

City of Richmond – Reimagining Public Safety Community Task Force
Meeting held via Zoom: https://richmond.granicus.com/ViewPublisher.php?view_id=38

Minutes*
Wednesday, January 25, 2023, 5:30 P.M.

**video recording and meeting transcript available*

A. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Small called the meeting to order at 5:32 P.M.

B. ROLL CALL

PRESENT: S. Bischoff, H. Burks, M. Cantú, E. Chacon, L. Chacon, D. Gosney, R. Joseph, A. Lee*, K. Kilian-Lobos, M. Njissang, J. Schlemmer, T. Walker, B.K. Williams, and Chair D. Small
*Arrived after Roll Call

ABSENT: L. Mangels, B. Therriault and L. Whitmore

STAFF PRESENT: Deputy City Manager-Community Services LaShonda White, Assistant Administrative Analyst Guadalupe Morales, Associated Administrative Analyst Stephanie Ny, and City Attorney Alison Flowers; Assistant Police Chief Timothy Simmons, Richmond Police Lieutenant John Lopez, YouthWorks Program Manager Bouakhay Phongboupha

C. AGENDA REVIEW AND ADOPTION

There were no changes to the meeting agenda and Chair Small adopted the agenda, as submitted.

D. MEETING PROCEDURES

Guadalupe Morales, staff to the Taskforce, identified the meeting procedures, the format of the web-based meeting and the public's ability to speak during the meeting.

E. MINUTES APPROVAL

1. APPROVE the minutes of the November 30, 2022 regular meeting of the Reimagining Public Safety Community Task Force

Motion by Taskforce Member Schlemmer, seconded by Taskforce Member Bischoff to adopt the minutes of the November 30, 2022 meeting, as submitted, carried by the following Roll Call vote:

AYES: S. Bischoff, H. Burks, M. Cantú, E. Chacon, L. Chacon, D. Gosney, R. Joseph, K. Kilian-Lobos, M. Njissang, J. Schlemmer, T. Walker, B.K. Williams, and Chair D. Small

NOES: None

ABSENT: A. Lee, L. Mangels, B. Therriault, and L. Whitmore

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F. CITY STAFF REPORTS

Deputy City Manager-Community Services LaShonda White wished everyone a Happy New Year and stated that 2023 would be a great year and a lot of work would get done.

Chair Small also extended New Year's greetings and stated the new year would be a year of renewed opportunities to move the Taskforce forward and make life even better for Richmond residents. She thanked everyone for their commitment to the process.

G. PUBLIC COMMENTS

No written comments were submitted or oral comments made by any member of the public.

H. PRESENTATIONS, DISCUSSIONS, AND ACTION ITEMS

1. DISCUSS and APPROVE Future Community Forums on Traffic Safety; Harm Reduction and Overdose Prevention; Police Policies & Practices; Youth Employment & Training; and Poverty Reduction

Chair Small advised that the topics had been discussed at previous Taskforce meetings with the intent to organize community forums, provide information to the community and get input from the community around those issues.

Taskforce Member Gosney asked that traffic studies be included in the discussion of Traffic Safety given the significant funds that had been allocated by the City Council to address significant traffic calming and safety issues, which he suggested appeared to be dedicated to specific areas of the City as opposed to being citywide.

Chair Small stated that all of the community forums had addressed issues on a citywide basis whether it be the reduction of gun violence or providing services for the unsheltered and the intention was no different with respect to traffic safety, which was a citywide issue. The goal was to get input from residents as to what residents saw as priorities with respect to traffic safety in their community.

Taskforce Member Joseph referred to Driving Under the Influence (DUI) issues and noted that the City of Richmond had some of the highest DUI rates in the County. Since the prevention programs had not curbed those numbers, he wanted to see what ideas the community might have to reduce DUI issues.

Chair Small recommended that Police Chief French be asked to participate in whatever community forum was organized around Traffic Safety to be able to include the data that the Richmond Police Department (RPD) had around DUI and accident issues as well as getting input from other City stakeholders. She added that Doria Robinson, the new City Council member, had expressed a particular interest in traffic safety and she would be asked to serve as the representative from the City Council in the forum on Traffic Safety to also get input from the community.

