

Steering Committee Meeting
Thursday, April 30, 2009 at 11:00 am -1:00 pm
GVSU Criminal Justice Grants Office
638 West Fulton 49504

Voting Steering Committee Members Present

1. Deputy Chief James Farris (for Captain Eric Payne) - Grand Rapids Police Department
2. Sgt Elliott Bargas - Grand Rapids Police Department
3. Ray Tromp - Baxter Neighborhood Association
4. Haris Alibasic - City of Grand Rapids
5. Marian Barrera-Young - Baxter Neighborhood Association
6. Pamela Benjamin - Eastown Community Association
7. Sandra Latham - Southeast East End Neighborhood Association
8. Stacy Stout - Baxter Neighborhood Association
9. Janet Strahan (for Kaye Hooker) - U.S. Attorney's Office

Voting Steering Committee Members Absent:

1. Kathryn Caliendo - East Hills Neighborhood Association
2. Michael Yasenchak - Drug Enforcement Administration
3. Scott Vogel - Madison Avenue Neighborhood Association: Bus.Rep.
4. Tim Doyle - Kent County Prosecutor's Office
5. Kaye Hooker - US Attorney's Office
6. Captain Eric Payne - GRPD

Non-Voting Regular Attendees and Guests Present

1. Debra Ross - Grand Valley State University
2. Kristine Jaros - Weed and Seed Site Director
3. Aaron Stevens - Grand Rapids Police Department Community Officer

I. Call To Order/Introductions

The meeting was called to order at 11:10 am by Chairperson Pamela Benjamin.
Members introduced themselves and a quorum was present.

II. Approval of Agenda

In order to accommodate an early exit of Dr. Debra Ross, the agenda was re-structured to be presented in the following order: **IV.** (Gang Talk Thursday Discussion)
VI-b. (Fiscal Report),
V. (Community Meeting Planning)
VI-a (Weed Report)
VI-c (Site Director's Report)

Sgt Elliott Bargas made a motion to pass the revised-order agenda. This was seconded by Stacy Stout. The motion was passed and the agenda was approved.

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III. Approval of March 26, 2009 minutes

A motion was made by Sgt Elliott Bargas and seconded by Stacy Stout that the minutes of the March 26, 2009 meeting be approved. The motion carried.

IV. Gang Talk Thursday Discussion.

The teleconference of April 16, 2009 from 3:00 to 4:00 covered two areas: the first was titled "Civil Injunctions Against Gang Members as a Strategy to Thwart Turf Gangs in Communities," and the second was titled "A Youth Program Model Used in Providence, Rhode Island To Serve Troubled, Hard-To Serve At-Risk Youth." Stacy Stout distributed a four-page paper summarizing the teleconference.

The featured speakers John Wilkinson and Michael Reis, presented information and strategies to meet specific problems of gang activities. Interesting information included the high-cost, insufficient results of group-homes. The recommendation was for investing in families, rather than in institutional solutions. Tracking the youth is very important and must be done consistently and frequently to produce positive results..

The Steering Committee discussed the injunction laws as a possible threat to the civil liberties of youth. Another question related to geography and whether this response was limited to the inner cities. Enforcement of injunction laws was discussed. The curfew law in Grand Rapids does not carry as much weight and substance compared to the laws presented through the teleconference. For example, the firearms, dangerous weapons and intimidation using weapons such as brass knuckles, pseudo-guns, knives and blades, and/or gestures suggestive of a weapon may elicit authority responses based upon suspicion, rather than proof. The question remains, is this a direction that Central City Weed and Seed wishes to pursue; by using the legal tool of injunctions as "1,000 cuts... to disrupt their activities and ability to gather which they need to function."

The Providence project uses aggressive probation to lock up gun-bearing youth, mediation between rival gangs to produce truces, and youth and family services on the street during the evenings and at night when families need the assistance of social service agencies. Systematic therapy for the entire family has proven to be effective when there is a caretaker/agency teaching parents how to stabilize their family through effective responsible parenting. Services that remove the youth out of the home for a day without incarceration, but to provide a cool-down period, have been effective for all family members.

The finances for the Providence project indicates that costs incurred for residential treatment within a group home are very expensive, averaging \$17,000.00 per child annually, and "the residential system does not work." Better use of the revenues allocated to youth services will focus on the family structure as opposed to the institutional solution.

Stacy Stout announced that the next teleconferencing event will be on May 21, 2009 from 3-4pm at 638 West Fulton.

V. Reports

A. Fiscal Report

Travel expense allocation was budgeted at a total of \$7,500.00, of which \$777.18 has been paid. The remainder will cover the expenses generated by the upcoming conference in Tampa, FL. A timely submission of travel expense documentation will be appreciated. Dr. Debra Ross stated that the 2008 grant extension has been officially approved by the Department of Justice.

