



Allentown

435 Hamilton Street
Allentown, Pa. 18101

Minutes - Final

City Council

Wednesday, January 13, 2021

6:00 PM

Council Chambers

Roll Call

Present: 6 - Candida Affa, Daryl Hendricks, Julio Guridy, Ed Zucal, Ce-Ce Gerlach, and Joshua Siegel

Absent: 1 - Cynthia Mota

Discussion - some guiding markers:

Why is this RFP needed?.

What models are out there?

Evaluation of what model works for the city's needs.

Future course of action to evaluate this and explore implementation.

Develop pilot program with stakeholders and results of rfp?

Perhaps, prior to whole rfp process, have separate discussions with Harrisburg, Denver, etc. to educate ourselves..

Ms. Julie Thomases stated hello and thanked them for the opportunity to speak for an alternative 911 Council. She is not an expert, but she did a lot of research. 911 is the most frequently called number. As a result, too often the police is dealing with nonviolent or noncriminal. According to Chief Granitz, that the Allentown Police Department received over 92,000 calls in 2020 and 100,000 calls in 2019. In the earlier day, he said that 10 percent of the calls were mental health calls. He was not included substance abuse or homelessness. In 2019, the Lehigh County Department of Corrections committed 5,250 to jail. Of these people, 1245 (24 percent) required a mental health evaluation and 1,154 (22 percent) needed to undergo a medically supervised detoxification. Mental illness and substance abuse contributes significantly to criminal recidivism in the US and prison inmates with substance abuse disorders return to prison more often than those without and those with both mental illness and substance abuse problems recidivates at an even higher rate. We know incarceration not only fails to correct this problem, but eviscerates the problem. One method of changing the outcome of number mental illness people going to prison or admitted to the emergency room against their will is to modify our 911 dispatch system. This will require collaboration among local police departments, 911 dispatcher at the county, health clinic and hospital. This is a grower national trend. She has spoke to many people in police and crisis intervention units. All are different from each other, but what they all tried to do in response to nonviolent, noncriminal emergency

calls is to eliminate death, injury, trauma or incarceration and have a follow up case management to reduce repeat calls from the same person. Some of these models avoid sending police whenever possible. Some are referred to as hybrid models where a crisis intervention team includes a police officer and a medic and mental health worker as pilot programs. She gave Council a handout on how each of them are funded. The best known the Cahoots Program in Eugene Oregon. The other two that she researched a lot was Houston and Denver. They also reviewed programs in Oakland, Albuquerque, New York City, San Francisco, Sacramento, and most recently Bensalem in Bucks County. Cahoots which is Crisis Assistance Helping Out in the Streets is a 30 year old direct response collaboration between local police and a community service organization. It has proven to be an effectively way to diverting a nonviolent, noncriminal 911 calls related to mental health issues (intoxication, behavioral health, substance abuse, and homelessness) away from law enforcement. It is served as a model for a number of recently created alternative 911 calls and create to reduce unnecessary inactions with police. It handled approximately 17 percent of the total 911 volume in Eugene in 2017. It saved the city \$8.5 million in additional public safety spending and \$14 million for ambulance and emergency room treatment annually. Cahoots sends a trained emergency medically service worker who could be a nurse or EMT or a trained mental health professional to resolve and deescalated situations. They successfully handled emergency situations related to suicidal threats, mental health crisis, substance abuse and interpersonal conflict. While some people critique this model, research shows otherwise. This approach not only saved the community money, also causes less trauma and advances the recovery of individuals and lowers recidivism. The second model is the Houston Police Department which partners with the Mental Health Center - the Harris Center and uses a number of models. A mobile response unit and the hybrid model CIRT (Crisis Intervention Response Team) and that includes a law enforcement and crisis mental health professional riding together as partners responding. All emergency calls goes to 911. Crisis Counselors are embedded at the call center. This program started a six month PILOT and due to the success made permanent that year. They have a homeless outreach team. They engage homeless individuals and provides links to various social services. In 2014, police contacts were reduced by 70 percent and emergency detentions were reduced at 50 percent. The third model is Denver's Crisis Intervention Response is known as the co-responder program and it pairs law enforcement and behavioral health specialists to intervene and respond to behavioral health related calls for police related services to deescalate situations and help link individuals with behavioral health issues to appropriate services. This co-responder team is assisted by Denver's STAR (Support Team Assistance Response Mobile Van Unit) and takes behavioral related calls to the next level. It started eight years ago and only

