

**MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TASK FORCE, IN REGULAR MEETING OF MONDAY, MAY 2, 2022 AT 5:30 PM, SOUTHEAST REGIONAL LIBRARY, SHAKESPEARE ROOM, 775 N. GREEFIELD ROAD, GILBERT, ARIZONA**

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**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Iya Affo; Chris Curley; Katie Hackett; Amy Holstein; Alexandra Rodriguez; Javier Rodriguez; Christine Sabel; Sean Warren; Heather Watts; Suzanne Lunt, Alternate; Bus Obayomi, Alternate

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** None

**STAFF PRESENT:** Council Liaison Kathy Tilque, Staff Liaison/Volunteer and Community Resources Manager Melanie Dykstra, Community Resources Program Supervisor Jennifer Lauria, Assistant Town Manager Leah Rhineheimer, Deputy Town Clerk Judy Martinez, Police Chief Michael Soelberg, Police Lieutenant Chris Timmins, Assistant Fire Chief Rob Duggan, Fire Battalion Chief Cory Gerard, and Management Budget Analyst II Genesis Hart

**GUESTS PRESENT:** Cecelia Chan  
Ginger Smith

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Hackett called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Vice Chair Warren led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**ROLL CALL**

Staff Liaison Dykstra called roll and declared a quorum present.

**WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Chair Hackett welcomed everyone and asked those present who were not members of the Task Force to introduce themselves. Those in the audience introduced themselves.

## **TASK FORCE MEMBER WARM UP – ENERGY CHECK-IN AND WEEKLY HIGHLIGHT**

Member Holstein led a warmup exercise and explained the process and purpose. She said each member should indicate what their energy level was, with examples of low (tired, feeling unwell, distracted, frustrated), medium (awake, feeling well, content, level), and high (energized, anxious, overwhelmed, excited). The Task Force members participated in the warmup exercise by sharing their energy level, stating their favorite color, and sharing a personal highlight from the month.

## **COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITIZENS**

Vice Chair Warren led the Communications from Citizens portion of the agenda.

Brenda Sullivan, Gilbert resident, discussed discrimination that she and her family had experienced in Gilbert at her Chandler school. She said she had pursued all of the avenues available to her at her children's schools and said it needed to be brought to the attention of the Task Force. She stated her family was one of many who were experiencing both racial discrimination and sexual harassment. She said it needed to be escalated because the schools were not doing anything about it.

## **AGENDA ITEMS**

### **1. Consider approval of the minutes of the April 4, 2022 meeting**

A MOTION was made by Member Sabel, seconded by Member J. Rodriguez, to approve the minutes of the April 4, 2022 meeting. *Motion carried 9-0.*

### **2. Reflections on Meeting # 3**

Staff Liaison Dykstra asked members to go to [www.menticom](http://www.menticom) (Mentimeter) and use a code provided to capture what from the last meeting they thought was important to remember as they moved forward. As the members entered their thoughts, the responses appeared on the screen. The responses entered by the Task Force Members included empathy, respect, civility, collaboration, wait, trust, (duplicate), open-minded, and listen objectively.

### **3. Needs Assessment Presentation**

Staff Liaison/Volunteer and Community Resources Manager Dykstra summarized the 2019 Needs Assessment from the staff perspective, noting she hoped all of the members went through the report as their homework. She listed the following 10 different priority populations identified in the assessment: individuals in need of

mental health and substance abuse treatment; survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault and abuse, and human trafficking; families in crisis; homeless individuals and families; low to moderate income individuals and families; youth in need of social services; special needs individuals; elderly/seniors (over the age of 62); immigrants and refugees; and culturally diverse individuals and families. She noted that the elderly/senior group priority rose during the COVID-19 pandemic. She noted there were 12 primary, 58 secondary, and 13 tertiary recommendations identified in the assessment. She also noted some of the recommendations were opportunities for the school districts, and although the Town does not have jurisdiction over the schools, we try to work collaboratively when possible.

