



Charlotte City Council
Safe Communities Committee
Meeting Summary
February 2, 2021

COMMITTEE AGENDA TOPICS

- I. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Family Justice Center – Informational

COMMITTEE INFORMATION

Committee Members Present: Larken Egleston (Chair), Dimple Ajmera, Renee Johnson, Victoria Watlington

Additional Council Present: Malcolm Graham, Braxton Winston

Staff Resources: Victoria Johnson, Assistant City Manager

Meeting Duration: 12:03 p.m. – 1:31 p.m.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Agenda
2. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Family Justice Center, From Victim to Survivor PowerPoint

DISCUSSION HIGHLIGHTS

The meeting was called to order at 12:03 p.m., by Chairperson Larken Egleston.

In response to an inquiry regarding violent crime year to date statistics, Chief Jennings reported that there have been 8 homicides since January 1st. There were 7 homicides at this point in time in 2020. The demographics of the victims were: 7 black males, 1 white female, ages 21 – 34 years, all involving a gun with the exception of the female, who was intentionally hit by a vehicle.

In forecasting violent crime, Chief Jennings noted that the main spikes occurred in June and July of 2020, which averaged 15-16 homicides each month. The Chief did not have a full violent crime data report and stated he could provide it but advised that the information was available to the public through the CMPD crime mapping system, as well as through the City's dashboard recently created.

Assistant City Manager Victoria Johnson read the Mayor's referral to the Safe Communities Committee to respond to the request for support in the establishment of a Family Justice Center in Mecklenburg County. The Family Justice Center follows a national victim-centered, trauma-informed model in which domestic violence, sexual assault, elder abuse, human trafficking and child abuse partners are co-located and work in collaboration with each other so that victims and their children can access services they need. The Committee policy question and charge was also read.

Policy Question: How would partnering in the establishment of a Family Justice Center in Mecklenburg County advance the City's violence prevention efforts?

Committee Charge:

1. Review the proposal submitted by the Family Justice Center group to determine the potential partnership options.
2. Assess participation options in conjunction with current violence prevention efforts and city focuses to determine potential impacts on advancing the City's violence prevention efforts.
3. Propose a recommendation for consideration by full Council.

Family Justice Center

Mecklenburg County District Attorney Spencer Merriweather provided the framework for the multi-agency collaboration, noting it responds to multiple inquiries across the state asking what is being done to address this type of violence. He emphasized that the Family Justice Center model focuses on providing services for victims when they are at the heightened point of their trauma. The Center will also address the impact of violence on the family members of the victim who witnesses the violence, especially children.

Andrew Oliver, CEO, Pat's Place Child Advocacy Center, noted that the work of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Family Justice Center has been in planning for 3 years. He stated that the Family Justice Center is a transformational, tested, proven and effective community response that will serve as a solution for the violence and abuse epidemic in our community. The examples of the violence and abuse included: domestic violence, child abuse, sexual assault, human trafficking, and elder abuse. Mr. Oliver stated that NC routinely ranks in the top 10 for the number of human trafficking cases reported annually in the U.S.

Mr. Oliver shared a graphic illustrating that domestic homicides make up 12 – 24 % of total homicides yearly. He pointed out that intimate partner homicides are a subset of the larger domestic homicide number, but the number also includes the deaths of children and others with a familial relationship. Mr. Oliver stated that Charlotte has strong, supportive and helpful organizations that are dedicated to supporting victims of violence and abuse, however, victims report that the services are geographically disjointed, and they experience redundancy in the process when interfacing with various organizations. In addition, the need to travel to different sites is costly and endangers them and they may end up not getting all the help they need.

The Family Justice Center would be called *The Umbrella Center* and bring all practices together in one location with a single, simple intake process. The model has been deemed a best practice by the U.S. Department of Justice and replicated in over 130 communities. The collaboration desires the use of a 100,000 sq. ft. facility near uptown. The space will accommodate over 150 core staff, as well as visiting service providers. The service partner providers include:

- Law Enforcement
- Prosecutors
- Medical Providers
- Social Workers
- Victim Advocates

Sherrill Carrington, Jamie Kimble Foundation for the Carolinas (JKFFC) Executive Director, discussed the proven approaches and the documented outcomes of Family Justice Centers. She referred members to the charmeckfamilyjusticecenter.org website to read about the expected outcomes and see examples of how these outcomes have been accomplished in other Family Justice Centers across the U.S. Ms. Carrington stated that the take away was that when the most vulnerable can access the care that they need they are more likely to build a life that is free from abuse and ultimately break the cycle of violence. This results in intergenerational change:

1. Treating and mitigating the impact of violence and abuse
2. Addressing adverse childhood experiences
3. Improving the lives of families across communities

She reported that San Diego has experienced a 95% decrease in domestic violence homicides over the last 15 years and Greensboro's successful reduction resulted in the opening of a Family Justice Center in High Point.