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Taskforce Member Joseph recommended that RPD Officer Decious also be asked to participate given his experience and information with respect to DUI issues.

Taskforce Member Williams commented that Councilmember Robinson was also the new liaison to the Richmond Arts & Culture Commission (RACC). She asked that public art also be considered with Traffic Safety, and working with the RACC make sure that intersections and those things affecting the visibility of traffic crosswalks were beautified and that art and traffic safety should be integrated to make a comfortable place for residents to thrive.

Taskforce Member Gosney commented with respect to Traffic Safety that there was a specific component in the discussion to include district reviews since five out of seven members of the City Council had made it a district-specific issue, which was not equity for the entire City and which needed to be addressed.

Taskforce Member L. Chacon suggested that another community forum might be needed to discuss how decisions were made and be able to talk through the issues to ensure that the decision-making process was fair and clear. With respect to outreach for the community forums, he recommended reaching out to communities not always involved such as the faith community, the Latino community, and to schools to get youth representation at the forums.

Chair Small stated that once dates had been set outreach could be better clarified.

Taskforce Member Burks asked about scheduling and Chair Small wanted to both approve the topics previously discussed and begin to schedule and follow a similar format in scheduling that had been followed in the past, to have the community forums on the third Wednesday of the month, a week before regular Taskforce meetings, and if agreeing on the topics to have those forums in February, March, April and May.

Taskforce Member Burks supported the topics, as shown, but recommended that Youth Employment & Training be shown as Youth Employment & Safety given some safety concerns. She suggested that the details of each topic could be worked out when being planned.

Taskforce Member Walker referred to the new elected leaders in Richmond who appeared to be interested in hearing from members of the community. With the intent to address the issues citywide, she sought a better clarification of the community engagement process to make sure that all the members of the City Council be involved in the process. When asked, she advised that she would help to plan the community forum.

Taskforce Member Schlemmer concurred with the comments about educating the public and demystifying some of the government process and suggested the onus was on the City Council to have some of its own community forums. With respect to Traffic Safety, he stated there was a lot of statistical data from the state based on collisions that could identify what areas were prone to collisions, which could drive a little more attention by the RPD.

Chair Small emphasized that the community forums would include more than Traffic Safety and she asked if there were any comments on the other forums that had yet to be discussed.

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Taskforce Member Gosney asked the intent of the forums and verified with the Chair that the format would follow what had occurred last year, with a community forum around a particular issue; once a month on the third Wednesday of the month a week before the regular Taskforce meeting.

Taskforce Member Joseph referred to the topic of Poverty Reduction and suggested the title be changed to be more descriptive of the intent, and Chair Small suggested Reduce Poverty in Richmond to reduce poverty and consider some of the initiatives that local communities were looking at to reduce poverty by establishing minimum income or providing certain types of housing initiatives. She noted the conversation of the Taskforce was to look at the root causes of social issues and poverty had been identified as one of the root causes.

Chair Small explained that the titles could be changed with the discussion of each topic but she asked whether the general topics could be approved.

No written comments were submitted or oral comments made by any member of the public.

On motion by Taskforce Member Joseph, seconded by Taskforce Member Njissang, the Taskforce approved community forums for the following topics: Traffic Safety; Harm Reduction and Overdose Prevention; Police Policies & Practices; Youth Employment & Safety; and Poverty Reduction Strategies. The motion carried by the following Roll Call vote:

AYES: S. Bischoff, H. Burks, M. Cantú, E. Chacon, L. Chacon, D. Gosney, R. Joseph, A. Lee, K. Kilian-Lobos, M. Njissang, J. Schlemmer, T. Walker, B.K. Williams, and Chair D. Small
NOES: None
ABSENT: L. Mangels, B. Therriault, and L. Whitmore

Chair Small recommended that the first community forum be started in March, with the remainder once each month until July. Groups would be identified at the next meeting to start planning the first three forums following a similar format to the one that had been used previously.

