

City of Richmond – Reimagining Public Safety Community Task Force
Meeting held in Person: Bermuda Room, Richmond Memorial Auditorium
403 Civic Center Plaza, Richmond, CA 94804

Minutes*
Wednesday, August 23, 2023, 5:30 P.M.

**video recording and meeting transcript available*

A. CALL TO ORDER

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

B. ROLL CALL

PRESENT: S. Bischoff, H. Burks, D. Gosney, R. Joseph, K. Kilian-Lobos, M. Njissang, J. Pursell, J. Schlemmer, B. Therriault,* T. Walker, L. Whitmore, B.K. Williams, and Chair D. Small

*Arrived at 5:45 P.M. after Roll Call

EXCUSED: M. Cantú, L. Chacon, A. Lee, and L. Murray

ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Deputy City Manager-Community Services Director (Staff Liaison to the Task Force) LaShonda White, Assistant Administrative Analyst Guadalupe Morales, Associate Administrative Analyst Stephanie Ny, and City Attorney Alison Flowers

C. AGENDA REVIEW AND ADOPTION

The agenda was adopted, as presented.

D. MEETING PROCEDURES

Guadalupe Morales, staff to the Task Force, identified the meeting procedures and the public's ability to speak during the meeting. She announced that anyone may make an oral comment even if a written one had previously been submitted; however, each speaker may raise their hand once to make one oral public comment per each agenda item. She added that an announcement would identify the time to make public comment for each item.

E. MINUTES APPROVAL

1. APPROVE the Minutes of the July 12, 2023 Special Meeting of the Reimagining Public Safety Community Task Force

Motion by Taskforce Member Bischoff, seconded by Taskforce Member Joseph to adopt the minutes of the July 12, 2023 meeting, as submitted, carried by the following Roll Call vote:

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

F. CITY STAFF REPORTS

Deputy City Manager for Community Services LaShonda White announced that the next City Council meeting would be held on September 12, 2023. She also noted that in the next few weeks there would be more information about the biannual Community Survey where over 3,000 selected households would be asked to answer questions about City services, recommendations and priorities. Results would be presented to the City Council, senior staff, Department Directors, be placed on the City’s website and be shared with City Boards and Commissions and community organizations, as requested. There would also be some website updates to make the City’s website more user friendly.

In response to the Chair, Deputy City Manager White verified that the Community Crises Response Program (CCRP) Report was on the agenda for the September 12, 2023 City Council meeting.

G. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Taskforce Member Burks announced Soulful Softball Sunday at Nicholl Park on August 27, 2023 at 10:00 A.M. She encouraged everyone to attend. In addition, she explained that all West Contra Costa Unified School District (WCCUSD) Schools were hiring and she referred anyone interested to the WCCUSD Human Resources website for more information.

Assistant Administrative Analyst Guadalupe Morales read the following email into the record:

CORDELL HINDLER: Good day Chair Small, Task Force Members and staff, I am forwarding the following comments into the record. 1. The Task Force is invited to the Baltic Kiss Anniversary Party this Friday at 6:00 P.M. hosted by the Point Richmond Business Association and Richmond Chamber of Commerce. 2. The Rosie the Riveter Annual Gala September 23, 2023 from 5:00 to 10:00 P.M. at the Craneway Pavilion, \$250 per ticket. 3. I am working on a project in relation to the Community Task Force and I will share it at a later date. Sincerely, Cordell.

BOUAKHAY PHONGBOUPHA, Interim Program Manager for YouthWorks, announced that Youth Works would be closing its application for the work experience grant program at the end of the month given that 794 applications had been received since July and there was a need to reach out to those young people. If money was still available in January, applications would reopen at that time.

H. PRESENTATIONS, DISCUSSIONS, AND ACTION ITEMS

- 1. DISCUSS the Draft Report on the Community Crisis Response Program and APPROVE Recommendations**

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Deputy City Manager White introduced Anne Jenks who was present through Zoom audio, to speak about the City Council-directed Draft Report on the Community Crisis Response Program (CCRP), which had been developed by Urban Strategies Council, had been submitted to the Reimagining Public Safety Community Task Force (RPSCTF) in July, and had also been submitted to the City Council for review. She identified a number of questions that had come in from a member of the community and a member of the Task Force and noted that Urban Strategies Council had submitted responses to those questions, copies of which were available.