Marian Barrera-Young then made the following set of statements:

At Marian Barrera-Young's request:

Marian Barrera-Young stated that she wanted the official record to show that

“Dr. Debra Ross said that “The Baxter Neighborhood Association was not to receive funds for the Fiscal Year 2009.” Also she said that Dr. Debra Ross said to her that “the reason they would not get funding is because they did not receive an invoice for the “National Night Out” program.” Marian Barrera-Young stated that the missing invoice was to cover payment for the services of a disc jockey (D.J.) who provided musical service at Joe Taylor Park on “National Night-Out.” Marian Barrera-Young stated she “had trouble tracking him down.”

She then stated that “Dr. Debra Ross told me that we needed to partner with a faith-based organization.” Marian said that “for the last several years Sherman Street Christian Reformed Church was a partner with Baxter Neighborhood Association.”

The action taken after this set of comments by Marian Barrera-Young was to note that the next “National Night-Out” would be held in August, 2009.

Dr. Debra Ross explained that the budget for FY 2009 will most likely start at the 1st of August 2009, following the end of FY 2008 on July 31, 2009. It was noted that it may take three months before the revenue flow begins from the Department of Justice.

The 2009 12th Annual NGCRC Conference will be held in Chicago on August 11-13, 2009. Stacy Stout presented a total budget for the Conference of \$2,008.34 and requested that she be sponsored to the conference. A full report will be compiled by attendees for presentation. The Conference tracks are “Management and Supervision Skills for Gang Specialists,” and “Gang Counseling Techniques.” Sandra Latham suggested the Elijah Libbett at Neland be offered a spot as well. The Steering Committee agreed. Kristine to coordinate the details and get permission from CCDO.

In the FY 2008 budget, “Project Sentry” was allocated the sum of \$1,200.00. Sgt Elliott Bargas gave a brief outline of Project Sentry. However, Weed and Seed will not be funding this project as it had been canceled by the Police Department. He suggested that the funding be re-allocated to the “Anti-Graffiti System”. This is a sound-alert system which detects graffiti and delivers a message to the Police Department when graffiti is being applied to the surface where the unit is installed. This advanced technology has been used in many vandalized areas and catches the crime in progress. It is a flexible device that can be applied anywhere and can use a wireless battery. A six-page promotional piece was distributed for more information. Deputy Chief James Farris informed us that the police department had reviewed the system and its application. They discussed cost, efficiency, enforcement, effectiveness, legal interpretations and uses, and are continuing to research this tool. Questions from the Steering Committee were raised. Pending results from the Police investigation of the device and its recommendation, the Steering Committee advised that re-allocation of funds be tabled.

Dr. Debra Ross discussed the “Yes!4U” youth employment project. The Federal government through the Stimulus program has released \$1.5 million dollars for youth employment programs in Summer 2009. Since Weed and Seed had already allocated \$9,993.00 for the same purpose, perhaps this money can be reviewed for meeting other program needs. The consensus was to see if the money will be replaced by the Stimulus Bill, or not, and to avoid duplication of funding and/or services based upon this new source of revenue for Jubilee Jobs.

VI. Community Meeting Planning

Because there had been some difficulty getting members appointed to the Community Meeting Planning group, it was decided to add all of the members of the Steering Committee to this planning group for the event, and all are encouraged to participate. All Steering Committee members will be e-mailed regarding a meeting date and time. The date, time, location and agenda for the Community Meeting will be targeted at the first meeting.

V. (Reports con't) B. Weed Report

Statistics for the first quarter of 2009 compared to 2008 were included on a three-page chart provided by Sgt Bargas, "Central City Weed and Seed GRPD Crime Data as of April 21, 2009." He noted that while larcenies, curfew violations, and drug use are increasing; weapons, prostitution, and domestic assaults are decreasing. Crime in general was down in the Weed and Seed area.

V. (Reports con't).C. Site Director's Report

Kristine Jaros said that several members of the Steering Committee have not yet turned in their survey to the CCDO. She will e-mail a reminder to facilitate the return of the survey. The Site Director has submitted her progress report to the CCDO with a revision of the objectives and how they are consistent with the Weed and Seed Grant Narrative.

VII. Announcements/Updates/Public Comment

1. Sandra Latham requested that the Steering Committee thank Pearl Banks for the time that she had invested in writing a Weed and Seed Grant.
2. The next meeting of the Steering Committee will be May 28, 2009 at 11:00 am.

VIII . Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 12:35 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Ray Tromp
Secretary

Next Steering Committee Meeting:

THURSDAY
MAY 28, 2009

11:00 am - 1:00 pm

GVSU Criminal Justice Grants Office
638 West Fulton Street