

MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TASK FORCE, IN REGULAR MEETING OF MONDAY, MAY 1, 2023 AT 5:30 PM, MUNICIPAL CENTER I, TOWER ROOM 146, 50 E CIVIC CENTER DRIVE, GILBERT, ARIZONA

MEMBERS PRESENT: Vice Chair Sean Warren; Members Iya Affo, Chris Curley, Amy Holstein, Suzanne Lunt, Javier Rodriguez, and Heather Watts

MEMBERS ABSENT: Members Alexandra Rodriguez and Christine Sabel

STAFF PRESENT: Council Liaison Kathy Tilque, Staff Liaison/Volunteer and Community Resources Manager Melanie Dykstra, Assistant Town Manager Dawn Prince, and Deputy Town Clerk Judy Martinez

GUESTS PRESENT: Katie Hackett (*attended virtually*)

CALL TO ORDER

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

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Vice Chair Warren led the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Volunteer and Community Resources Manager Dykstra called roll and declared a quorum present.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

There were no additional members of the public present at the meeting.

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

The members participated in a warm-up exercise by sharing what they would do for the Town of Gilbert if money were no object.

AGENDA ITEMS

1. Recognition of Katie Hackett for her service to the Community Engagement Task Force and appreciation of her continued work as an advising member of the public.

Vice Chair Warren recognized Katie Hackett for her work as Chair on the Community Engagement Task Force (CETF) prior to her resignation and stated she would continue to participate with the group as a member of the public and advisor. Member Watts asked how that process would work. Vice Chair Warren stated Hackett could participate in discussions but would not have voting privileges.

2. Selection of Chair and Vice Chair

Council Liaison Tilque stated she would like to recommend Vice Chair Warren as the new Chair and Amy Holstein as the new Vice Chair, if the members were agreeable and would like to make a motion.

A MOTION was made by Member Watts, seconded by Member Curley, to appoint Sean Warren as Chair and Amy Holstein as Vice Chair. *Motion carried 6-0; Member J. Rodriguez was absent for the vote.*

3. Consider approval of the minutes of the April 3, 2023 meeting.

A MOTION was made by Member Affo, seconded by Vice Chair Holstein, to approve the minutes of the April 3, 2023 meeting. *Motion carried 6-0; Member J. Rodriguez was absent for the vote.*

4. Report on presentation to Council on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention

Vice Chair Holstein discussed her experience of presenting to the Town Council on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention on April 4, 2023.

Staff Liaison Dykstra noted they shared with the Council the objectives and components that were important to the CETF, including highlighting what services were available 24/7 and different age groups they were accessible to. She discussed services and the order of priorities.

Vice Chair Holstein reviewed the recommendations that were presented to the Council including working with community partners because we do not want to duplicate efforts, how there were a lot of great people in the community working on those efforts, and how to work in conjunction with them. Other recommendations

included having the community as a whole be trauma-informed so they can respond better to crises, comparing it to how many people knew cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

Staff Liaison Dykstra and Vice Chair Holstein discussed the recommendation of working with the future advocacy center as a one-stop shop and advocating for alternative therapies and non-traditional methods. Vice Chair Holstein discussed the Gilbert Good Business designation idea and creating a safe space for people in the community to get the help they needed, feeling that was a really strong recommendation from the CETF. Lastly, she discussed increased access to information including resource cards, resource fairs, different publications and advertising opportunities including Mental Health Mondays.

5. Review and discussion of priority area of Human and Sex Trafficking

Staff Liaison Dykstra noted the CETF members would begin the exercise of working through the process of capturing ideas, prioritizing them, and trying to determine the time length needed to accomplish them, as they previously had done with the prior focus area. She led the group through the exercise and asked them to consider gaps in services, new ideas, the results from the 2019 Needs Assessments, and what needed to be focused on. She discussed issues in Gilbert with human and sex trafficking, and sexploitation that the group heard about recently from presentations. She said she already prepared Post-It notes with some of the different information captured from previous information, but told the group to consider if they should be included and what should be added. She said she started with the three headers of Awareness, Education, and Resources, but said the group could also change those categories. She noted there could be events to create awareness and social media posts, asking for the group to consider how to get information out and to engage the community. She discussed group homes and those in foster care, education and information being distributed through the faith community, and the need for legislative review and reform with someone on front end of that. She asked the group to consider how to educate people on signs to look for, resources and apps for parents like Bark, funding support and could they make apps available for those who could not afford it. She asked the group to work on the exercises in groups and to post any of the ideas on the board.

The group listed their ideas on Post-it notes and arranged them into their desired categories.

Katie Hackett stated she thought there may be grants out there that could be shared with non-profits to apply for.

Member Curley discussed the need to have a specific set of questions to anyone working with access to children, noting he had come up with those types of questions for his profession. He said from his experience, some people lied, but others answered them honestly.

Chair Warren asked if those were different questions than those used in background checks.

