

Steering Committee Meeting
Thursday, June 25, 2009 at 11:00 am -1:00 pm
GVSU Criminal Justice Grants Office
638 West Fulton 49504

Voting Steering Committee Members Present

1. Sergeant Elliott Bargas - Grand Rapids Police Department
2. Ray Tromp - Baxter Neighborhood Association: Resident
3. Kathryn Caliendo - East Hills Neighborhood Association
4. Stacy Stout - Baxter Neighborhood Association
5. Scott Vogel - Madison Avenue Neighborhood Association: Bus.Rep.
6. Daniel Snyder - Drug Enforcement Administration
7. Janet Strahan - U.S. Attorney's Office
8. Marian Barrera-Young - Baxter Neighborhood Association
9. Amber Z. Kilpatrick - Eastown Community Association

Voting Members Absent:

1. Tim Doyle - Kent County Prosecutor's Office
2. Pamela Benjamin - Eastown Community Association
3. Captain Eric Payne - Grand Rapids Police Department
4. Sandra Latham - Southeast East End Neighborhood Association
5. Haris Alibasic - City of Grand Rapids
6. Kaye Hooker – U.S. Attorney's Office
7. Michael Yasenck – Drug Enforcement Administration

Non-Voting Regular Attendees and Guests Present

1. Kristine Jaros - Central City Weed and Seed Site Director
2. Enid Gaddis - Arbor Circle
3. Josh Hansen - Wedgewood Christian Services
4. Eric Price, Jr. - Omega Life Alternatives, Director
5. Rashid Robinson - Omega Life Alternatives, Director
6. Aaron Stevens - Grand Rapids Police Department Community Officer

I. Call To Order/Introductions

The meeting was called to order at 11:09 am by Treasurer Scott Vogel, as the chairs were absent. Members introduced themselves and a quorum was present.

II. Approval of Agenda

A motion to pass the agenda was made by Kathryn Caliendo, and seconded by Sgt. Elliott Bargas. The motion was passed and the agenda was approved.

III. Approval of May 28, 2009 Minutes.

The motion to approve the minutes of May 29, 2009 was made by Kathryn Caliendo, and seconded by Sgt Elliott Bargas. A clarification to the minutes included the information that the designated dead-end avenues: which are north of Wealthy Street, west of Fuller Avenue, and east of Diamond Avenue; would be accessible from the parallel avenues by a connecting street at the end of each avenue, thereby effectively eliminating the dead ends. This will improve emergency vehicle and residential traffic patterns, by allowing alternative access and egress. (*VII. Announcements Up-Dates and Public Comment*)

Sgt. Barges in reference to the Weed Report indicated that the foot patrol was activated already the first part of June, 2009. (*VI. Reports - (c) Weed Report.*)

With these adjustments, the motion to approve the minutes was passed.

IV. Eric Price: Executive Director, Omega Life Alternatives

Eric Price informed the Steering Committee that the Omega House is located at 722 Eastern Avenue SE at the NE corner of Bates Street in the facility previously owned by Project Rehab. Eric Price stated that he graduated from University of Indiana, and is a former Sports Ambassador, using basketball as a tool in the Philippines to perform missionary duties. The Omega House provides men's programming for re-entry into society from prison status. Services include mentoring, workforce development, counseling, and individual growth. The Omega Life Alternative Program requires volunteers to help the residents achieve the stated goals, and the Criminal Justice Department of Grand Valley State University is currently looking at ways they can assist them. Due to the number of prison closings, services like this will experience an increase in demand. Eric Price introduced Rashid Robinson who described the residential program in detail.

V. Reports

a. Fiscal Report

In the absence of Dr. Deborah Ross and Dr. William Crawley, the fiscal report was provided by Kristine Jaros. The Fiscal Report of 2008 showed that an amount of \$96,331.73 was yet to be invoiced, and also that the travel line item has \$37.00 remaining. She stated that the FY 2009-2010 Budget has not yet been returned as approved by the Department of Justice. This is expected to occur during August 2009.

b. Weed Report

Sgt Bargas, in the absence of Capt. Payne, reported that all projects are underway, and a curfew sweep will be implemented during August. The criminal statistics will be reported on a quarterly basis from the Grand Rapids Police Department using the office of Phil Potter which maps and researches all the numbers and statistics of the local Weed and Seed programs to assure that compliancy is achieved to the original Narrative.

c. Community Meeting Report

Because of the rental fee (\$50.00) of Wealthy Theatre, and also due to the "neutral-site" requirement; it was the consensus of the Steering Committee to hold the Community Meeting in the

Fall 2009 at a local school. A suggestion indicated that the Martin Luther King Academy of Henry and Logan Street might be acceptable, and available without cost.

d. Site Report

Kristine Jaros reported that Random Acts of Kindness Day, Saturday June 27, 2009, will start with a lunch sponsored by Macatawa Bank at Neland Avenue Christian Reformed Church. Each volunteer in the service project will be given an imprinted Tee shirt celebrating the event. So far, 12 groups will participate in this event. Some of the activities planned are flower planting, wheelchair excursions for seniors, and yard, garage, alley, and drain sewer clean-ups. The Grand Rapids Press promised extensive coverage for this event and showed enthusiasm for the concept.

