

Minutes

Harris County Criminal Justice Coordinating Council

Wednesday November 11, 2015

1001 Preston Street, Houston, TX 77002

Commissioner Lee called the meeting to order at 12:35 pm. Council members in attendance were: Devon Anderson (DA), Tom Brooks (Juvenile Probation), Judge Susan Brown, Alex Bunin (Chief Public Defender), Chris Daniel (District Clerk), Judge Margaret Harris, Dr. Teresa May (CSCD), Dennis Potts (Pretrial Services), Constable Alan Rosen, Vince Ryan (County Attorney), Judge Robert Schaffer, and Judge Michael Schneider.

1. Approval of October 2015 meeting minutes

A motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made and seconded. The motion carried.

2. OCJC Jail Population Report

Karen Hebron reported that in October 2015, the average daily jail population housed declined to 8,592, a net reduction of 46 persons from the previous month, due to fewer pretrial felony detainees and fewer post-adjudicated TDC/state jail prisoners. The decline was offset by an increased number of probationers and county prisoners. Dr. May commented that a transition in residential treatment providers led to a temporary halt in transferring probationers from the jail but the backlog should be relieved within a few weeks. A copy of the jail population report is included with the minutes.

3. Video Presentation: "Why Smart Statistics are the Key to Fighting Crime", Anne Milgram, VP of Criminal Justice, Laura & John Arnold Foundation

[Click here](#) to view the video. Dennis Potts noted that while these concepts are not new, we now have the technological ability to gather and analyze data to determine who is in jail and whether that makes the community safer.

4. Reports

a. Community Meetings

Sherea McKenzie reported that focus group meetings were held with members of the African-American and Hispanic communities to discuss racial and ethnic disparity in the Harris County criminal justice system. On November 2nd there were 55 people in attendance at the Judson Robinson Community Center and on November 3rd there were 42 people in attendance at Ripley House. Rey Banks and Tom Eberly, Mac Arthur Foundation Site Coordinators, conducted the meetings which began with an overview of the Safety and Justice Challenge grant opportunity. The meetings provided a forum to discuss criminal justice issues of greatest concern to the audience. There were lively discussions both nights and many of the concerns raised were consistent with the planning team's efforts thus far. There are plans to hold two additional larger community forums prior to submission of the grant application due on January 6, 2016.

b. Miami-Dade site visit

Judge Margaret Harris reported that representatives from Harris County traveled to Miami to observe the Miami-Dade County Mental Health Jail Diversion Court system, a program designed to divert mentally ill defendants to treatment (pre-booking) or within 24-48 hours after arrest (post-booking). The defendant's initial contact with the police is followed closely by a brief mental health assessment, transport to a community crisis stabilization unit and, upon discharge, enrollment in community based treatment. If

charges are filed, criminal cases are resolved after the defendant has been stabilized. Some defendants receive follow-up case management for up to 12 months in addition to community based treatment. Judge Harris noted that Harris County has services and resources for the mentally ill but they have not been cataloged and coordinated as well as Miami-Dade's. There is a need for more options for Harris County residents needing mental health treatment who are involved in the criminal justice system. Judge Harris stated that there are stakeholders in Harris County who desire to transform the available resources into a coordinated system rather than a series of silos. Miami-Dade site visit attendees: Clay Bowman, Court Administration, Judge Susan Brown; Wendy Baimbridge, HPD; Alex Bunin, Chief PD; Tim Cannon, HCSO; Belinda Hill, DA's Office; Judge Margaret Harris; Regenia Hicks, County Judge's Office; Bill Jackson, County Budget Officer; Floyd Jennings, PDO; Monalisa Jiles, HCMHIDD; Teresa May, CSCD; Dennis Potts, Pretrial Services; Ed Wells, Court Administration; Caprice Cosper, OCJC; and Clarissa Stephens, OCJC.

c. Overview of MacArthur Grant Proposals

Caprice Cosper provided an overview of the planning team's proposed initiatives which include more mental health diversions prior to arrest, expansion of the First Chance Intervention program, an impact court for low level non-violent felony offenses, a jail population management team, development of a community outreach coordinator, and continuous improvement of Harris County's criminal justice processes.

5. New Business

a. NACo Stepping Up Mental Health Initiative

Bill Jackson presented a request from the National Association of Counties (NACo) to support their "Stepping Up Initiative to Reduce the Number of People with Mental Illnesses in Jail". Counties are being asked to pass a resolution and work with county leaders and stakeholders to reduce the number of people with mental illnesses in jail. A draft template is attached to the minutes.

b. First Chance Intervention Program

Devon Anderson reported that the program, designed to address first offenders charged with possession of 0-2 oz. of marijuana, has encountered 2270 individuals since its inception October 1, 2014. Of those, 1525 have completed the program successfully, 290 have been terminated, 367 are active participants and 88 were deemed ineligible – an 87% successful completion rate. She has decided to make the program mandatory since the benefits – the offender avoiding arrest and a record, and the county avoiding jail and court-related costs – were not fully realized since 78% of those who participated were enrolled post-charge rather than pre-arrest/pre-charge. As a result, effective January 1, 2016, FCIP will be mandatory for all arresting agencies with only two ways a first-offender will not participate: (1) if they choose not to, in which case, they will be arrested, charged and booked into jail; or (2) if the officer believes the offender should not participate, in which case he must obtain his supervisor's approval and approval of the intake prosecutor. A training video and additional communication will be provided to those agencies in advance January.

6. Old Business

Karen Hebron reported that Central Technology Services is working to develop a website for the Council that includes information on membership, strategic plan, mission/vision statements, and scheduled meetings.

7. Announcements

A listing of the 2016 proposed meeting dates was distributed and is attached to the minutes. The meeting was adjourned at 2:00 pm.