Member Curley said yes, it was different, that background checks only showed what people were convicted of and only had to disclose for a certain number of years.

Member Curley discussed his experience creating different curriculum for different grades and then doing training for parents separately.

Vice Chair Holstein stated she liked the idea, noting that she had seen training by the Phoenix Police Department that showed engaging examples and videos, such as showing someone overdosing on fentanyl.

Katie Hackett asked Member Curley if the trainings had been done at schools or separately.

Member Curley stated specific training like that was not usually done in schools, it was more general training.

Katie Hackett discussed how permissions were done at schools like sex education, adding that no human trafficking education was done in Gilbert.

Member Curley stated the schools he worked with did permission slips and it included information on what he would be speaking about, adding that most parents wanted their kids to participate.

Katie Hackett said many may feel better knowing that the training was endorsed by the city. She said the Town could possibly create a partnership with the schools.

Member Curley stated that parents were so uneducated and could not keep up with all the fast trends on social media.

Member Affo stated they would need to look at legislature too, adding there had been a lot of changes and pushback in terms of what could be taught. She noted that during one of the presentations from the prior month, someone said that parents were reluctant to allow sex education. She reiterated that legislative

changes would have to be considered, as well as how to influence parents to be receptive.

Member Lunt stated that at Gilbert Public Schools it was required for students to get education on safety with computers and internet.

Member J. Rodriguez stated that many may not know certain terms, such as sexploitation, and how different age groups had their own vernacular. He said it was important to teach on different terminology.

Member Curley said the Bark app was good at that, but it was not the end all, be all.

Chair Warren said that schools did a good job but it would be great to go straight to the parents.

Staff Liaison Dykstra stated that Gilbert Public Schools had their “Parent University” with webinars like internet safety, anti-human trafficking, bullying and more. She also noted that the Attorney General’s Office had great resources as well.

Member Curley stated the Attorney General’s Programs were great, but it was not their only mission, they did other things.

Staff Liaison Dykstra stated those resources were all great, but you did have to sign up for them or seek them out. She discussed how it should be known to more people and more readily available. She also noted anti-human trafficking committee started by former Arizona Governor Doug Ducey.

Staff Liaison Dykstra continued reviewing their ideas including having a video presentation, then also noted the need to have direct experiences.

Member Lunt discussed the 2019 Needs Assessment Summary and having safe spots, noting the future advocacy center could be a safe spot.

Vice Chair Holstein stated that Gilbert Good Businesses could also be safe spots.

Member J. Rodriguez stated that kids got caught in the trade because they were often tied up with drugs and did not have support to get off drugs; he advocated for more support and wrap-around services.

Chair Warren discussed how group homes could have mandatory educational postings, similar to how businesses were required to have Federal notices for employees. He also noted how restrooms sometime had anti-trafficking notices and

contact information, adding that could also be used with the Gilbert Good Businesses, plus a phrase that could be shared for someone who was in danger to use to notify the business to call the police department.

The group also discussed non-custodial kidnapping and how shelters were also targets, including cases when staff members manipulated or victimized residents.

Staff Liaison Dykstra discussed a program that linked calls for help to a type of decoy call if the abuser was near, such as a weather app. This could be done by the caller/victim hitting a button so that the abuser did not know the victim made the call.

Member Affo asked for clarification on the custodial parent recommendation.

Chair Warren stated it was part of the 2019 Needs Assessment, that it provided a safe drop-off exchange place, like a police department.

Staff Liaison Dykstra stated there was a drop-off location at the Police Administration Building on Civic Center, as well as at the San Tan Substation.

Member Affo discussed group homes and asked how many there were. She said there should be a discussion around group homes and how some were in bad shape, salaries were low, and it did not attract the best staff at times. She said it could lead to the residents having interactions with people who could further exploit them.

Staff Liaison Dykstra stated that the Town Council just heard a presentation on group and recovery homes. She said she know of CeCe's Hope Center in Gilbert and there was also Sunshine Acres in Mesa, but she was not sure who else was offering those services.

Katie Hackett stated there was also the Starbright Foundation for children 17 and under. She discussed how people could be trafficked in different ways and said that group homes were not educated and asked about funding to help educate them.

Vice Chair Holstein stated there was a lot of training group homes were required to have. She said her opinion was that it was not a lack of awareness, it was the lack of a support system. She said residents in group homes just talked about their old lifestyle, but there was a lack of support and wrap-around systems, adding that multi-disciplinary teams (MDTs) were needed.

Katie Hackett said she agreed with Vice Chair Holstein's statements and then spoke of her personal experiences and how things had not changed. She said people were

put aside and issues were not dealt with. She discussed Recommendation No. 3e in the 2019 Needs Assessment regarding 30 days of respite, adding there were girls who had been in group homes for six months and never got counseling. She agreed that as soon as they reached out for help, they should have people there to offer counseling; otherwise, they would go right back to old habits.