two percent resulted in arrest or citation. Out of the 150,000 911 calls, 15,000 were mental health calls. Bucks County, Dauphin County, Franklin and Fulton County. Bucks County just announced a two year, \$400,000 PILOT Program that will paid social workers to police. The goal is to divert appropriate cases away from arrest, and instead connect people to housing programs, youth counseling and drug rehab. After, two years, data on the program will be studied to determine whether it is affective and should be expanded. They researched a number of programs across the country. Five others and according to the people on the ground to the alternative response programs, these programs provides direct benefits that lowers the cost to ER and ambulance in the community and build trusts. The police are happy with the program. The 911 dispatchers needs training and the police are tired of dealing with mental health issues and repeat calls and law enforcement has to buy in.

Mr. Julio Guridy thanked Ms. Thomases for her time and research. This was sent to us and they learned a lot. Thank you for explaining and researching.

Ms. Julie Thomases stated that there is a little bit more information. She is sure everybody is going to say how it is going to get funded. It is more to look into. It is a collaboration. They are hoping to have a stakeholders meeting so people can learn more about these programs and more about the models within the next month.

It was important to have the Chief of Police since it was important for him since he was a part of some of the conversations with Julie Thomases.

Chief Glenn Granitz thanked Mr. Guridy for having him. He stated that he has spent a lot of time with Ms. Thomases. He appreciates her passion in this area. It aligns with his. This is not an issue where the Allentown Police Department is not willing and is not invested in doing this. He is behind the scenes trying to set up these meetings with the county and trying to move them ahead. He agree with the Bucks County Model. It is somewhat similar to the Dauphin County Model. These are things that they can do quickly with the support with the county. With the relationship that they are establishing with Cedar Crest College with the city and the department. They are going to have a really good basis to track effective these amenities and social workers that they did not have before out there with us. It is a no-brainer for what they want to do here and what residents want to see from them. Any support that they can give him and Ms. Thomases to get some of these resources will be great.

Mr. Julio Guridy thanked Chief and stated that the conversation that he had with him and Ms. Thomases it is extremely important that the county and other stakeholders participate. We need to make sure that it is not only the

city. The city does not have all this money. We should be a big participant.

Ms. Candida Affa stated that was a wonderful presentation. Everyone would love to see these program implement. It is exactly not only what Allentown needs, but the country. What our Chief is doing with Cedar Crest is a step forward. The Cahoots from Bucks County was very interesting saved \$8.5 million. Was that in a year or from 2017? How are they able to save that amount of money. Someone is paying the salaries for the workers. With the Social Workers, the county is funding them. Being a councilmember, she wants to know how much it is going to cost them, the taxpayers. She thinks the program is wonderful which every one you pick. In all these cases, who is funding this? It will be a lot of money going out to pay these people. The county should be funding this and not the city's taxpayers. We should not have RFP's going. We do have a program going. The study at Cedar Crest College. Give us a good enough time to see the outcome of the Cedar Crest College study is going to give us. Her concern is the cost. She doesn't see the taxpayers having the burden once again at this time when we have to tighten our budget. She stated that she does approve of it. She doesn't know how the city is going to pay for it.

Mr. Julio Guridy stated that at the end of the sentence that the funding \$14 million for ambulance and emergency room treatment annually. He stated that he is assuming that it was annually.

Ms. Candida Affa stated to Mr. Guridy if he thought that the \$8.5 million was yearly.

Mr. Julio Guridy stated that it looks like that. It is one sentence that says that. It says estimated outreach of \$8.5 million in additional to Public Safety spending for ambulance and emergency room treatment, annually. Your question about who is paying for it, is not completely indicating here.