Taskforce Member Walker suggested that more time might be needed to meet a March deadline for the first community forum and Chair Small commented that the forums did not have to be done in order. She volunteered to prepare the Harm Reduction and Overdose Prevention forum that she suggested could be planned for a March event.

2. RECEIVE a Presentation from Urban Strategies Council Regarding Development of the Implementation Plan for the Community Crises Response Program

Deputy City Manager-Community Services White explained that the Taskforce had envisioned a Community Crises Response Program and had brought it forward to the City Council. An update would be provided on what the Urban Strategies Council had done to date. She stated in July 2021 the City Council had allocated funding to help with the development and implementation of the program, with a focus on supporting community in need of additional support and services. Much of the work was hearing from the community, honoring the work that had been done to date and bringing forth additional information and recommendations to the City Council about the implementation.

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Ms. White reported there was a web page where the contract with Urban Strategies Council had been posted, with five tasks. Task 1 (project initiation and data gathering) and Task 2 (community engagement) were ongoing, Task 3 (analysis of program options) and Task 4 (proposed program plan) would be submitted to the City Council at the end of May 2023, and Task 5 (Implementation Plan) had yet to be determined. She provided a timeline and stated that more dates had been identified on the website at <https://www.ci.richmond.ca.us/4451/Community-Crises-Response-Program>. She had been tasked with the program and was working with the Fire Department and RPD as well as a Taskforce subcommittee. She explained that the program would take time, understood the urgency to implement the program and staff was working with Urban Strategies Council to get the work done.

David Harris, Urban Strategies Council, working on the Community Crises Response Program, described the initial process of developing the program and stated that a deeper level of community engagement would be pursued. The plan was to convene several community focus groups and community wide meetings, and a community-wide survey would be administered in February. He asked for a working group of Taskforce members to advise on the implementation of remaining engagement strategies. He understood the desire of the Taskforce to be actively engaged in the process and he asked either the working group or the whole Taskforce to look at the survey and provide feedback by next week. He sought input from the Taskforce as to the groups both pro and con to be included in the process and stated the plan was to provide a definitive recommendation to the City Council in April or May of the different options the City needed to take to implement the program. He identified the groups that Urban Strategies Council had already communicated with.

Ms. White stated a working group had already been established at the last Taskforce meeting and a meeting of those members would be scheduled with Urban Strategies Council to look at the survey.

Anne Jenks, Urban Strategies Council, identified other groups and individuals who had been involved in the process and asked to be apprised of groups or meetings where they could get on the agenda. She asked for information as to how the survey should be distributed for input, and requested a focus on what the City was getting from Contra Costa County and what it was doing to avoid a duplicative effort. Taskforce Members were encouraged to offer feedback and information of groups that should be added to the list of contacts.

Taskforce Member Schlemmer asked for a clarification of the goals, and Mr. Harris stated the end goal was to present to the City Council a program in design and plan on alternative non-police responses to 911 low level non-violent calls that the City Council would be able to adopt and implement for the City. Urban Strategies Council would present different options based on its regional and national work and would give the policy makers different options to consider, which would be tailored to Richmond based on the feedback, aspirations and needs of the City's residents.

Mr. Harris reported that programs had been designed by Urban Strategies Council in Oakland, Antioch and Cambridge, Massachusetts, and in all three places the governance structures had approved funding for the programs. In Oakland, funding had been approved for the MACRO (Mobile Assistance Community Responders of Oakland) where initially \$1.2 million had been allocated and had been placed inside the Oakland Fire Department for implementation. In that case, employees had been hired and teams had been deployed.

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In Cambridge, Massachusetts, the HEART (Holistic Emergency Alternative Response Team) program had been funded and implemented by the city council in partnership with a non-profit; and in Antioch the program had been accepted and approved by that city council where a non-profit vendor would implement the program, which was in the start-up phase of implementation. Urban Strategies Council was also working with an international organization of alternative response programs that were monitoring the programs in the U.S., Canada and other parts of the world.