Member Affo discussed a youth council, where youth could get together to discuss issues peers in community and could spread education amongst them.

Staff Liaison Dykstra stated that mental health had been a subject for the Mayor's Youth Advisory Committee in the past, but agreed it would be good to see what the kids could share and knew about currently regarding sex trafficking.

Staff Liaison Dykstra continued leading the group through reviewing their ideas, asking if there was anything brought forward earlier that did not belong. She asked the group to consider if the categories of Awareness, Education, and Resources were appropriate. The group worked on prioritizing their ideas into categories. Red, blue, and green stickers would be used to do prioritization, with the goal of short-listing some items; red being first choice, blue being their second choice, and green being their third.

Summary of the group exercise:

Awareness - Short-term (1-24 months):

Information, events to create awareness, peer to peer investigations (Police Department training currently happening, relationship/partnership with non-profits, social media posts, number of group homes for youth, and compliance posters creating awareness for kids in group homes about sex-trafficking.

Awareness - Long-term (2- 5 years):

Community engagement, legislative review for prevention, pre-employment questions of regional sexploitation history, and gas station bathrooms with trafficking stickers or Quick Response (QR) code for help (could be with Gilbert Good Business).

Education - Short-term (1-24 months):

Training by retired first-responders with specific child crime experience, different curriculum for varying age groups and parents, education in group homes and foster care, student education, youth council, and training for businesses.

Education – Long-term (2- 5 years):

Video or in-person presentations by past victims and parents, messages and information through faith community, and group home victimization recruitment.

Resources – Short-term (1-24 months):

Apps for parents, family advocacy center, trauma-informed care, grant support for non-profits, 30-day respite and counseling for survivors, and providing safe spots

Resources – Long-term (2- 5 years):

Support of victim advocate positions, drug addiction support, direct access to family advocacy center for support from group home, and dedicated clinicians.

Chair Warren asked who would be doing the presentations on the next focus area.

Staff Liaison Dykstra asked the group to send her speaker recommendations on the topic of Domestic Violence.

6. Discussion and assignments of action items for the CETF members

Staff Liaison Dykstra discussed the group’s homework sheet and noted the different resources provided as well. She asked the group to make recommendations to her on speakers for the upcoming presentations. She noted the resources provided by the Attorney General’s Office and the Parent University, stating it was important to share that information with others.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITIZENS

None.

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.

There was no additional discussion.

COMMUNICATIONS

Report from Council Liaison on current events.

Council Liaison Tilque discussed going to Dallas to visit a children's advocacy center. She said they received some Federal funds that would keep them moving but also said there would be a pause to make sure that what was built was what was actually needed for the future. She said it was important to tell the right story to make sure the advocacy center was a priority for the community and then build according to what was needed. She spoke of the advocacy center in Dallas/Frisco, Texas being trauma-informed in everything they did and how victims were isolated with detectives, victim advocates and all working together as a multi-disciplinary team (MDT). She said she learned about how the advocacy center worked to keep things separate for the victims and how they also had training spaces. She discussed what the team in Dallas/Frisco learned from their first center and how they made changes when they built their new one according to their actual needs.

Member Lunt asked what would happen next after the Council presentation on their first focus area.

Council Liaison Tilque stated there would probably be no action yet, they just wanted to know the progress of the Task Force. She said once they were done with their assignment, the Council would review action items.

Staff Liaison Dykstra discussed how some of the smaller pieces may be actionable now, but others would have to come into play later.

Council Liaison Tilque noted the Town was also working on the possibility of an internship program. She said she hoped 911 dispatchers would receive mental/behavior health training as well.

Vice Chair Holstein asked if the advocacy center in Texas shared what they had learned.

Council Liaison Tilque stated when they had their first advocacy center there, they went into an existing building and tried to make it work; this time, they created their own spaces. This included details like having restrooms everywhere so that a mom could stay with her kids and keep them together if one of them needed the restroom. She said they also built their offices for two people, thinking ahead and so they would not have to rebuild. She said they also had features like an activity room, areas for teens or younger children to play, and offered music and Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) therapy.

Member J. Rodriguez asked if there was a way to coordinate the Task Force’s efforts to show where they are making an impact.

Staff Liaison Dykstra stated, yes, they should have that information and could show what was completed and where they were headed.

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

Staff Liaison Dykstra highlighted events including the For Our Town Informational Breakfast, the lighting of the Gilbert Water on May 1st to recognize Mental Health Awareness Month, Gilbert’s Memorial Day Celebration on May 29th, and the Heat Relief Network’s initiative throughout the summer.

Report from Task Force Members on current events.

Member J. Rodriguez discussed his work with the Veterans and Business Council and asked the Task Force members to share any information with him that could be passed along to the group.

ADJOURN

Chair Warren adjourned the meeting at 7:06 p.m.

ATTEST:

Sean Warren, Chair

Melanie Dykstra, Staff Liaison