Deputy City Manager White highlighted Urban Strategies Council's background, the development of the CCRP, the different phases of the work, the community outreach and the paper and on-line surveys associated with that outreach. She explained that the survey had been done in nine languages, there had been nine focus groups and two community forums, along with interviews with elected officials as well as select interviews with community-based and civic organizations to gather information and get a deep understanding from a broad set of stakeholders given the level of interest in how the CCRP would interact with Contra Costa County's A3 Program. She highlighted the discussion and information from the surveys and identified the demographics associated with the 415 responses from the survey.

ANNE JENKS, Urban Strategies Council, stated that survey results had been monitored to make sure that those who might be less inclined to engage with surveys had been encouraged to become involved. She described some of the concerns expressed in the surveys that the CCRP would respond to a broad range of calls as opposed to just mental health calls; the CCRP would help residents access available resources; whether the engagement and community crises would be voluntary or involuntary; the need that the teams recruited would look like the communities they were serving to meet the needs of the different neighborhoods in the City; the jobs provided by the work would acknowledge, with pay, that the work was challenging and a successful group of individuals interested in the work would be on the teams; and that the teams would include those with lived experience in that advanced degrees were not necessary and training would be provided.

Deputy City Manager White identified common calls that could be involved with the CCRP that teams could respond to outside of behavioral health calls, which is what A3 responded to, such as welfare checks, noise complaints, and neighbor conflicts, as examples.

Ms. Jenks emphasized that the program would be voluntary, which was a crucial element in the safety of the teams, and even within a type of call there was still a safety and appropriateness assessment that would occur with dispatch to understand the appropriate protocol to pursue.

Deputy City Manager White explained that the survey had also expressed desires to make the City's emergency services better, improve de-escalation, improve response arrival times, increase routine patrol, provide more cultural sensitivity and a greater focus on keeping residents safe. The survey identified support for the CCRP at 87 percent.

Ms. Jenks stated the level of support for the CCRP was notable, over 10 percent higher than the same survey in Antioch, which she expected was a result of the work of the Task Force and the level of education and knowledge community members had in Richmond.

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Deputy City Manager White identified the implementation options addressed in the report based on Richmond's needs for a possible structure to implement a community response program. Not in any particular order, the options were identified as a Request for Proposal (RFP) for an independent non-profit agency organization to run the program; creating a new department within the program to be instituted within the City, to be embedded either within an existing City department or to create a new department and all that implied; a non-profit hybrid model to start the implementation by hiring a non-profit organization with plans to turn it over to the City and have it embedded in another City department; or a partnership with Contra Costa County's A3 Program.

Deputy City Manager White spoke to the pros and cons of the five different options and reported that the initial thoughts based on input would be how quickly the program could be up and running, the cost, the sustainability, and community support. Recommendations with those aspects in mind for a quicker and easier process pointed to use of a non-profit to get the program up and running.

Chair Small referred to the ranking of cost and asked who had done the ranking and the basis for making the decisions given that the Task Force had established as a priority that staffers would be community-centered, be given living wages, and be paid on par with City of Richmond workers.

Deputy City Manager White stated that City staff and Urban Strategies Council had discussed as a starting point of the conversation that it would be more costly for a City department to run the program given that there would be a whole extra layer of overhead different from a non-profit. The cost consideration had considered the higher cost of City staff as opposed to staff of a non-profit.

Ms. Jenks stated the assumptions of cost were that a non-profit would turn the jobs into decent jobs as had occurred in the City of Antioch. The jobs would not be minimum-wage since that would not create a successful program and it was not the right thing to do.

With respect to budget projections, Deputy City Manager White stated that tentative numbers had been included in the draft report, classifications had not yet been defined, and dollar amounts and costs had been based on tentative assumptions. Staffing would be 24 hours a day seven days a week, equating to 14 full-time equivalent positions, and numbers had been based on projected annual salaries for each position based on current positions within the City of Richmond. She identified potential positions for a Program Manager, Administrative Data Analyst, Community Crises Responder (multiples), EMTs (multiples), and a Mental Health Technician.

Chair Small noted the report was not relying upon an EMT as a principal responder and she therefore questioned why EMTs had been included in the pilot because the program design talked about using EMTs to help develop the protocols and to manage stress and support the team, suggesting that a full-time EMT was not needed as part of the initial program design.

Ms. Jenks noted a confusion between the EMT and the clinician position in that the Mental Health Clinician position did not have to be full time. Of a two-person team, having one person with a bit of basic medical knowledge would be valuable especially when engaging people with substantial barriers to getting healthcare. She explained that EMTs were the lowest level of medical knowledge that was certified in California and most other states. The position would be different from a firefighter EMT.