Staff Liaison Dykstra discussed the common themes of access to mental health, behavioral health, substance abuse, and health treatment services; additional safe, affordable housing options; awareness, education, and the bridging of resources; and solutions to local transportation needs. She discussed the need to move the needle and highlighted non-profit organizations, housing and homelessness, education/awareness, and transportation challenges. She highlighted non-profit partnerships in the areas of substance abuse, basic health care, sexual abuse/trafficking, behavioral, and ongoing partnerships. She said seven new and expanded partnerships were developed and gave examples, adding there would be a presentation on housing and homelessness in August. She discussed bringing on two new partners, plus one additional partner for home repair. She discussed heat relief and shelter, efforts that included a cooling van or taking individuals to cooling stations and places where they can get meals and do laundry.

Staff Liaison Dykstra highlighted education and awareness and the importance of people knowing what was available to them. She noted examples of suicide initiatives, development of resources, domestic violence awareness, and sharing resources.

Assistant Town Manager Rhineheimer asked who in the Task Force was aware of the resources available before reading the assessment. Some of the members stated they were aware of some, but not all, of the resources. Assistant Town Manager Rhineheimer then asked the group who followed Gilbert's social media channels; about half of the members identified they did.

Staff Liaison Dykstra discussed outreach efforts and social media presence, also noting the usage of postings in the newspaper for those who were not on social media. She discussed working with the Gilbert Chamber of Commerce and the East Valley Resource Coalition. She discussed networking and sharing resources with groups such as churches and a group known as HELPR, adding that particular

program was transitioning but had been very useful in linking needs to groups that could provide assistance.

Staff Liaison Dykstra discussed transportation and other highlights including transportation access, volunteerism, ongoing partnerships, and enhanced experiences of culturally diverse individuals to events such as the Regional Unity Art Walk. She discussed the Community Wide Food Drive that was done with the help of the faith community. She discussed Make a Difference Day and how it was used to get others to serve, the Senior Help Line, and re-engaging For Our Town, For Our City. She discussed efforts to bring in people who were seeking ways to volunteer and how the Town ramped up the volunteer appreciation and recognition efforts in April. She discussed cultural diversity and noted that the COVID-19 pandemic made them re-access how to transition that initiative to include showcasing art online, a book walk at the Riparian Preserve, a movie screening of the film Just Cause, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Parade, and others. She also discussed the recent Day of Service which provided a gathering of interested volunteers to learn how they could help with things like house or yard work, and tasks as simple as changing light bulbs. She also discussed internal efforts, next steps and opportunities. She said they were looking for additional resources to bridge gaps in services and resources, as well as increase volunteer engagement through resource fairs, workshops, and the youth mental health collective.

Staff Liaison Dykstra asked the group several questions regarding her presentation. The questions included asking the group to name one of the identified priority populations; Vice Chair Warren identified the elderly population. Staff Liaison Dykstra asked what was one common theme amongst all populations; Member Watts answered mental health. Staff Liaison Dykstra asked the group to name one way they had moved the needle and in what area; Alternate Lunt responded in non-profit work by providing more services. Staff Liaison Dykstra asked the members if they read the 2014 Needs Assessment; the group indicated they had not.

Chair Hackett asked if the assessment was done every five years; Staff Liaison Dykstra stated it was their intent or interest to do one every five years.

Assistant Town Manager Rhineheimer noted the assessments captured the data behind the stories and were valuable tools for policy makers and for the Town of Gilbert, adding they not only provided anecdotes but numbers, showing what was trending in the community.

Staff Liaison Dykstra asked members to go to [www.menticom](http://www.menticom) (Mentimeter) and use a code provided to capture what the members would identify as the most pressing need. The answers identified included mental and behavioral health, drug

addiction, suicide prevention, connecting resources and information, affordable housing, homelessness, mental health, and suicide and substance abuse with teens.

Member Sabel said a lot had changed in the past three years with the COVID-19 pandemic; Assistant Town Manager Rhineheimer noted it was worth considering what had changed since the pandemic.

Member Affo stated she was concerned about the areas regarding diversity. She said it was fair to say if there was not a big diverse population and the numbers were not percentages, it could show topics were not a concern in the survey. Staff Liaison Dykstra discussed efforts to take that into account, noting that 1/3 of Gilbert's population was non-white; she also discussed refugees and others who may be under-represented. Assistant Town Manager Rhineheimer said survey methods were used to project for that in the survey, adding though she could not think of the specific method or term, she could follow up with the group.

Member Affo discussed moving beyond just experiences, stating it was good to celebrate Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, but there was a need to move on to cultural shifts of people being treated differently. Staff Liaison Dykstra said the inclusivity study did identify what people were hearing and feeling, adding that part of the study was being looked at and would be shared with the group.

