



**CITY OF OAKLAND
REIMAGINING PUBLIC SAFETY TASK FORCE
(REGULAR MEETING)**

Meeting Minutes (Draft)

Wednesday, January 6, 2021

6:00 PM

Via Teleconference

1. Roll Call and Determination of Quorum

Co-Chairs Councilmember Bas and Councilmember Taylor.

The meeting began at 6:02pm.

Task Force members present: Anne Marks, David Kakishiba, Antoine Towers, Brooklyn Williams, Mariano Contreras, Keisha Henderson, Reygan Cunningham, James Burch, Pat Kernighan, Gus Newport, John Jones III, Brenda Roberts, Carol Wyatt, Nikki Dinh, Ivan Garcia, and Losaline Moa.

Task Force members absent: Member Ginale Harris was absent at the time of roll call, Ms. Harris joined the meeting at approximately 6:44pm, during Item 3.

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes

The draft meeting minutes of December 9, 2020 were approved by: Anne Marks, David Kakishiba, Antoine Towers, Brooklyn Williams, Mariano Contreras, Keisha Henderson, Reygan Cunningham, James Burch, Pat Kernighan, Gus Newport, John Jones III, Brenda Roberts, Carol Wyatt, Ginale Harris, Nikki Dinh, Ivan Garcia, and Losaline Moa.

Absent: Member Ginale Harris was absent at the time of the approval of meeting minutes, Ms. Harris joined the meeting at approximately 6:44pm, during Item 3.

3. Opening Statements

Co-Chairs Councilmember Bas and Councilmember Taylor, and Task Force members Losaline Moa and Ivan Garcia provided opening and framing remarks.

Member John Jones III made a motion, seconded by Member Ginale Harris, to modify the order of the remainder of the agenda as follows: Item 6 Racial Equity Presentation, Item 7 Discussion of Grounding Principles of the Reimagining Public Safety Task Force, Item 4 Public Comment, and Item 5 Presentation and Discussion on Reimagining Public Safety and Racial Equity.

The motion was approved by the following vote:

Maker of Motion: John Jones III

Second: Ginale Harris

Aye: Antoine Towers, Keisha Henderson, Reygan Cunningham, John Jones III, Brenda Roberts, Carol Wyatt, Ginale Harris, and Losaline Moa.

No: Anne Marks, David Kakishiba, Brooklyn Williams, Mariano Contreras, James Burch, Nikki Dinh, and Ivan Garcia.

Abstain: Pat Kernighan and Gus Newport.

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The agenda items were taken in the order listed below:

4. Racial Equity Presentation – Darlene Flynn, Director, Department of Race & Equity

Darlene Flynn, Director of the City of Oakland’s Department of Race and Equity, provided a presentation about systemic racism, racial equity, and the public safety-related findings from the Equity Indicators Report from 2018.

5. Discussion of Grounding Principles of the Reimagining Public Safety Task Force

a) Presentation of the Draft Recommendations Template

b) Review and discussion of each principle proposed by five Task Force members

c) Review and discussion of additional principles suggested

d) Poll of Task Force members

Co-Facilitator Anand Subramanian with PolicyLink presented the draft recommendations template document that was co-created by the Advisory Board co-chairs and Work Group leads. The template was created with the idea that each recommendation will be evaluated and analyzed as described by the criteria in the template.

Co-Facilitator David Muhammad with the National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform presented the proposed guiding principles that have were proposed by a group of five Task Force members and from three other Task Force members.

Member John Jones III emphasized that public safety involves many issues beyond policing and that the safety and needs of community members who don’t have a voice at Council or other public meetings must also be taken into consideration.

Member Carol Wyatt stated that the issue of cannabis businesses being targeted by robberies, and other crimes of survival, need to be considered as well.

Member Antoine Towers stated that the recommendations and solutions need to be grounded in the criteria that the Task Force identifies.

Member Ginale Harris emphasized that those impacted by violence, particularly Black residents in East Oakland Council Districts 5, 6, and 7, must be centered. She also described findings from the 2020 poll conducted by the Oakland Chamber of Commerce.