Mr. Ed Zucal thanked Ms. Thomases on the very good presentation and very informative. With regards to all the talk with the program with Cedar Crest College as far as manpower. You are talking about a lot of people here. Who is going to be in charge of them? Is it going to be the police in charge of them or someone from the county or the 911 Center. He came up with a synopsis of what the Cedar Crest College Program will do. He agrees that there are excellent programs there. It all comes down to money. We already funding funded through our budget this year for Cedar Crest College to proceed. He stated that the purpose of the program is to evaluate and support police practices in four different areas and it is based on all the different things that he heard. Police strategy, practice, community outreach, police reorganization or current organization and the transfer of national recognized police intervention. Are things changing,

yes? What is good in Dallas and if it is good for Allentown? Maybe or maybe not. What is going to happen to this program. It is said that will be obtained and used to implement practices that create change or enhance quality of life issues. When they are done, they will be able to evaluate and assess current police strategies and practices and evaluate what is being done now. Does there need to be a change, if so what kind of change and what would be the best way to implement it both financially and manpower. We have PSA (Patrol Services Areas). They already said that they will look at call volumes and types of calls. Does the current model used sufficient. Does it need change and if so, what change? The study that they are going to do will provide the answers for us. Does the public like? We can use a public outreach and analysis the surveys. They need to look at the city's Youth Police Academy. Does it need to be longer or shorter. Does it need more youth? The benefits of it: It is a possible benefit. Their are going to identify Community Policing Initiatives by developing and designing a Community Policing Initiative that is appropriate both for APD and the dynamics of our city. They are planning to identify changes, modifications or whether you need to expand the policing initiatives that we currently have. In the end, he believes that the college with the involvement APD and some input from Councilmembers are going to address the needs that will be addressed by us and by the community. This is not an overnight process. Time is going to be needed for the study to be done. Time to implement any changes or remedies that need to be done. She just thinks that without having any response from them or factual statistics back from them. It is not fair to cause the taxpayers to extent or spend money on programs that this study might include a little of each.

Ms. CeCe Gerlach stated that one thing should be cleared up based on the feedback from her colleagues. They definitely need a consultant to come in here and answers these questions for us. As an alumni of Cedar Crest, she has nothing but respect for the institution and the study that they put forth in one year, two years or three years or whatever it takes will be nothing, but comprehensive. That however, Cedar Crest is not an organization that goes in and revamps and reorganizes county systems or city systems or city departments. This is something different. She does not know if they have a written copy of the proposal. So they can have direct deliverables. Are there overlaps to see what Cedar Crest is doing?

Mr. Julio Guridy asked Chief Granitz.

Chief Glenn Granitz stated that the official documents are not signed so they are not out for dissimulation at this time. He can tell them that it is a definite tenant of the proposal for the working engagement. That is in the contract that will be approved by the city. One of the main tenants is the transferability and the appropriateness of national police initiatives. We

are looking at innovative Police Programs. Some of which received notoriety in different areas of the country. Of course, the Cahoots Program will be one of them. He and Assistant Chief Roca have spent time on the phone with the Cahoots Program. It could definitely be considered one of the leaders of trailblazers in this area. Ms. Thomases referred to the big sticking point that it is a significant demographic issue relating Eugene Oregon to the City of Allentown. He stated that they do not know the transferability from any of the programs anywhere in the country. The Denver Hybrid Model is certainly an interesting read and conservation. It is about the transferability within the system that we have here in Pennsylvania, Lehigh and the City of Allentown. With the amount of money the effects the emergency rooms that is why we brought in with the direction of the mayor and Ms. Thomases has been part of those conversations. Some of the Health Directors from some of the Health Networks here in the Lehigh Valley and try to get them to partner. They will be present again next week. These are the things that we are working on. It is part of whatever absolute final piece of the Cedar Crest relationship will be.

Ms. CeCe Gerlach stated that in the original introductory resolution she can't recall if it was a specific monetary amount. In our conversation with some of the organizations that specialize in this. No disrespect to Cedar Crest College, but this is not their specialty. With conversations with these organizations on what they do, they cost can vary in terms of consultant. When you talk about cost to actually implement this program, yeah, we are not even to that point. Her understanding of this meeting is just to see do we even want to expend funds to get someone here to help us move to this direction. After having further conversations with these consultants, there is a huge range to arrange a stakeholders meeting to have an expert there. There should be a consultant there that knows how to guide the conversation and serve as the expert in the room. Because certainly none of us are. That can range from \$600 and the consultant can come and say you need some guidance and that will increase the cost. She stated anywhere from \$600 to the max of \$20,000. Just in case when the consultant comes in here and says there are organizational infrastructural issues that need to be guided along. They all agreed that it is needed. City Council is not experts at this, the Police Department is not experts in this and Cedar Crest is not experts in this. We have experts out there and it make sense to get those experts here to show us how to move in this direction. I am sure that those experts will love to be in communication and consultant with the wonderful work that Cedar Crest is doing in other areas.