Assistant Town Manager Rhineheimer noted that good points were made by the Task Force members and encouraged the group to write down questions and comments regarding what was covered and not, or to share ideas. She said it was the responsibility of the Task Force to brainstorm and help identify issues.

Member A. Rodriguez said she was raised in Gilbert and could see what had changed in Gilbert and what had not changed. She said inclusivity was a buzz word, but the reality could be different. She said it was used as a buzz word, similar to the term mental health, but it was not just something to say but needed to have more specific actions to be covered.

Staff Liaison Dykstra asked members to go to [www.menticom](http://www.menticom) (Mentimeter) and use a code provided to capture what the members would identify as the largest gap in services in Gilbert. The responses included: perception of what makes up Gilbert's residents, hard to determine, all things housing (emergency, temporary, transitional, and long term), messaging and awareness of services, sex trafficking, crisis services (outside of Fire and Police Departments), lack of resources and awareness for mental health, issues around diversity, qualitative data, and the ability to speak your voice in a safe environment.

Council Liaison Tilque discussed identifying gaps, adding it was all important and she appreciated their ability to speak up to identify issues, so nothing was missed.

#### **4. Community Snapshot – Community Resources and Public Safety**

##### **Community Resources Presentation**

Community Resources Program Supervisor Lauria provided a presentation on community resources, first sharing the names and titles of the four members of her team. She discussed Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) and how they were used to help the community, highlighting housing assistance, HOME funds, non-profit funding, community resources guides, the Heritage Center, Tribal Gaming Grants, and Housing Assistance. She noted CDBG and HOME Funds were Federally funded by HUD-Housing and the Urban Development Office and were very flexible, focusing on low- and moderate-income persons. She discussed eligible projects that needed to meet the National objective, emergency and minor home repairs, and COVID-19 funding. She gave the examples of air conditioning repair and replacements, modifying bathrooms and showers, and roof repair. She highlighted non-profit funding sources including the Neighbor 2 Neighbor Program from utility bill donations, 100% proceeds from the Gilbert Goodies Town Store, and additional funding sources such as the CARES Act and CDBG Funding in 2020 and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) in 2022. She highlighted housing assistance, affordable housing, and emergency rental assistance programs and showed a slide with the various organizations Gilbert worked with. She discussed additional ways of connecting the community including the Community Resource Guide; The Heritage Center for wellness, education, and resources; and tribal grants.

Supervisor Lauria asked if there were any questions.

Member Holstein asked how often the community information was updated; Supervisor Lauria stated the hard copies were updated once per year and the website was updated twice per year.

Vice Chair Warren asked how it was determined what was included in the resource. Supervisor Lauria said the effort was made to use groups who were not looking to profit. Staff Liaison Dykstra discussed how hospitals were also listed for the benefit of use by PD and Fire and the goal was to list most agencies who were local and closest to Gilbert, noting they also tried to represent all of the different categories.

Member J. Rodriguez asked about using a QR Code; Staff Liaison Dykstra stated they would look into it.

Chair Hackett asked if the resource went out to residents' homes; Supervisor Lauria stated it as online and could maybe do a better job of marketing it. Staff Liaison Dykstra discussed efforts to get it out in various channels through the program. Chair Hackett noted having cards for things like poison control referenced in her home and how that could be helpful to have that resource guide in households.

Alternate Obayomi asked about the HELPR group and if it was listed in the guide; Staff Liaison stated it was no longer being utilized but discussed the 2-1-1 system which was for resources and could be promoted.

### **Police Department Community Engagement Presentation**

Police Chief Soelberg introduced himself and gave a brief history of his work and experience. He highlighted some of the community engagement efforts such as the Chief's Community Forum, which he said had 75 members and had grown since the since George Floyd killing and protests that followed. He also highlighted the Citizens Police Academy in the Spring and Fall; the Monthly Community Engagement Events that included coffee, pizza, or ice cream with a cop; Youth and Adult Resources including youth alcohol assessments and referrals, curfew, counseling and crisis intervention, domestic violence counseling, and a youth violence intervention program; and Diversity Training including Academy Training and a Citizen Panel Discussion, and Implicit Bias and Know Your Authority Training.