In terms of spending and interaction with the Contra Costa County program, Taskforce Member Bischoff emphasized the need to have a clear idea of what the County was doing for the City to be able to design a program of its own.

Mr. Harris described how the established programs were doing and the lessons learned, commented that there was a national shortage of credentialed people for the jobs and the jobs had to be built on the assets that existed in the communities. The main assets were the people who had lived experience, who knew others in the community and the relationships with City bureaucracies along with the needs and desires that Richmond residents wanted. He added that the program would only work with a strong network with referral and support organizations given that it was a response program; responding to situations where no one with a badge and a gun had to show up and the responders were not there to solve the situation, which was why a network of resources was needed. It would have to be determined what the County would provide and what already existed in Richmond and elsewhere to meet the needs of those people who were in the middle of an incident.

Taskforce Member Bischoff wanted to make sure that the resources would be spelled out and the Chair suggested that Member Bischoff become a member of the working group working with Urban Strategies Council.

Ms. Jenks stated that one of the programs had found that over 90 percent of the interactions did not use a referral and the majority of times the team was addressing a crises without any kind of referral. In terms of the County, she noted the County would be substantially different in five to ten years. For Richmond, she recommended that the program be nimble to be able to respond to some of the calls that Richmond had been responding to in that studies had universally shown that 30 to 40 percent of the calls received by 911 or a non-emergency line on average did not require a police or fire response. It would be good if the County was able to expand to do more of the work, but as of now there was a massive deficit.

Taskforce Member Burks stated she would work with Youth Voice and with schools to deal with mental health and mental crises and youth safety within the institution of schools. She noted the West Contra Costa Unified School District's (WCCUSD's) engagement office had existing relationships with many of the groups that would work with United Strategies Council. She would be happy to leverage with those groups and with the schools and asked that the survey be sent to the full membership of the Taskforce.

Taskforce Member L. Chacon concurred and made himself available to help connect with students and families and provide the names of contact information for some Latino faith-based organizations, and he would help with outreach.

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Taskforce Member Schlemmer referred to CAHOOTS (Crises Assistance Helping Out On the Streets), which was crises intervention, non-violence substance abuse program, and asked if that was what the program was about, and Mr. Harris confirmed that it was about a percentage of calls that did not require a sworn officer to show up. He had met last week with Police Chief French who had expressed a desire for support in that area given a number of calls categorized as wellness checks, noise complaints, inappropriate public behavior and the like, and while there were mental health issues, he stated the program was not just about a mental health response. It was much broader and 30 to 40 percent of the calls the responders would address would not be mental health.

Mr. Harris added that wellness checks and noise complaints represented many of the calls in the Antioch program. For Richmond, he noted the Police Chief had recently reported that both violent crime and property crime over the last several years had statistically gone down. While those numbers had been questioned, the fact was that police were dealing with issues of needing more manpower, and dealing with the reality of having to respond to different trends in the way crime occurred. Underneath all of that, police were doing jobs that they felt they should not be doing, which was the case with teachers in schools and others who felt they were going well beyond their mandate. He stated the intent was to provide a more humane response where people were not being killed and where public safety was being achieved while the police were able to focus on what they should be focusing on. His goal was to present a program design that addressed those types of calls that were inefficient and ineffective for police to respond to and at the same time build a capacity in communities to respond to conflicts in situations before the police got involved, creating a better outcome for everyone.

Taskforce Member Schlemmer asked about the timeline from conception to implementation and operation in Oakland and Cambridge, and asked about the costs involved, to which Mr. Harris stated in Oakland \$1.2 million had been approved in June 2020 and implementation had begun in March 2022, and in Antioch the program had been approved in December 2021 and a non-profit vendor had been selected with implementation in August 2022.

Taskforce Member Bischoff stated he would send references to staff about the MACRO program in Oakland in terms of the types and numbers of response on the website.