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Chair Small clarified the EMT was to provide basic hands-on medical support services needed in the moment and the Mental Health Clinician was to advise on mental health issues.

Deputy City Manager White explained that the City Council would decide on which option to consider after which things would start to be put in place to implement the program. Among the options included in the draft report was a Community Advisory Board, regular meetings with service providers, more outreach and information sharing with the community, a website, and a mechanism for people to share opportunities for improvement and feedback on the program. The budget included a classification for Program Manager to lead the work, and there was still space on the contract with Urban Strategies Council to continue to help the City if it decided on an RFP, and there would need to be additional training with the Richmond Police Department and with the County's A3 Program. As such, she emphasized that much more needed to happen to be able to implement the program.

Ms. Jenks stressed the need for community engagement to continue, and added it would be beneficial to hire someone to work on implementation who could continue to engage with all involved.

Taskforce Member Gosney asked for clarification of total expected employee costs, including benefits, especially with a potential half-time Mental Health Clinician who would be on call 24/7.

David Harris, Urban Strategies Council, explained with respect to cost that the estimated benefit costs could be calculated better when the positions had been better defined. The assumptions and percentages used in the draft report included some standard benefit costs.

Ms. Jenks added that the Mental Health Clinician would not be an on-call position. The goal of that position was to provide support for the program and the responders, develop training and protocols, and provide support for the challenges in the field. As to hiring someone half-time, she noted that clinicians as a career may have a private practice the rest of the time or were people looking for part-time positions. She reiterated it was not an on-call position.

Taskforce Member Williams asked about the hand-off to A3 and the behavioral health issues and asked if some events would be handled by the City, CCRP, or A3. She asked for a clarification of the potential cost per incident.

Taskforce Member Kilian-Lobos stated she currently worked for A3 as a Mental Health Community Support worker, and a registered Substance Abuse Counselor, stated one of the things previously discussed was that if the Richmond team was dispatched and it was determined that someone was experiencing psychosis or mental health issues, the A3 team had licensed clinicians who had the training and ability through the County to assess someone for a 5150 involuntary hold, when the A3 team could be called to assist with the Richmond team. A3 also had access to people's medical records and if already in the County Behavioral Healthcare system during working hours there would be other resources to link to immediate service for those people, which was how A3 could support the Richmond team. She stated the list of calls were not A3 calls, which had to be mental health calls. If a person had dementia, for instance, that would be medical and A3 would not be involved. She clarified that A3 did not transport and if Richmond could provide transport, it would be huge.

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Mr. Harris commented that there was no information on the cost per incident, which it was hoped would be learned during the implementation of the initial pilot period.

As to how an incident would be handed off to A3, Ms. Jenks explained that depending on the protocols to be developed, which had yet to occur, someone would contact A3 as to how a particular incident would be handled in a coordinated approach that would be developed over time.

Chair Small requested that Ms. Jenks or Mr. Harris walk through how a CCRP team would work in response to a call. She commented that it was important for the Task Force to note when talking about cost that there was a comparison to the current situation where calls were currently being handled by the RPD. The point of the program was to provide an alternative to the current situation where the calls coming in were being responded to by the RPD and she suggested that was the most expensive process.

Ms. Jenks added that one of the challenges for the RPD was that de-escalation was often taking the time to listen and understand what was going on and giving people time to express what they needed to express and work out the issues, and the police did not have that time. It was not only the cost of police but the cost of arrest, of holding someone, court costs, and other costs associated with police responses to calls above and beyond the actual calls of response. As to process, she would call the non-emergency number, talk to the dispatcher, indicate an incident and identify the conflict, and the dispatcher would determine whether or not it was an appropriate call for the CCRP. The dispatcher would explain that it would dispatch the CCRP, which the caller may or may not be happy to hear. Two people might show up, a Community Responder and an EMT potentially, and the two acting as a team would determine what was occurring and engage the caller, and who would do what within that team would be defined by the situation. The advantage of having transportation as an option was noted and examples were offered, and those involved would figure out how to deal with the crises in that moment.