Member Anne Marks described the guiding principles that she developed and proposed to the Task Force.

Member Mariano Contreras stated that he agrees with each of the principles proposed by the group of five Task Force members and emphasized that the Task Force must be focused on what will keep communities safe; he also expressed concern about public statements made by the Oakland Police Officer’s Association and Police Department

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suggesting that if the Task Force recommends reallocating funds away from the Police Department that community safety will be negatively impacted.

Member Keisha Henderson asked Member Anne Marks to clarify her recommendation to the Draft Concepts and Ideas that sworn officers should not respond to a cold call such as a burglary. Member Anne Marks clarified that if the police function of a sworn officer taking a report on a crime that has already occurred could perhaps be done by an alternative mechanism, allowing sworn officers to spend their time on other matters. Member Keisha Henderson shared a personal experience to illustrate why in some cases it is necessary for a sworn officer to be involved in the intake and investigation of a burglary or other incident.

Member Reygan Cunningham asked Member Anne Marks to clarify her proposed principle that “estimated cost savings from Police budget reduction must first be directed towards a suitable alternative response prior to being invested in an alternative solution that addresses a different need” and that “estimated cost savings from a police budget reduction should address any resulting public safety gap” – is the recommendation that violence prevention and intervention should also be included in that? Task Force member Marks responded that she meant that if there is an intervention that is proposed to be eliminated, that exact function does not necessarily need to be replicated by another agency or organization, the purpose or function of an intervention could be accomplished in other ways.

Member James Burch read the proposed guiding principles submitted by the Defund Coalition into the record: 1) imagination and visioning, 2) reinvestment and restoration, 3) racial equity, 4) accountability, 5) expertise, and 6) data driven and fact based.

Member Pat Kernighan clarified that she was the one submitted the idea/concept that sworn officers should not respond to a cold case burglary, she was envisioning an ordinary burglary in these instances and proposes that rather than a sworn officer, the department can send a police technician who can take the report and fingerprints, but this would only be for a garden-variety burglary. Member Pat Kernighan also emphasized the importance of having new services in place to substitute for policing in a thoughtful/careful manner so that as police services are phased-out there are adequate, effective new services and alternatives in place. She stated that implementation will take time, but recommended flexibility around how new services are tested, in order to allow for more rapid implementation. Lastly, Member Kernighan stated that she supports the guiding principles that have been proposed, including those proposed by the Defund Coalition, and doesn't see these principles as conflicting.

Task Force member John Jones III stated that he agrees with the principles proposed by the Defund Coalition, but the larger issue is that the people who live in District 5, 6, and 7 are not being properly engaged. Member Jones emphasized that the lived experience of those most heavily impacted by violence must be weighted just as heavily as data in informing the recommendations.

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Member Brooklyn Williams stated that all Task Force members should share the same goal of a safer Oakland. In addition, she requested clarification of the principle “police reductions will only be made when a suitable alternative is in place that is proven to offer an equivalent or better impact on public safety” – what is meant by equivalent or better? Task Force member Ginale Harris responded that the notion of “defunding” needs to include a replacement for what is being defunded, and that these alternatives need to be clearly defined and supported in practice, to ensure they will have the intended impact.

Member Antione Towers emphasized that the solutions that are recommended need to be able to allow for an appropriate level of enforcement that also accounts for a variety of situations.

Member Brooklyn Williams further clarified that her question is how will the Task Force define what is “equivalent or better”? In addition, some members have expressed dissatisfaction with the current level of services provided, therefore maybe the alternatives must be “better” rather than “equivalent”?

Councilmember Taylor agreed that the principles as presented are not specific enough to provide the rubric needed to determine if something is equivalent or better, but this is permissible because it’s meant to be a guiding principle – to obtain the more specific rubric, the Task Force can direct the Alternates Advisory Board to define how to measure equivalence and what metrics should be used. In addition, the “equivalence” aspect could be removed, given that many community members do not feel safe currently.

