

Mayor's Commission on Reentry Minutes
April 20, 2020

In attendance: Keith Mitchell, Kristin Barker, Michael Forte, Cathy Robinson, John House, and Waleisah Wilson

Keith Mitchell opened the meeting and Michael Forte delivered the opening prayer. Keith asked the group to review the minutes from our February meeting. Michael motioned to accept the minutes with any needed corrections. Cathy seconded that motion.

Keith shared that Andrea has stepped down as chair of the Housing Subcommittee. This subcommittee is critical to the purpose of the commission. While we are looking for her replacement, Keith will work with Cathy as Co-chair to keep momentum with the committee. Cathy suggested that Carla Drew may be someone who can help. Carla used to work with the Columbus Housing Authority. Cathy will reach out to her. Cathy will also reach out to Pat Frey with Home for Good.

Kristin shared that the employment subcommittee met on April 16. The group discussed work that is currently being done virtually as well as some berries to work created by the pandemic. Hiring Well Doing Good has spoken to First Step Staffing about developing a future partnership. This may create an avenue for the organization to begin working in Columbus. Susan Gallagher also shared some insight into funding for our partner organizations with the subcommittee. Kristin had a meeting scheduled with Mayor Henderson regarding his workforce taskforce and our plans for the expungement summit. Unfortunately, this meeting was temporarily postponed due to COVID-19.

The expungement training event in March went very well and was well received. Following the training, Keith and Kristin met with Danielle Forte, Julia Slater, Suzanne Goddard and representatives from the Georgia Justice Project to discuss an expungement summit in the fall. That meeting helped to clarify how the event will be structured and who needs to be at the table during the planning stages. The timeline will include setting up a web page for online registrations by this summer, distribution of marketing beginning in late July-August, and a cut off for those registrations 1-month prior to the event. The city is implementing a new system that should be up and running in late September. A decision was made to plan the event in November to be sure the system is online and working as expected. Keith expressed that he was very encouraged about this meeting.

We need to propose a date for the expungement summit to occur. Keith suggested that we look at a date in November. Cathy suggested looking at early November so we aren't too close to Thanksgiving. Friendship Ministries may be a good location for the event as it is easily accessible by bus. The commission proposed November 10, 13, and 19 potential dates for the Expungement Summit.

The Faith Based subcommittee has postponed current subcommittee meetings as churches have not been able to meet due to COVID-19. The subcommittee will consider meeting again in a few weeks once churches have been able to adapt. Love in Action meetings have also been cancelled until further notice. Dr. Forte spoke to with Leah Hughey at Better Together in February. He has not spoken with her since the pandemic started. He will reach back out to her this month.

The commission reviewed a draft vetting proposal that was submitted by Keith Mitchell. The proposal will outline the commission's approach for partnering with other organizations in the Chattahoochee Valley. The commission will perform a final review of the document by Friday, 4/24. Once that review is complete and edits are made, John House will forward a copy to the city attorney for review.

Keith would like to be sure the commission is mindful about keeping our web page updated so people begin to go to that page for needed information. Mike asked what the commission policy is on posting photos from community events. Would we like to receive photos from commission members as they attend reentry related events for posting on the website? Keith explained that these photos may be best shared via the commission Facebook page. We want to keep the page basic, so only a few of these photos may be posted on the web page.

The web page should have subcommittee information, information about meetings, and a link to the commission Facebook page. To keep meetings public, we should have a link for the public to register for virtual commission meetings on the webpage as opposed to publishing a direct zoom link. Kristin asked if the purpose and mission of each subcommittee can be included on the Facebook page and linked from the web page. Keith will contact Jeanette James regarding needed updates on the webpage and about publishing photos on Facebook.

Waleisah shared information on several virtual events she is currently working on. These include a virtual job fair, resume writing event and a work ready Q&A event on record restrictions. Once the date is finalized for the Expungement Summit, we can share this information via these virtual events.

As a reminder, Keith shared that we would like to have key goals and objectives solidified for the subcommittees by the end of June. We would also like to be prepared to communicate this to the Mayor's office and the City Council.

The meeting was dismissed at 2:28pm. Our next meeting will be held on May 18 and 1:30pm.