Ms. Jenks stated in terms of looking at mental health calls, the things that appeared to be mental health related were not necessarily classified as mental health incidents. She was hopeful that Richmond's program would be able to be implemented quicker than other programs given the support for the program in Richmond.

Ms. Morales identified the public's ability to speak to the item.

No written comments were submitted or oral comments made by any member of the public.

3. RECEIVE a Presentation from Matrix Consulting Regarding the Comprehensive Study of Emergency Services in Richmond

Deputy City Manager-Community Services White introduced Richard Brady and Robert Finn from Matrix Consulting to provide the presentation.

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Richard Brady, Matrix Consulting, explained that the purpose of the study was to evaluate police and fire workloads and the service delivery system and look at ways to maximize efficiency in the use of existing personnel, and to develop an analysis with options of the number of personnel needed to provide a wide variety of public safety services through a fact-based process with community input into the development of the analysis. The process had been started during the summer of 2022 and had received community input through individual interviews and seven focus group meetings. There had been extensive data collection on workloads and service levels within the public safety services along with an evaluation of a wide variety of options and alternative responses. Some of the themes that had been identified were that the community had noticed that the budget reduction in police had greatly impacted services, safety was a significant issue in the city, and there were concerns about servicing marginalized people and those in various forms of crises along with concerns about disparate treatment, especially by police in that law enforcement in particular needed to be more accountable for its actions and needed to use data better to provide services given the limited resources available. Many felt that response priorities were inconsistent in areas of the City and segments of the community requesting service found non-responses to certain kinds of calls. Most participants wanted to see more engagement with the community.

Overall conclusions were that the RPD and Fire Department had experienced reductions that had greatly impacted service delivery in a number of ways including an ability to work proactively with the community and in response times. The significant numbers of vacant positions, although a national problem, impacted service even more, had impacted management's ability to meet public safety needs and the options had been reduced to the basics in that any kind of proactive units working with the community had been eliminated or sharply reduced which greatly impacted the RPD and Fire Department's ability to partner with the community and respond to incidents.

Mr. Brady stated the concept of proactivity was central to law enforcement today and provided a much-needed balance. He presented several graphs and referred to RPD's reactive workload that was about 47,000 calls for service down compared to pre-COVID. He described the type of calls involved and stated that most related to quality of life in a safety context related to public disturbances, alarms, loud music, suspicious persons or vehicles in a neighborhood. He also identified proactivity by day and time of day and noted that to be effective law enforcement needed to be proactive 40 percent of the time.

In Richmond, 30 percent had been identified although most of the time had occurred during hours of the day or night in which there were few proactive things that could be done. Between 10:00 A.M. and 10:00 P.M., there was essentially no proactive time and calls were being stacked to be dealt with by later hours of the day or the evening and those hours of the day represented 12 to 15 percent overall which meant that there was no proactive time that officers could work with the community in a proactive way. He added that the number of vacancies in the RPD had been at a crises level in the last year when 20 percent of the positions had been vacant while the average over the last four years had been about 15 percent. The RPD was taking steps to remedy that, to recruit locally and to work harder to get laterals to fit into Richmond's service environment.

Mr. Brady stated there was a significant gap in the ability to provide a reasonable level of service that could only be filled by adding resources, although there were alternative ways of handling workloads including an alternative response depending upon the type of call for service.

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Mr. Brady noted that crises responses, which United Strategies Council had illustrated, needed to be addressed with a more effective way of dealing with people in crises situations. He described the traditional way of handling calls for service with response from sworn-officers as opposed to a comprehensive program of diverting calls for service to different kinds of service providers outside of law enforcement, which narrowed the number of calls that needed a response from sworn officers.

Mr. Brady stated the report had come up with a supportive analysis to start out with eight community services officers to handle the lower priority calls for service to be able to divert 12 to 13 percent of the calls. He noted that many communities in the Bay Area had been able to divert 20 to 30 percent of the calls. On the alternative response related to crises calls, the firm had a supportive recommendation to have two teams outside of law enforcement that had a mental health technician paired with an EMT to respond, potentially in co-response with police to work with people in a more case management way to get them into programs and services in a more productive way.

