

Mayor's Commission on Reentry Minutes
July 15, 2019

In attendance: John House, Andrea Reese, Jeanette James, Norman Quarles, Michael Forté, Keith W. Mitchell, Kristin Barker, LaFini Mosby, and Rev. Juan Carlos Diaz

The meeting was held in the Elections and Registration office, Citizens Services Center, 2nd Floor at 1:30 pm. Norman Quarles opened the meeting in prayer.

Keith Mitchell suggested that additional items may be added to the agenda by group members. In the future, Keith would like to include reports from community agencies that serve the reentry population. These include but are not limited to the Community Supervision office, Love in Action, and NewLife-Second Chance Outreach.

At this time, the commission reviewed the minutes from our June 10, 2019 meeting. Jeanette James made a motion to accept the minutes. Keith seconded that motion, and the minutes were accepted by unanimous vote.

The commission received an update on the Reentry Job/Resource Fair. Waleisah Wilson was unable to attend the meeting, but gave her update over the phone. The job/resource fair will be held on July 30, 2019 from 10am-1pm at Friendship Baptist Church, 831 First Avenue, Columbus, GA. Two pastors are still needed to support the event. Keith will text contact information for a minister who may be able to help. Assistance is also needed to set up tables the day before the event from 12:00-2:00pm. Keith, Jeanette, and Kristin volunteered to help with this. There is an additional need to secure a breakfast sponsor, water, and a wireless mic for the event. Keith may be able to help secure a sponsor. He also stated that Friendship Ministries should be able to provide the coolers with ice and a wireless mic for the event.

Norman asked what information attendees need to bring to the event. Waleisah said the job fair is open to the public and to let attendees know to bring their ID, a resume and background check if they have it, and proof that they have served time if they want to be entered into the drawing. Keith asked members of the commission to attend the day of the job fair if possible as this will be a good opportunity to take photos of the group in action. Kristin will send out a reminder email prior to the event.

Jeanette asked the commission to approve information on the mission, vision, members, and upcoming events for uploading to the Mayor's website. She explained that IT manages these pages but will give her access to make corrections or additions once the information has been uploaded. In the future, Jeanette will have the agenda uploaded before our meetings.

Kristin Barker asked who needs to receive the meeting minutes other than the commission members. John House said that the Clerk of Council will need to review them and take them to the City Council to approve. He will find out who the minutes should be sent to for this purpose.

Councilor House had invited a guest, Rev. Carlos Diaz, to attend this meeting on recommendation of Councilman Barnes. Keith Mitchell asked Mr. Diaz to introduce himself to the group. Rev. Diaz is pastor of Iglesia de Dios Nuevo Pacto on Macon and Reese Rd. Rev. Diaz is interested in knowing more about the Mayor's Commission on Reentry and how he might help.

For new business, the commission discussed creation and administration of a Facebook page. Kristin asked what the purpose would be. Andrea Reese and Norman Quarles suggested it will be valuable for sharing information and helping reentering adults. It was decided that Jeanette will create a Facebook page for the commission and act as lead admin on the page. Norman will be a secondary admin on the page. To avoid pushing one organization over another, we need to require that posts promoting specific agendas be run by the council for approval. Before adding something in the name of the Mayor's Commission for Reentry, we will require it to be approved. Jeanette will also manage and monitor the email address that was set up for the commission. This address is mayorsreentrycolsga@gmail.com.

Keith opened the floor to discussion of a process for adding additional members to the commission. A decision was made to invite individuals who show interest to attend meetings as a public bystander. Once the person has attended at least two meetings in this capacity, the commission may opt to invite that individual to join the group by majority vote. A motion was made to adopt this process for adding new members. This motion was seconded and carried.

Core members of the Mayor's Commission on Reentry include: Keith L. Mitchell, Andrea Reese, Kristin Barker, Norman Quarles, Waleisah Wilson, Michael Forté, LaFini Mosby, and Jeanette James. Advisors to the commission include: Mayor Skip Henderson, Councilor John House, Joshua McCarty, and Seth Brown.

The decision was made to table a discussion on a logo for the commission for now. We will discuss this further in the future. No image will be immediately associated with the Mayor's Commission on Reentry.

John now shared information for consideration on urban farming as a job opportunity for the reentry population. Andrea asked what kind of wage can be earned with urban farming, and could this be a self-sustaining opportunity. John explained this could be an opportunity to earn a good income or could be used for its therapeutic value. Norman suggested there are good opportunities for working the agricultural side of this business as well as the warehouse and storage side. Many restaurants in Columbus are looking for opportunities to buy homegrown produce. Stefan Bloodworth, Director of Columbus Botanical Gardens, Gardens is a great resource and proponent for this in Columbus. The Columbus Land Bank Authority is currently working with a local group of urban farmers to turn around some of the land that has been acquired for this use.

LaFini Mosby shared information on staffing agencies that are felony friendly as well as national companies who will hire felons based on specific needs. She also shared information on the DOL TOPPSTEP and Federal Bonding programs.

The next meeting will be on August 19, 2019 at 1:30pm.