Assistant Town Manager Rhineheimer asked when the next Citizens Police Academy would be; Chief Soelberg responded they were finishing one and he believed the Fall session would be announced in July, noting it typically would fill up in two to three weeks of opening. He stated members could email the Police Department to be put on a list if interested.

Chief Soelberg stated there were State of Arizona mandates for cultural awareness training with a minimum of 8 hours for the subject. He said Gilbert PD goes beyond the 8 hours by incorporating information into field practices and also throughout the Academy. He discussed a community panel and the community members' perspectives, conflict resolution, and in-service trainings that covered autism in 2022 and bias training in 2021.

Police Lieutenant Timmins highlighted hiring and the Crisis Response Team. He discussed intervention training and trying to help people for issues not criminally-related, noting the need to have a team go out to help reactively and proactively without pulling officer resources. He spoke of the need to be proactive and offer resources for mental health issues in advance. He discussed mental health detainers and what they were, then spoke of providing resources for assistance

such as rides for healthcare visits, medication, and court-ordered appointments. He discussed interactions that were not using force and were more humane. He discussed Critical Incident Training (CIT) stating that there were 104 CT employees, or 32% of sworn Gilbert Police Department (GPD) employees. He discussed professional partnerships with GPD and other entities, de-escalation and reductions in the use of force, and treatment versus incarceration.

Lieutenant Timmins stated GPD achieved Certified Autism Center Status/Autism and Awareness Certification through The International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards (IBCCES), and discussed the training to recognize mannerisms and behaviors of individuals with autism to reduce the use of force. He acknowledged Gilbert leadership and the Town Manager for their efforts and support of the training. He discussed a QR Code which provided links on the website for individuals to register those in their family with autism and include details like their habits, behaviors, and favorite places. He noted that the nearby school, Lauren's Institute for Education, worked with GPD to allow officers to see varying levels of children on the autism spectrum and gain an understanding. He noted the need for children to feel comfortable with police officers and go to them for help, so that if they were in crisis, they would not run.

Chief Soelberg noted the GPD Police and Transparency Hub webpage on the Town's website which included GPD policies and demographics. He said it contained diversity reports, demographics of GPD, a link to the "Alex" data portal, arrests for each month, crime numbers, and other data sets. He noted they were working on refining the site to make it more user-friendly.

Vice Chair Warren thanked Chief Soelberg and Lieutenant Timmins, then asked from the Chief's perspective, what was the biggest challenge related to policing. Chief Soelberg replied hiring and recruiting were challenges to make sure there were staff available to respond, noting GPD was over-hiring now. Chief Soelberg then listed growth in the community as a challenge. He discussed growth, driving forces like human trafficking and sex and domestic violence, having easier processes for survivors to go through, and a crime lab to help in processing evidence. He said not only was growth a big factor, but then to maintain the quality of life in Gilbert and not see it decline.

Chief Soelberg asked if there were any questions.

Member J. Rodriguez thanked Chief Soelberg for the information and transparency.

Member A. Rodriguez asked if GPD considered having a non-uniform person going out for response. Chief Soelberg replied yes, then discussed next steps including



certification, in-house mental health for staff, and working with advocates and social workers. He discussed the City of Phoenix as an example in providing resources for incidents that were not crimes but offered help to someone in crisis or transfer them to those who could help resolve their issue.

Member Affo acknowledged Chief Soelberg, stating she chose Gilbert and raised several Black sons here because the police culture in Gilbert made her feel safe. She spoke in appreciation of seeing Chief Soelberg become emotional as he debriefed the participants of the Chief's forum after the incidents with the Black Lives Matter and Blue Lives Matter protests.

### **Fire and Rescue Community Resources Presentation**

Assistant Fire Chief Duggan spoke of Lieutenant Timmins' great reputation and demeanor, then introduced himself. Chief Duggan discussed how Gilbert Fire and Rescue used data, showing the statistic that an older adult passed away from a fall every 20 minutes in the United States. He said the No. 1 call type for the department was also falls, which was consistently the No. 1 incident type. He noted that the COVID-19 pandemic changed statistics but still had falls as the most common incident type, then discussed efforts to reduce the frequency and severity of falls. He said improvements had been made through public/private partnerships, using the examples of working with Dignity Health and The Oaks Senior Community on programs that included exercise and strength building to reduce falls. He discussed additional services including the Community Engagement Response Team (CERT), home safety inspections, smoke detector maintenance, a lock box program to allow staff to respond and access homes quickly, the Child Abduction Response Team (CART), and the Community 251 Van.

