li> <li>● Supporting pre-existing mentoring programs</li> <li>● Youth Employment opportunities in workforce development</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Rapid Response: Joe and Stacey <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ FedUp program to support families who have experienced gun violence</li> <li>○ Bringing on Carilion with the trauma doctors and social workers to work collaboratively with our coordinated response team</li> <li>○ Helping the surviving family members with financial situations, work, etc.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Marketing and Communications: Joe <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ A plan has been developed</li> <li>○ A Request for Proposal will be sent out <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Media, billboards, social media</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Community Forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Joe Cobb Welcome and Introductions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Something that has set our work apart is our strong support from city council</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Mayor Lee comments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Thanks to commission members</li> <li>○ 4,500 people died from gun violence to this period in 2021 in the USA</li> <li>○ This is higher than 2020</li> <li>○ 2020 and 2021 have been some of the worst for gun violence in decades in the USA</li> <li>○ Violence from large cities to small; national epidemic</li> <li>○ Our overall crime rate in Roanoke is continuing to decline but gun violence is increasing</li> <li>○ This is not a law enforcement failure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The city council continues to strongly support our police officers</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ This takes efforts from the entire community</li> <li>○ Spending on community safety is our second top priority outspent only by education</li> <li>○ Last year council approved a multiyear pay increase for every police officer and increasing starting pay by \$5,000 and numerous bonuses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ High numbers of retirement and resignations of police officers</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Violence interruption and suppression efforts</li> <li>○ Grants, assessments, partnerships with youth organizations are providing support for our area youth</li> <li>○ Changes are not going to happen overnight</li> <li>○ We are doing the same things as other cities as far as our community efforts</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Police Chief Sam Roman <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Thanks to commissioners, community, and officers</li> <li>○ Updates on accomplishments since Aug 2021</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

- Second operation with Marshals Fugitive Task Force: warrants for violent criminal offenses
      - 331 warrants
      - Seized 26 illegal firearms
      - Seized drugs and currency
    - 81 warrants for Part 1 crimes
    - Notable arrests
      - Sept 29th incident in an emerging hot spot where an officer was conducting a targeting patrol on 6th and Morman Ave; shots fired in store; officers apprehended suspect for the homicide of the clerk in the store
    - US attorney's office
      - Prosecuted 3 individuals involved in violent or organized crime
    - Interrupting the cycle of illegal firearm possessions
      - 47 firearms seized (separate from Gun BuyBack event)
    - Relentless in our pursuit of illegal drug sales in Roanoke with multiple seizures of cocaine, meth, and heroine
  - We will continue to find individuals involved in nefarious activity
  - Public safety is a shared responsibility
  - The importance of addressing long term trauma as the result of gun violence
    - RESET team has been finding services and support for the community after gun violence
    - Lloyd Merchant: RESET Coordinator
      - Made up of volunteers who care about our community
      - Has been in the position for about a year
      - 33 deployments since Feb.
      - Providing mentoring to 5 young men in the family; connected 5 families with services
      - Why it is important for RESET to be a part of the RPD
        - Young man who was thinking of joining a gang who was joined with a mentor and is making improvements
  - Joe Cobb
    - Eureka Fall Festival bringing together community partners
      - Joe shares a personal story of a woman that he met at the event who has experienced gun violence
    - Introduction of Chris Roberts and Jermain Johnson
      - Chris: have been busy in the community
        - Role to coordinate services between agencies, finding gaps, etc.
        - Shared story of interaction of Melrose Library
          - Wed. night times with youth
            - 60 youth present first night
      - Jermaine: Goes into the community to identify young men and women who need help
        - Story of a young man he met at movie night
  - City Manager Bob Cowell
    - Thanks to commissioners, council, community, RPD, outreach workers
    - This is not a simple challenge that will not be resolved easily
    - City departments that have roles to play
      - City departments who wanted to assist the RPD
      - Library has later hours now
      - Eureka fall festival
      - Mentors assisting youth
      - Teens starting employment with the city
    - Challenging anyone who is saying that the city isn't doing enough to address this issue



- Gun Buyback project
  - Brought together the NAACP, TAP, Goodwill, Rescue Mission, etc.
  - Strong cultural message
    - 90ish guns bought back
    - 40 on the waitlist
- Make an investment in future events
- Latory Woodberry: not present
- Lanora Castello
  - Youth Enrichment Services rep
  - Providing social and academic programming for children
  - In a low-income area
  - Need the funds to continue the programming with the children
  - Involve the parents in programming
  - Assistance in keeping the program going
- Bishop Joseph Mayo pastor of Paradise Cathedral on Melrose
  - Trying to reach out to help the young people
  - Personal interest: lost two nephews to gun violence here in Roanoke
  - Took in 30 individuals from the street
  - Discussing brother who is an artist who wants to teach his trade to youth
  - Making yourself available is one of the most important ways to support community members
  - Consider Paradise Cathedral for their many programs
- Amazetta Anderson: Community Arts Reach
  - Question: Do we have adequate safe housing for our youth? A lot of people are not safe in their homes that are violent. Where can they go?
  - Interact with many families though arts, reading programs, food, clothing, gardening
  - Want to continue to work with children and parents
    - Graduated a whole family with the Carver Garden
  - Address the emotional imbalances that so many people are experiencing
  - Get in touch with “Mother Earth” first before conflict resolution
  - Consider everything we do in reference to mental health
  - Continue to support Community Arts Reach
- Angela Williams
  - Speaking on behalf of youth who couldn’t be here
  - Bring grassroots and large organizations together
  - Bring organizations into the community don’t bring youth out of the community
  - Think outside of the box
  - RFP committee that is not the normal committee
    - Allow youth to be a part and to look at grants
- Damon Davis
  - Working with community and the kids for a long time
  - Psychological concerns with youth
  - Parents who need help
  - Disconnected from each other
  - NW section is deteriorating
  - Youth need to be re-educated
  - We shouldn’t have to be asking for civil rights

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Discipline issues with youth and parents getting in trouble for discipling their youth</li> <li>○ Re-evaluate where the money goes and to which neighborhoods</li> <li>● Public Hearing closed</li> <li>○ Bob Cowell next steps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Encourages commissioners to also make suggestions</li> <li>■ Money available for a couple of years and needs to be spent during that period of time</li> <li>■ Money delivered through a combination of grants and applications</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Announcements	<p>Community Stakeholders meeting update from Assessment: Friday Nov. 12 morning 8:30 on Zoom</p> <p>Stomp the Violence: Saturday, Nov 13th</p> <p>Gun Violence Prevention Commission Meeting, Tuesday, December 7, 2021, 5:30pm</p>
Adjournment	7:25 pm