Mr. Julio Guridy thanked Ms. Gerlach and stated that these are totally different from the numbers he heard. Before, you were talking \$150,000 and now you are talking about \$600 - \$20,000. Where do you get those numbers from.

Ms. CeCe Gerlach stated that \$150,000 is for the Cedar Crest arrangement. She stated that she never mentioned \$150,000. Someone at the last meeting, Mr. Zucal mentioned \$100,000 or \$150,000.

Mr. Ed Zucal stated that it was in the budget, but he does not recall the actual amounts.

Ms. CeCe Gerlach stated that is a whole separate thing.

Mr. Julio Guridy stated that he made an amendment to provide \$45,000 -- \$50,000 for Cedar Crest partnership. He stated that he doesn't know about the \$150,000 he was hearing about.

Mr. Joshua Siegel stated that when we were initially discussing money set aside for Council's capacity to Commission studies and research projects. It was initially \$150,000 and they kept negotiating it back. They settled at \$100,000. That is the figure that is probably in your head. It is in my head too now that you bring it up.

Ms. CeCe Gerlach stated that in terms of these reduce cost. She called an organization in the United States and referred to by many municipalities. This individual was quick to say look it is there a rare occurrence that it could cost \$25,000, in Denver it did not come anywhere close to that. The infrastructure may not be here so that they don't have to have an extended stay. They will have to get us started. This one organization starts at \$300 an hour. That is where the \$600 comes from. That is a two hour meeting.

Mr. Michael Hanlon stated that the cost of the RFP will be driven by the RFP.

Mayor Ray O'Connell stated that you are talking about a consultant that will come in and say this will be the best program or fit for our city.

Ms. CeCe Gerlach stated that a consultant that would come in and look at what we got and help us mold something that would work for us. Instead of us trying to figure out what to do having never done it before. Have someone that has looked at these different programs and help us figure out how to implement different elements from different cities based on our demographics and based on our 911 calls and everything we got going on.

Mr. Julio Guridy stated when he heard about it first, he said we already have a program then he read about it and thought that these are some good things going on here in some of these models. Speaking with the Chief and Julie Thomases, he said this is really good. He stated that he

does not want to spend \$150,000.

Mr. Daryl Hendricks stated that we are not there yet. He stated that he thinks they show some real promise, but there is a meeting already planned and there are a lot of stakeholders we want to bring in on this from Lehigh Valley Health Network, St. Luke's Health Network. He is sure there is some funding out there. We are not there yet.

Mayor Ray O'Connell stated that they had meetings with the county and St. Luke's will meet again with Public Safety Initiatives and obviously the Chief . He stated that they invited Mr. Armstrong and Mr. Schlossberg. We are looking at LVHN and St. Luke's. He stated when they get to the Resolution, he has a comment from the administration.

Mr. Daryl Hendricks stated that the 911 system is a county function. Social Services is a county function. We don't want the taxpayers of Allentown funding this to a great extent. It is something where the county needs to step up to the plate and help out with this. They are pushed with the 911 system. It is early in the process, but this shows a lot of promise.

Mayor Ray O'Connell stated in fairness to the county, they are at the table and will continue to be at the table.

Mr. Julio Guridy stated that they have a legislative committee and he would like to inject himself in that meeting. He wants Council to be part of the discussion. He agrees with Mr. Hendricks that they can't do anything without the county takes a big input in that. They are the biggest stakeholder than anybody else. The funders and the workers in the 911 programs and the hospital will appreciate it.

Mr. Daryl Hendricks stated that it will be a benefit to both. The medical services that they could be saving.