Baxter Community Center is collecting used clothing, especially men's clothing, for their clients. Donations can be brought to RAK Day.

The Grant Progress Report for the narrative is due by the end of July, so Neighborhood Associations in the Weed and Seed area now need to verify that their information is submitted. Responses are coming in.

The July 2009 Conference in Tampa, Florida will be represented by four members from Grand Rapids Central City Weed and Seed. The Gang Crime Research Conference in Chicago, Illinois will be represented by Pearl Banks from Neland Avenue Christian Reformed Church and Stacy Stout from G.R.C.C. Weed and Seed. The Crime Mapping Research Conference will be attended by Phil Porter in August.

In the Steering Committee monthly packet a letter from the Dayton, Ohio Northwest Weed and Seed requested cooperation in supporting the Weed and Seed budget. In protesting the proposed federal cuts to the Weed and Seed budget, it was noted that the proposed 22% cut follows the 33% cut imposed during the last fiscal year. Since Weed and Seed programs most closely meet the needs of the intended targeted population, these cuts are devastating.

The letter encourages all involved to write letters and join others now, and also at the CCDO Tampa National Conference in communicating the impact of cutting Weed and Seed budgets. "We have to make our collective voices heard - other OJP program budgets have grown tremendously in the new administration, and I am deeply concerned that Weed and Seed will be on the chopping block unless we demand the attention of everyone up to the President and get them to review the funding. It's not enough to just restore the previous funding levels; Weed and Seed budgets should be doubled because of our proven effectiveness. In true Weed and Seed fashion, we need to make this happen ourselves. We need hundred a letters and e-mails NOW." Remember, "the people living in our Weed and Seed target areas are exactly the people who are supposed to benefit from community programs and they are the people who can least afford to make up funding reductions."

Kristine Jaros announced that there are still garden plots available at Joe Taylor Park, contact either the Kent County Health Department or Baxter Community Center to reserve one.

The Domestic Violence Committee has been re-named "The Violence and Women Committee"

VI. Announcements/Up-Dates and Public Comment

1. A motion was made by the Steering Committee to change the date of the August meeting from August 27, 2009 to August 20, 2009. This will accommodate the staff, the fiduciary representatives and other members schedules. The motion was passed unanimously to be re-scheduled for August 20, 2009.

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2. Marian Barrera-Young announced that “Michigan Voice” will have a town-hall meeting August 11, 2009. Local issues will be discussed.

3. Public Comment was made by Josh Hansen of Wedgewood Christian Services . He was introduced as an addition to the membership for the Drug Reform and Reduction Program. He will work with the Kent County Coalition representing all the cities in Kent County to raise awareness of Alcohol use and its impact upon the environment, especially upon minors.

In order to reduce the volume of alcohol sales to minors, one of his responsibilities is to inform party stores about the law regarding sales of alcohol to minors, and to display legal information inside the party stores informing the public about purchasing alcoholic beverages. This display will help document the negative impact of alcohol use upon the behavioral choices, the subsequent legal problems, the diminished educational future, and the other anti-social results of alcohol use by minors. Another responsibility is to trace the considerable financial and social costs to the community of alcohol use by minors. This data will help reveal the short-range and the long-range effects of alcohol use by minors.

In working to reduce the incidents of alcohol sales to minors and alcohol use by minors, he will educate the taxpayers of the high costs related to this problem. This information can generate effective efforts which can be made individually, by neighbors of party stores, and collectively, by neighborhood groups, to reduce the profiteering of selling alcohol to minors. Another tool is to aggressively prosecute the party stores who sell alcohol to minors.

The Steering Committee is aware of the many party stores within the target area, and believes that such information and collaboration will be very useful in reducing crime, in reducing the activities of the gangs, and thus improve the environment for minors and for all residents of the Target Areas. By informing, educating, collaborating, enforcing, and prosecuting, we can work together to take a significant positive step forward in weeding out this negative influence in our neighborhoods.

VII Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 12:07 pm

Respectfully submitted,
Ray Tromp
Secretary

Next Steering Committee Meeting

THURSDAY

JULY 23, 2009

11:00 am - 1:00 pm

GVSU Criminal Justice Grants Office

638 West Fulton Street