

Minutes

Youth and Family Affairs Committee

Monday, March 22, 2021 - 8:00 a.m.

Videoconference and Teleconference: Zoom

Members Present: Onreka Johnson, Jeff Elbert, Robert Gorrell, Brenda Meyer, Dianne Owens, Lisa Shaw, Ernie Sherman, Willie Smith, Woogie Burgess (Administrative Assistant).
Ex-Officio: Mayor Stan Booker

Members Not Present: Rick Lowe

Guests Present: Glen Gatlin

Agenda

I. **Call to Order, establish quorum and ensure public notice requirements have been met** – The meeting was called to order at 8:02 a.m. by Onreka Johnson. It was acknowledged that all required posting notifications had been made and confirmed that a quorum was present by videoconference and teleconference, as required by the Oklahoma Open Meetings Act, 25 O.S. 2011, Section 304, as amended by Section 3, Chapter 81, O.S.L. 2019 (25 O.S. Supp. 2019, Section 304, 307.1 and 311), Senate Bill No. 661 (2020).

II. **Welcome and Introductions – Committee Chair, Onreka Johnson** – Chair Johnson welcomed all members to the group, and asked each member to introduce themselves and describe their experience with at risk youth.

Mayor Stan Booker thanked the members for joining the Committee and the call this morning. He discussed the Committee Charge and Vision, as listed in the City Ordinance, which was distributed to the Committee prior to the meeting. The Community has been vocal about crime in the community, and had held a panel about crime and community. He said it became clear that the only way to help reduce crime was to start by helping kids avoid pathways to crime. Originally called the Blue Ribbon Commission on Juvenile Affairs. Came up with Youth and Family Committee to avoid stigma of “juvenile”. Committee designed with one council person and eight citizens with experience working with kids. There will also be a technical committee, where we bring in others to provide expert input in some areas. Ideas have been advanced during campaign for funding for this purpose, and we will need to review those. This Committee has been allocated \$6 million over 15 years. That is about \$400,000 a year, and we must be very focused about how we use those funds. 23% of our population is under 18, so that is about 21,000. Our focus is the 40% most at risk, by ordinance, and that is about 8,500 kids.

III. Business

A. **Logo Development:** The Committee members discussed options for getting a logo. Brenda suggested taking the logo development need to the kids in detention for a contest. After much discussion, Jeff Elbert agreed to develop a flyer for the contest, and to distribute it to the committee members. He agreed that allowing the kids in the juvenile programs to develop it, that would be the most focused area. Willie Smith suggested we use the logo development as an opportunity to

introduce ourselves and the issue we are focused on. The Committee also discussed setting up an award for the winner of the contest. It was generally agreed that \$100 would be a good amount as a prize. Deadline for logo.

Willie Smith moved that we recommend \$100 to be awarded as a prize for the logo winner. Seconded by Lisa Shaw. The vote was unanimous in favor of the motion. Mayor Booker asked that he be allowed to fund the \$100 personally rather than taking this issue to City Council.

Lisa Shaw moved that Woogie Burgess marshal the logo development effort. Jeff Elbert seconded the motion. After vote, the motion passed unanimously.

B. Scope of Committee Responsibilities and Possible Projects

Chair Johnson opened the discussion about summer programs/workshops for K-12 (Cameron and LPS student/staff).

Woogie Burgess noted that LPS used to have many summer workshops for kids across Lawton to attend, placed at neighborhood schools, and they were heavily attended until budget issues caused the programs to be suspended.

Dianne Owens talked about the gang prevention program that used to be sponsored by OJA at Marie Detty. The counselors hung out where kids hang out, and were generally available. The program was very successful, but funding was lost when Oklahoma budget issues caused several programs to lose funding. They had measurable results and strong outcomes. They coordinated with the Lawton Police Gang Task Force.

Jeff Elbert talked gang prevention at the Great 580 Association – first focus is gang prevention, second consideration is building relationships with current gang members. Said prevention only works for kids not born into the lifestyle – some are born into the gang lifestyle, and need to build relationships. The third tier is gang rehabilitation. That group needs help from this group. He is a former gang member, and has direct experience with trying to help reduce gang activity. Mayor Booker talked about the Gang Prevention program at Marie Detty, and the fact it had measurable results. He noted we would have to measure any program(s) we fund, and would have to show how it helps crime go down. He suggested we provide data such as how we help increase school attendance by kids involved, increase the child's GPA, impact graduation rate.