Mr. Brady stated they had looked at other opportunities including using civilians in different capacities within the RPD to work in crime analysis and the like. In Richmond, the number of vacant positions was so great that the overtime was not just excessive but mandatory, which was not sustainable. He stated the study looked at staffing, recruitment, and training, which also needed to be increased.

Robert Finn spoke to the evaluation of the Fire Department where there were three important factors with respect to performance, two of which were controllable. The three factors were call processing, turn-out time and travel time. National Best Practices had set the benchmark performance at 4 minutes travel time 90 percent of the time, although most communities could not meet that standard. A community would then have to adopt acceptable performance standards. In Richmond, three years of data had been analyzed to indicate that right now travel times were 6 minutes 44 seconds 90 percent of the time. The call processing and turnout times were longer than best practices as well and should also be improved, which could only be done by improving the automatic aid, changing how the resources were deployed or increasing the number of fire stations. One of the larger issues was the amount of overtime needed in the Fire Department to meet minimum staffing. He noted there were currently 14 vacancies in the Fire Department and people on long-term leave due to Workers' Compensation, and when firefighters were forced to work overtime there would be fatigue, which led to accidents, which led to Workers' Compensation, which perpetuated the issues. It was therefore important to get the vacant positions filled and Human Resources (HR) was working to do that.

Mr. Finn stated when considering the performance of the Fire Department, it was important to note that there were a number of automatic and mutual aid partners, and with the mutual aid partners a majority of the City could be covered in 5 minutes 20 seconds, with some improvements to travel times. Using the regional approach was the best practice and the partners helped to achieve a timely response to emergencies. In the alternatives recommended, return to work policies to help control the amount of overtime, putting in policies to identify a maximum number of hours personnel could work, and adding 19 shift personnel to provide a better balance with the amount of leave firefighters were allowed to take through the contract would help. As such, staffing would have to be added to reduce the overtime and help control the amount and make it manageable for the department, improve the work/life balance for fire personnel, and improve the dispatch processing for dispatching units and capture data to make sure it was useable and reliable for the Fire Department.

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It was also recommended that cross staff quick response EMS vehicles that were less expensive and easier to obtain than the current apparatus be brought in.

The first alternative recommended for the Fire Department was to fill the vacant positions, and getting some civilian positions such as a Fire Adaptive Community Coordinator for the Wildland Urban Interface Areas, a Public Education Coordinator to help with the workload and an extra Fire Inspector.

Mr. Brady stated they had reviewed a first draft of the report and had presented a revised draft. The report would be finalized in March, to then be presented to the City in March or April 2023.

Given the hour, Chair Small asked for a motion to extend the meeting to complete the item.

Motion by Taskforce Member Gosney, seconded by Taskforce Member Williams to extend the meeting to allow the completion of the Presentation from Matrix Consulting to include questions from the Taskforce and public comment, FAILED to carry by the following Roll Call vote:

AYES: S. Bischoff, D. Gosney, K. Kilian-Lobos, B.K. Williams, and Chair D. Small

NOES: H. Burks, L. Chacon, A. Lee, M. Njissang, J. Schlemmer, and T. Walker

ABSENT: M. Cantú (left at 7:00 P.M.), E. Chacon (left at 6:36 P.M.), R. Joseph (left meeting), L. Mangels, B. Therriault, and L. Whitmore

The meeting was adjourned at this point and the remainder of the agenda was continued to the next meeting.

4. **RECEIVE a Presentation from Safe Organized Spaces Richmond Regarding Status of Contract Services for Unhoused Populations in Richmond and Future Plans**
5. **RECEIVE a FY 2022-2023 First Quarter Report Regarding Allocations for Unhoused Interventions, YouthWorks, Office of Neighborhood Safety, and the Community Crises Response Program**
6. **REVIEW Feedback on Proposed Taskforce Bylaws and DISCUSS Next Steps**

I. ACTION ITEM RECAP

J. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:27 P.M.