Mr. Julio Guridy stated that there is an opportunity for them to not have to prolong it. We can start the talks right now. Wait for a couple of years or next year. The amount of money and the conversations don't dictate that we have to wait until where one ends and the other one begins. The Chief is ready talking. Why don't we keep the conversations going?

Mr. Daryl Hendricks suggested to steer Cedar Crest College on what we need immediately and that will be most beneficial to getting this started.

Ms. Candida Affa stated that these experts that might cost anywhere \$600 - \$20,000. What are their qualifications? Who are these experts? Are they people that are educated in mental illness or social workers. Who are the

experts that you want to spend the money on to explain to us? She stated that she would like to know their qualifications.

Ms. CeCe Gerlach stated without their names, the organizations are who Ms. Thomases referenced tonight. One of them being Cahoots who are mental health and behavioral health experts with high level degrees. It is not just having a mental health organization come in. It is about an organization that specializes in mental health, but has went to a municipal or county and helped the police department and social service department in a more coordinated ways that actually responds to the needs of the community. A good example of one of the organizations is Cahoots. It has been proven that their track record has been pretty solid. Because there could be a potential RFP out there, she does not want to say anything that we were steering one way or another.

Mr. Michael Hanlon stated that if you are going to do a consultant. If a consultant is going to come and talk to the stakeholders, you don't need an RFP. You need an RFP if it is going to be a lot of money.

Mr. Julio Guridy stated that Council already set up some funding. There is about \$50,000 in the budget for smaller things than that.

Ms. CeCe Gerlach stated that the last statement that Mr. Hanlon made. If we were to bring in a consultant to run a stakeholder's meeting and it is \$600 and it is the opinion of everyone in the room and the consultant that we would need some help with this. Would they be able to go back to Council and then potentially do an RFP if it is a \$10,000 expense.

Mr. Michael Hanlon stated that you will have to see what kind of money it would cost. You might not need an RFP. You might want someone to facilitate that is less than an RFP.

Mayor Ray O'Connell stated that they have to see how much they have in their Professional Services Account. That would guide you on what you can do down the road.

Mr. Julio Guridy stated that they have some funding in their department.

Ms. CeCe Gerlach stated that legislatively what will happen.

Mr. Julio Guridy stated that they can use it for anything they want.

Mayor Ray O'Connell stated a consensus.

Mr. Michael Hanlon stated that the Solicitor stated that Transfers at one

time, Council would decide on them internally, do a poll. Mr. Kloiber states that we have to do that in the more out in the open. We have to do approve a Resolution.

Mayor Matt Kloiber stated that the one thing that is ideal. The RFP is a service that we want done and we want to see and the Resolution identifies folks to help to find what that service is. The criteria of what Council would be looking for. It is opening up to see who will be the best one. We put it out there. This is what we have and this is what we are willing to spend and who will be able to provide the service for us. Cahoots might be able to say, yeah we might be able to help you with this and a lot of the other programs might say, yeah we can help you with this. There are a variety of providers that can do it. The RFP takes it back a step and create that criteria. Let's identify the service that we want done.

Mr. Julio Guridy stated that the computer will restart in a second.

Mr. Michael Hanlon stated that he has to restart it into another meeting. The computer is going to restart.

[15-3995](#)

R5

RFP Authorization

Sponsors: Gerlach and Mr. Siegel

Attachments: [R5 RFP Authorization](#)

[Alternative 911 Council handout](#)

[RFP Manual](#)

[Lehigh County Da Says Intelligence and Investigation Center Will Pitch In](#)

[A Long-Planned Program To Remove Police From Some 911 Calls](#)

[Launches As Denver's Streets](#)

[Cahoots & The Police Departments](#)

[How Social Workers and Police Share Responsibilities in Eugene, Oregon](#)

[In Cahoots - How the Unlikely Pairing Of Cops and Hippies Became A National Model](#)

[In Denver, Unarmed Mental Health Workers Respond To Hundreds of 911 Calls Instead of Police](#)

[Portland Aims To Dispatch Better First Responders For Some](#)

[Homelessness Calls](#)

[Support Cahoots - Serving the Vulnerable](#)

[The Wake Forest Law Review - In Cahoots with the Police](#)

ADJOURNED: 6:52 PM