Fire Battalion Chief Gerard discussed Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I) including Fire Academy training, the refugee experience, broadening perspectives, and orientation specialists. He said there was a tendency to let experiences and trainings disqualify others because of issues at hand, stating that DE&I helped them to gain perspective. He discussed the challenge faced by staff of creating engaging, relevant, and immersive training for recruit firefighters in the world of COVID-19. He said there were several iterations and a three-phase approach with community partners to create an immersive experience. He discussed work with Catholic Charities USA, noting that staff could not be experts in all of the wide scope of responsibilities.

Fire Battalion Chief Gerard spoke of the refugee experience and challenges, then discussed efforts to train and share information to create an immersive and emotional connection with the refugee perspective. He said the department had a

unique opportunity with a firefighter named Foday, a first-generation resident from Sierra Leone, and Foday's mother, Mrs. Kiawein, who provided a first-hand experience, an emotional connection, and impactful training.

They asked the Task Force if there were any questions; there were none.

## 5. Roundtable/Recap of Meeting Takeaways

Staff Liaison Dykstra asked members to go to [www.menticom](http://www.menticom) (Mentimeter) and use a code provided to capture their meeting takeaways. As the members entered their thoughts, the responses appeared on the screen. The responses entered by the Task Force Members included appreciating the efforts of so many; how to plan, prioritize, and make an impact; the need for greater dissemination of information about available services and opportunities; opportunities to build on programs already established in the Gilbert; fall risks in elderly; and that they enjoyed learning about the programs and training already in use of Gilbert.

## FUTURE MEETING SCHEDULE AND TOPICS

Future agenda topics may be requested and compiled for a list of potential agenda topics; however, the merits or details of the items may not be discussed until placed on an agenda.

Council Liaison Tilque reminded the members that they could let Chair Hackett know of any possible topics that may be added to future meeting agendas.

## COMMUNICATIONS

Report from Council Liaison on current events.

Council Liaison Tilque reported the Town and Council were in the budget process. She discussed the advocacy enter and public discussion in the Fall on the merits of a crime lab, also noting the projects with the transportation municipal bond. She discussed commuter rail and a transportation commuter study, adding the Council was looking at if a commuter rail should have a stop in Gilbert. She discussed the Gilbert Sister Cities Friendship Garden. She said as the Task Force members received data points, to think about ideas for discussion topics and to email them or any questions to Staff Liaison Dykstra. She said the Task Force was doing a great job and exactly what was expected. She also noted she would follow up with the individual who spoke during the Communications from Citizens portion of the meeting, adding it may feel odd not to respond to those comments, but the group was not allowed to respond during the meeting and those topics could be

suggested for future meeting agendas. She said the Council would be looking at the work of the Task Force, adding items like the suggested QR Code may be added.

Report from Staff Liaisons on task force assignments and current events.

Staff Liaison Dykstra announced the next meeting would focus on the inclusivity report, which was their homework, and she would email it to the members. She noted May was Mental Health Awareness, announced that the Gilbert Water Tower would be lit for the cause, and suggested joining the Town’s social media channels to receive information on activities such as 30 Seconds of Calm. She said there would be no Task Force meeting in July but said August would focus on homelessness and lead to a discussion of focus areas and how to tackle them.

Report from Task Force Members on current events.

Staff Liaison Dykstra announced that Member J. Rodriguez agreed to serve on a group focused on the next Unity Walk, adding other human relations commissions from the East Valley would work on more than just an event or festival, but also on what unity in the community would look like and brainstorm ideas.

Member Watts noted that May 5<sup>th</sup> was the National Day of Prayer, stating in the past, faith groups united on that day; she asked about the current year. Staff Liaison Dykstra noted some faith groups had met in the past at the Municipal Center, but said things were up in the air with the building construction, adding no one was aware of something for the year at that point, but some schools celebrated it in the Fall.

**ADJOURN**

Chair Hackett adjourned the meeting at 7:37 p.m.

**ATTEST:**

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Katie Hackett, Chair

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Melanie Dykstra, Staff Liaison