Dianne Owens offered to do a workshop training people on how to track outcomes.

Chair Johnson talked about the programs she works with, and how they were able to track and measure programs. Mr. Gatlin also has a tracking system with his new program. She indicated that as we look at organizations that are doing the work, we should avoid reinventing the wheel. She also noted that kids are being recruited out of elementary school, and that prevention is crucial.

Willie Smith said that we must keep in mind that we need to put something in their hands, not just take something away. We need to bring them into something, not just take them out. We should look at taking them to various venues to see new things, and give them attention to something more positive.

Glen Gatlin said his program works with all youth, not just a specific group. He said that many kids are at risk without warning, and his program engages all types of youth to help them all be prepared. It is a community collaboration.

Woogie Burgess suggested the Committee consider developing an application form to vote on at the next meeting, so that we can choose which project to support. She then pointed out the

specific mission as set out in the ordinance adopted by the City Council. She suggested the United Way has an application that works as a grant application, that we could adapt for our use. Mayor Booker pointed out that the ordinance was approved by the voters for prevention purposes.

Brenda Myers asked if we had a comprehensive list of programs in Lawton. The group discussed, and it was decided that Woogie Burgess would compile information from this Committee, the United Way, and other groups for use by the Committee and others. She asked all members to email to her any organizations that they knew of that she could include in the comprehensive list. Mayor Booker said we had to be careful that we were not providing replacement funding for existing organizations, and that what we fund with public money is an increase in the service rendered. He said that what the Council will want to know is (1) what is the funding of the organization and the reach of the organization now, and (2) how is their proposal taking us to a new level and reaching new groups of children.

Chris Tina Chen asked what if an organization does not need money. This issue and ways to address it was discussed.

Willie Smith said it would be useful to add to the list information about groceries and supplies for families.

Onreka said we should also consider programs like Big Brothers and Sisters, and bringing that back.

IV. Set Committee Meeting Schedule and any Timetables

After thorough discussion, the group agreed to set meeting times for the near future the first and third Tuesdays of each month at 5:30 p.m. Meetings will be by Zoom for the next several meetings.

V. New Business – No new business was addressed.

There being no further business, Chair Johnson declared the meeting adjourned at 9:06 am.

Next meeting set for April 6, 2021, at 5:30 pm.

Summary of Attendees and groups represented:

Glen Gatlin: representing "All About Understanding", new 501(c)(3) – Mentorship program, designed to mentor kids in life skills, helping them understand what they want to be; do community service with them.

Brenda Meyers: director of Comanche County Juvenile Bureau and Comanche County Juvenile Detention Center. They are the front of the line after a juvenile has received a citation through the law enforcement system. Try to lead them to a different path than the criminal justice system.

Mayor Stan Booker: not a member,

Dianne Owens: former (retired) director of Marie Detty Youth and Family Services.

Robert Gorrell: senior minister of Centenary United Methodist Church, also a psychotherapist.

Chris Tina Chin: Onreka's mentee, former teacher at Lawton High. Now is an instructional coach for first and second year teachers in Oklahoma through Teach For America, Oklahoma City, Lawton.

Willie Smith: Pastor at Atlanta Baptist Church. They have a program called "Adopt a School". Brings children in after school, feeds them, teachers help kids with issues they are struggling in.

Lisa Shaw: Associate District Judge.

Jeffrey Elbert: teaches math at Lawton High School, President and Founder of the Great 580 Association, on staff at Cameron Baptist Church as pastor of Recovery Ministries.

Onreka Johnson: Ward 7 City Councilperson, has been working with youth in community for over 20 years.

Amanda Nunez – Hope Coordinator for the Might Community Development and Resource Center, for entire families; she provides help to the teen program, currently getting ready the summer work readiness program, to get kids ready for workforce when they turn 16.

Kim McConnell – Lawton Constitution

Woogie Burgess – Assistant to the Committee.

Ernie Sherman – Lawton First Assembly

Bernita (guest) - Bernita talked about the Community Center and youth she works with. They make sure families have the kind of support they need to succeed, lights on, groceries as needed, and