

Mayor's Commission on Reentry Minutes
May 17, 2021 at 1:00pm

In attendance: Pat Frey, Michael Forte, John House, Shereatha Sims, Baki Muhammad, Richard Bishop, Ashley Mercer, Stacey Rivera, Gamaliel Torres, Cathy Robinson, Tracey Mosley, and Waleisah Wilson.

Gamaliel Torres opened the meeting in prayer.

The minutes were reviewed and Pat Frey motioned to accept the minutes as read. The minutes were approved.

There was no correspondence to discuss.

Some themes that stood out from the initial Community of Practice (CoP) meetings were:

- (1) How we are using data is extremely important.
- (2) We must be sure we are able to fully build and leverage our partnerships.
- (3) Communicate well enough to legitimize the Commission.
- (4) It is critical that we influence and educate employers.
- (5) The Commission should be positioned to coordinate efforts in the community or support the coordination and connect resources.

It will be critical that Ban the Box includes tracking the number of employers who sign the pledge and follow through with the commitment. We need to see how many DCS individuals from each employers have been interviewed and hired.

Funding for RPH is on hold right now. The program is being looked at operationally. No new referrals are being taken at this time.

The Urban League has a strong focus on employment and is hiring administrative support in this area. Commission support can help to identify and coordinate needed resources for soft skills training or other support needs that arise.

Housing is a huge struggle. The Commission can help with resource connection here as well and understanding proximity restrictions. Solutions on housing for sex offenders coming out of the CoP were using city funds to create a shelter.

The Commission reviewed the existing action plan to consider the information we are gaining from participation in the Community of Practice and identify where gaps in our current strategy exist. The following points were discussed:

1. Our current timeline for this action plan may be too aggressive. We should consider expanding the plan to cover a 3-4 year period.

2. Objective 1 - Coordinate local efforts to support adults exiting local and state incarceration facilities in Columbus and statewide that will be released monthly to a Muscogee County residency.
 - a. There were no identified gaps to include in this area.

3. Objective 2 - Provide the Mayor, City Council, the public, and any other appropriate agency with accurate and comprehensive information about the reentry population in respect to service programs, barriers that contribute to their return to a life a crime (i.e. lack of employment opportunities, housing, access to education and healthcare, etc.), and best practices for meeting their needs.
 - a. Develop a comprehensive and simple communication plan
 - i. Plan should include PR/media coverage and a community update platform (This could take the form of email newsletters and/or developing out our web page and Facebook pages with a sign-up for to request information. Should address a broad reach than just website. May include newspaper articles and op eds.)
 - ii. Coordinate with partners to distribute information

4. Objective 3 - Publicly and consistently recognize organizations and programs that excel in service to the Commission's target population.
 - a. Define what "High Value Partners" means to the Commission
 - i. Develop a rubric for recognizing organizations that exemplify this definition to remove bias from the section process and add to the integrity of the Commission.

5. Objective 4 - Coordinate monthly information sharing, planning, and engagement among all interested private and public stakeholders to the extent permissible under Federal and State law.
 - a. Define whether the Faith Based subcommittee is targeting only faith based organizations or all community support organizations.
 - b. Define how the Commission wants to utilize available reentry data and identify data we need to track progress at the community level (*NOTE: The Employer Subcommittee is already tracking data on recidivism, data from GDC on the # of individuals scheduled monthly for release into Muscogee County & surrounding counties, and data from DCS on offenders under active supervision who are recorded as employed the # of those who are asking for help with employment or housing.*)
 - c. Develop a shared space for maintaining metrics that is accessible by all Commission members
 - d. Coordinate efforts of Commission partners at the program level
 - i. Create a shared system to facilitate connection of Commission partner organizations

The Reentry Employment Subcommittee is currently tracking information on the number of people returning to our community post incarceration. We also want to begin looking at wage data for

returning citizens and tracking this as well. This information can be used by the Commission as we begin looking at how we collect and share data.

Michael Forte expressed that having this quantitative data available is very important and asked if the full Commission can review this information monthly. The Faith Based Subcommittee needs access to this information.

Richard Bishop shared information on the new Construction Ready program that is scheduled to begin sometime in October. The program is free and classes can serve 21 students. This is a full-week boot camp targeting citizens of Georgia. We will get more information about how people can register at a later date.

The Commission can give an update to City Council in late June or July of 2021.

The meeting was dismissed at 2:04pm.

Our next meeting will be on June 21, 2021. We will meet virtually on zoom.