Taskforce Member Walker spoke to the model used in the City of Antioch and noted that every community had different needs. In that case, that model was administered by a non-profit of Administrative Services and reported to the Department of Public Safety and Community Resources, which was similar to the Office of Neighborhood Safety in Richmond. They worked with the Antioch Police Department as well as dispatch and went through training with dispatch and had a community engagement division that would keep consistent community engagement around the progress of the crisis response team funded at \$2.5 million for a two-year pilot. That collaboration needed to be close to that city so that future funding could be sought from other sources because the city run process would have taken staff capacity that was unavailable with unpredictable fiscal sustainability. She noted the unpredictable fiscal sustainability made it important to have a partner, and while the start up in Antioch had come from city funds there was a commitment from a non-profit to help raise additional funding to keep the program going after two years. She identified some of the struggles involved, one of which was that the program could not launch given that the County had pushed back to allow the team to have its own EMTs. As a result, she asked if Richmond had worked out that issue or whether the EMTs were part of a city run model as opposed to a non-profit run model.

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Deputy City Manager White stated the issues with the County EMTs had been brought up during the preparation of the report, although Richmond had not engaged in conversation with Contra Costa Emergency Medical Services and what it would look like if Richmond decided to have EMTs.

In response to Taskforce Member Walker who asked about the categories of response for the CCRP, specifically related to noise, as an example, and how the CCRP teams would deal with situations where there was no real crises resulting in a waste of resources to be able to respond to an actual crisis, Ms. Jenks stated the teams would become very sophisticated about Richmond's noise ordinances and other regulations. Any incident would need to be de-escalated and she described how that could occur.

With respect to the EMT issue, Ms. Jenks stated that Contra Costa County was unique with respect to that issue. She described what had occurred in the City of Antioch.

Taskforce Member Walker commented, when asked, that in Antioch there were comments that people were having a hard time getting the emergency response teams to show up. She added that the teams did not have the legal authority to enforce anything. She encouraged the training for conflict mediation strategies to bring people together to create agreement so that people could exist together. She hoped the teams would have follow ups, be aware of the local municipal codes, and try to create space to develop a relationship so that neighbors could respect each other.

Taskforce Member Schlemmer commented that what was happening in Antioch had some importance to the program in Richmond and he confirmed that the Antioch program had moved forward without an EMT element. He questioned what would happen if the non-profit element in Antioch could not come up with the money to continue the program and how much money was involved, and Ms. Walker explained that after the two years the team would no longer exist without additional funds and there needed to be a conversation with the non-profit and others on fundraising to continue the program.

Taskforce Member Therriault asked Urban Strategies Council about its experience in the State of California and in the City of Cambridge, Massachusetts.

As to how many had been successful in California, Mr. Harris stated they had helped the cities of Oakland, Antioch and Richmond and other models were being implemented around the state in Alameda and San Francisco, which had different models. He noted the challenges involved during the start-up period related to the continuous learning between dispatch and programs operating and the recruitment of staff to reflect the communities being served. He had seen no formal evaluations of any of the models.

Taskforce Member Therriault commented that when he looked at the calls for service, he was curious as to whether there was any data on the necessity for police to respond and how many of the calls where law enforcement still had to respond.

With respect to that type of data, Mr. Harris stated outside of some work that the Vera Institute of Justice in New York had been doing on the implementation of some of the programs, he was not familiar with any data, especially in the case of calls where it had been determined that police needed to intervene.

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Ms. Jenks stated in terms of when alternative emergency response teams nationally, broadly defined, needed police backup it ranged from below one percent to a high of three percent, which did not mean that every call for police backup was because there was a serious or dangerous situation, it was that sometimes some of those involved wanted to make a complaint to file with the police. She stated the number of times when teams called for police backup were low, which meant that when police used to have to respond to 100 calls, at worst they would be responding to three out of that hundred.

Deputy City Manager White noted that the questions and responses were being listed to include in a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) that could be included on the website and in the next presentation to the City Council.

Chair Small commented that the CAHOOTS program in Eugene, Oregon, started over 30 years ago, had been fairly well documented as to the effectiveness of the program.

Taskforce Member Kilian-Lobos commented that triaging the calls and understanding the nature of the calls was important. With respect to the A3 program, when a community member called her, she had a page of triage questions and her questions would be safety questions and she would get a name, birthdate, and a phone number of who had placed the call for service. She noted those were implementation questions and there would have to be a lot of collaboration with RPD and with dispatch. If the call was not for an emergency service, 9-1-1 would have to be called in that case. She stated that dispatch would have to ask a lot of safety questions. A3 would talk to people on the scene to be able to determine what type of team to send out and there would be collaboration with dispatch.