Safe Alliance CEO Karen Parker explained why the Family Justice Center is important to the City of Charlotte. She spoke about the alignment with Cure Violence and addressing unmet needs, as well as reimagining policing and addressing racial equity issues. She stated that no additional staff positions are required. Current staff working in different offices around the City would be relocated to the space rent free. She identified the project's core partners that served on the Steering Committee: Nonprofit Partners, Public and Community Support, Law Enforcement, Healthcare Providers, and Legal Support. CMPD, City staff, City Manager and Assistance City Managers and some members of Council have been committed partners from the onset by participating in the initiative planning and research in various capacities. She noted that the nonprofit partners have launched a soft phase of a Capital Campaign.

Ms. Parker announced the opening of a Survivor Resource Center in the Children's Family Center mid-February. The temporary location will inform the planning of the full Family Justice Center. It has been designed to address the most lethal cases of violence and abuse. Victims will be received by referral only. On-site and off-site partners will assist in the collaborative process. The Survivor Resource Center will address the immediate crisis and enhance safety, while the Family Justice Center will provide a more holistic approach. Ms. Parker stated that the Survivor Resource Center is not a pilot project. It has been tested and proven since 2002.

Chief Jennings explained that CMPD will have permanent office space at the main facility when it's completed and rotating detective resources at the Survivor Resource Center. A Domestic Violence Advocate and Sexual Assault Detective will also be assigned to the Center.

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Family Justice Center is being developed as a private-public partnership to ensure sustainability. The building cost estimate is \$30M. An additional \$5M will be raised to support an operating endowment to cover the common expenses shared by the organizations in the Family Justice Center. The Steering Committee is asking that both the City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County consider an investment of \$10M each. The Mecklenburg County staff were favorable to the plan and would recommend that Mecklenburg County own and maintain the facility as part of their ongoing commitment. The BOCC has not voted on the matter. The County's participation would be contingent on a strong seed involvement of the partnership. The City would also be asked to provide representation

on the building committee and the donation of City owned land/building could be a part of the \$10M investment, in addition to locating CMPD Victims Services team on-site.

DA Merriweather closed the presentation emphasizing a comprehensive, holistic approach is the best effort to make victims whole and potentially escape future trauma.

ACM Johnson stated that staff would work with the Family Justice Center presenters to analyze the numbers and how the Center fits into the Safe Charlotte, violence interrupters and other City programs. Also, the Budget Department will be asked to review the numbers. Per the Committee's request, the next meeting will include information on what the City's service model will look like, how it fits into the overall City budget, what the outcome is based on the analysis and how the City can partner in this endeavor.

Questions asked or additional information was requested on the following items:

1. Prepare a violent crime year to date report for each Safe Communities Committee meeting.
2. Provide information on how the community can access the crime data online.
3. Be cognizant of the impact of COVID19's impact on gathering spaces.
4. Analyze the plan and how it correlates to the City's framework and efforts around violence (outline of the scope).
5. Make the case for how the Family Justice Center will serve as a preventative approach to addressing violence in our community.
6. Is the intention of the Center to reduce the number of violence cases? If so, how is co-locating reducing cases?
7. What options have been looked at? For example, how do we leverage technology to reduce redundancies? Can we leverage or improve an existing data base that shares the victim's information to prevent having to tell their story repeatedly?
8. Consider available spacing reuse in the wake of COVID that utilizes existing vacant commercial space that are centrally located and along the transit line rather than new construction.
9. What are the findings of the commercial real estate agent?
10. What is the data from the pilot Survivor Resource Center that can be used to right size the work?
11. What is the City's role besides providing a CMPD officer at the Center?
12. What drove the domestic violence homicide numbers down in San Diego and Greensboro?
13. What is the Chief's vision for the City's involvement?
14. What changes in the process between the Survivor Resource Center and the Family Justice Center will allow the collaboration to scale up?
15. Obtain more information on redevelopment in urban corridors where Family Justice Centers are located. How are we investing in the places where we will see the highest return?
16. What are the positions of the other towns in this project?
17. Can the required space be reduced to use existing spaces like 601 5th St and the Valerie Woodard Center and meet virtually with clients? Rephrased: The victim comes to the set location and the partners are virtual.
18. Will there be space for grassroots organizations that provide services that can help victims?
19. Ensure that resources or modified resources for individuals with a brain injury are available at the Center.
20. While looking at getting additional funding and capacity building for grassroots organizations to participate in the violence interrupter model, consider how the grassroots organizations

involved in intimate partner and domestic violence services can be expanded into the Family Justice Center space.

21. Are there collaborative services for the perpetrators? (Answered: will explore and also partner with Meck Co. Nova Program)

The meeting was adjourned at 1:31 p.m.