

Mayor's Commission on Reentry Minutes
December 16, 2019

In attendance: Keith Mitchell, Andrea Reese, Kristin Barker, Cathy Robinson, John House, and Gamaliel Torres

Keith Mitchell opened the meeting with prayer and asked if there were any corrections to the minutes. Andrea motioned to accept the minutes. Cathy seconded that motion. Gamaliel Torres attended the meeting in place of Rev. Juan Carlos Diaz and commission members introduced themselves.

Cathy also shared that SafeHouse Ministries is preparing to open SafeHouse South on Victory Drive behind Fairbanks Motors. The facility will have case managers and other services on site beginning January 21, 2020. They are utilizing three trailers until the end of 2020 when they are looking at building a facility in the area.

If we have anything in writing that needs to be read to the commission, this will be considered as correspondence. There was no correspondence to address.

Keith also suggested that we focus during commission meetings on the activities we have predetermined as our focus on 2020. Each subcommittee will be expected to make decisions related to their focus and bring those recommendations to the commission. In this way, our subcommittees can have more detailed discussions, and the commission will simply review their recommendations and provide direction moving forward.

It was also noted that the commission's focus must be on those reentering from prison and not on other groups. Individuals or organizations who don't focus on helping this population are not a good fit for the commission. It was noted; however, they may still be a valuable resource to our subcommittees.

The Housing Subcommittee has decided to table further discussions until the January meeting. In 2020, the commission also needs a point person to coordinate and communicate regarding commission activities and events. Andrea suggested we find someone with a background in event planning who is willing to lead in this area. A recommendation was made to look for a college intern who may fill this role.

It was also noted that it can be difficult to work with interns because of the short term commitment. However, the commission may be able to identify a point person, communicate our deliverables, and ask that person to coordinate with students for assistance with event planning. Andrea will reach out to her contact at the university to see if there is a point person who can serve on the commission and assist in this way. Gamaliel Torres may also have someone he can recommend to serve in this role.

To recap, the commission will be sponsoring three events in 2020. These events will be related to education, connection, and recognition. Specifically, we will sponsor a seminar, an Expungement Summit, and a recognition event. The purpose of the seminar is to train leadership in the community.

The purpose of the recognition event is to spotlight and pay appreciation to key people in the community who have supported our mission.

It was also noted the recognition event will be in part to involve those in the state legislature who are supportive of our mission. This could become an annual hallmark event. Because of this, we should plan our recognition event around the legislative session. Andrea suggested we may be able to get some sponsorship that will allow us to produce a nicer event. This event could also create an opportunity to report on the commission progress to the community.

John reminded the group that we, as a city commission, do not want to take sides or support a political campaign, so we must be careful how we recognize political supporters. We do not want to appear to endorse a candidate.

The commission agreed to have Kristin move forward with planning an expungement training for non-profits and community advocates in March of 2020. John recommended that we consider writing an update to the city and the mayor's office of what the commission has accomplished. For example, we could share details about the training following this session. Providing this type of report to the city would be a good idea quarterly. These updates could also be presented during a City Council meeting.

Kristin asked for confirmation that the commission has agreed to support Waleisah Wilson's job fair in July for Reentry Awareness Month. Keith stated that we are on record to support this event, but we are not the sponsoring entity and will not deal with incoming or outgoing monetary support. The commission also discussed developing some type of quality control process for the events like this that we will support in the future.

Keith mentioned the commission needs a place to capture community resources and key supporters as they are identified. Roz's Café and Catering employees a number of ex-offenders and may be able to help with events. We need to create a web space that can become a hub for reentry information and include resources like this as well as housing resources and other supportive employers. We need to think about how to compile this information and where it should be posted.

Cathy offered to share a resource manual and resource checklist that can be used to disseminate this information with the community. We can start with Cathy's list and consider how to address this.

Andrea recommended Pastor Larry Biggers would be a good addition to the Faith Based Subcommittee. Keith will share this with Dr. Forte.

The commission decided to move forward using the Columbus consolidated government seal for the commission logo and believes this will create legitimacy for the commission. John will ask for formal permission to use the logo on all materials.

Kristin asked for recommendations for the employer subcommittee. The group suggested recruiting someone from the Urban League, Goodwill, and Columbus Tech. Roz was also recommended as an employer who may agree to serve.

Keith noted our job is to become information experts and create a website that can become a hub for reentry information. This is a future conversation that Jeanette needs to be a part of.

The meeting was dismissed at 2:41 pm. Our next meeting will be held January 27, 2020.