Taskforce Member Kilian-Lobos asked if the local Richmond center would work with dispatch and Ms. Jenks stated the specific protocol for dispatch needed to be worked out with dispatch, RPD, Richmond Fire District (RFD) and with the CCRP. She stated Richmond dispatch already asked safety questions which would continue and potentially get refined in terms of the CCRP response. She hoped there would also be the potential for CCRP to call especially in a situation it could not get to immediately. She added that those specifics still needed to be developed.

Taskforce Member Pursell asked about the option that the community preferred and Mr. Harris stated that question had not been asked directly because they wanted to get a better sense of the needs for response as opposed to getting into the structure questions. He stated it was clear that there was a greater degree of faith that the City of Richmond do it than the County, and when speaking to non-profits about the potential for a contract there had been some reluctance to bid on something that could be done a year or two and then be moved into the City.

Taskforce Member Pursell emphasized the need for community engagement as to the options that would be viable for the community through the neighborhood councils or other way to follow up on the outreach. He noted there would be several reasons why law enforcement or the legal system would be involved such as if all methods of de-escalation had been exhausted. He asked if a case of public drunkenness was involved, whether there would be a record to be utilized by the legal system or law enforcement if the incident had escalated outside the crisis response, and whether the crisis responders would be involved in any further legal engagement.

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Ms. Jenks stated the specific protocol for Richmond would be developed. She noted that in Eugene, Oregon members of the teams had been called to testify on occasion and there had been situations that ended up in court, and she stated they tried to avoid getting information that would put the teams in the middle of a situation. The team's goal was to define a scope of practice separate from law enforcement and were there to resolve crises in the community, had a separate scope from law enforcement and tried to keep a barrier to law enforcement.

Taskforce Member Pursell suggested the perception of case building should be addressed.

Taskforce Member Walker noted that the City of Oakland had challenges with its model around hiring in and from the community when it came to people with convictions and she asked how those issues had been or could be resolved.

Ms. Jenks stated the challenges had not been resolved in Oakland but they were still working on them. The Oakland team was within the Fire Department, which had created some challenges in terms of the background check the fire department was using for the teams, which had been part of the problem. She suggested it was easier for non-profits to hire people than for cities and counties to hire people.

Taskforce Member Gosney thanked Ms. Walker for pointing out the chart for the benefit packages and the two sections of the table for a non-profit and for the City, and when excluding fixed rates like social security and state disability, it noted it was 266 percent higher for City employees than for non-profits given the cost of a benefit package, which he suggested meant that non-profits were not unionizing, which he strongly opposed. He urged the City Council to keep that in mind and that whatever was done involve union workers.

Deputy City Manager White commented that non-profits also hired formerly incarcerated people, which cities struggled to do.

Ms. Jenks noted that she had encouraged the City of Oakland to card check applicants to recognize unionization.

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

Chair Small asked the Task Force if it was ready to make a motion to the City Council about the proposal and in a straw poll the Task Force was not ready to proceed to that level. As a result, she recommended that there be a special meeting of the Task Force to consider this item only prior to the next City Council meeting scheduled for the September 12, 2023 meeting.

On the discussion, Deputy City Manager White advised of the drop-dead date for a recommendation from the Task Force to the City Council for its meeting in September.

Motion by Taskforce Member Joseph, seconded by Taskforce Member Bischoff to call a special Task Force meeting on Wednesday, August 30, 2023 to discuss recommendations for the draft Report on the Community Crisis Response Program, carried by the following Roll Call vote:

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NOES: J. Schlemmer
ABSTAIN: None
ABSENT: M. Cantú, L. Chacon, A. Lee, L. Murray and L. Whitmore

2. DISCUSS and APPROVE Assignments to City Council Monthly Reports for October, November and December 2023 as Well as the Process for Substitutes

Chair Small verified that Taskforce Member Pursell, who had volunteered to give the Monthly Report to the City Council in September, would still be providing the report at that time.

The meeting adjourned at this time and the remainder of the agenda was carried over to the next regular meeting on September 27, 2023.

Chair Small recommended consideration of a better name for the CCRP, suggested SAFER (Safety Alternatives For Everyone Richmond) and asked members to consider other ideas to be discussed at the special meeting on August 30.

3. DISCUSS a General Outreach Plan to Increase Public Awareness of and Participation in Task Force Meetings and APPROVE Recommendations

I. ACTION ITEM RECAP

J. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:02 P.M. to a special meeting on Wednesday, August 30, 2023 in the Bermuda Room, Richmond Memorial Auditorium, 403 Civic Center Plaza, Richmond, CA 94804.