Member Carol Wyatt stated that she agrees with the guiding principles that have been proposed, but that the Task Force needs the tools, data and facts to know what the current situation is in order to provide informed policy recommendations.

Member Anne Marks requested if a comments section could be added to the poll so that members could provide explanation for their votes, in addition she requested that the additional principles read into the record by Member James Burch from the Defund Coalition could also be added to the poll.

Co-Facilitator David Muhammad stated that for those reasons the poll would likely be revised and re-sent to the Task Force.

Member Mariano Contreras observed that public engagement is mentioned at many Task Force meetings, and that despite each member representing a different constituency, likely 80-90% of community voices are likely missing from the conversation. Member Contreras stated it is critical to hear from all community members.

Co-Facilitator David Muhammad confirmed that poll would be revised and re-sent to the Task Force, which will also allow for public comment to be heard prior to poll being taken by the Task Force members. The results will be tabulated and shared with the Task Force, as well as published to the website.

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6. Public Comment

There were seventeen (17) public speakers for Public Comment.

7. Presentation and Discussion on Reimagining Public Safety and Racial Equity

Member James Burch provided a presentation about police spending, the City's budgetary challenges, Oakland Police Department overtime spending, and the #DefundOPD campaign. The presentation also included studies which found that investment in housing, health and healthy living, and youth programs, reentry programs, parks and recreation can lead to reductions violent crime.

Member Ginale Harris requested that the cities/locations in which the studies in the presentation were conducted be provided, and that the Task Force should keep in mind that programs that worked elsewhere may not work as well in Oakland.

Member Gus Newport stated that he appreciated the presentation, as Mayor of Berkeley he led the reorganization of Berkeley's Police Department in 1979 after the passage of Proposition 13, and it was a combination of this type of research as well as community engagement that enabled the City to develop a master plan. Member Newport also stated that the entire city must be examined, not just the police department, including an assessment of which police functions could be performed by other departments.

Member Brenda Roberts shared that police officers have the ability to defer overtime for use at a later date, allowing cadets to bank overtime for use at a later point in their career when they are likely to be earning a higher salary, this was included in an audit she led as Oakland City Auditor. Additionally, law enforcement on the west coast is more expensive than the east coast as a result of labor negotiations between cities and unions over the years and the associated costs stemming from pensions and other liabilities. Member Brenda Roberts also stated that addressing this will require negotiating with unions, and this must be considered from a realistic standpoint, and that reasonable milestones should be created for the short-, middle-, and long-term.

Member Nikki Dinh shared that as a member of the Safety and Public Services Oversight Commission (SSOC), she has heard a lot of Oakland-specific data, and although there are some gaps due to underfunding of the non-profits that work in Oakland, this does provide some insight into what is working in Oakland. This information can be found on the SSOC website.

Member Antoine Towers expressed that he would like to see more details and information around alternative solutions to what was shared in the presentation.

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Member Ivan Garcia asked how the Task Force should begin to talk about the solutions and begin the reimagining process, because it seems as though they cannot move forward without these solutions. He would like the Alternates Advisory Board to provide an update on what is being formulated, and that this direction is needed in order for the Task Force to progress forward.

Member Brooklyn Williams described the importance of sharing and valuing individual experience, while also being able to consider the big picture.

Member Losaline Moa expressed that “defunding the police” can mean many things, but to her is not about abolition but about investing in communities and refunding root causes that have led to violence.

Member James Burch clarified that the Defund Movement does not want to defund violent crime response, rather it recognizes that 10% of funding is currently spent on violent crime, and that there are tasks being done by the Police Department that could be done by another department or agency. In addition, he stated that he would share the PowerPoint presentation with the Task Force which included the studies and data that he compiled, and other resources as well.

Member Keisha Henderson clarified that she is in support of funding the community, and that it is critical to continue sharing personal experiences.

Councilmember Bas stated that all would probably agree about wanting the public safety system to work better, and if the City is only spending 6-10% on violent crime, given the spike in violent crime during the pandemic, we need to figure out how police can focus on violent crime, which they are best trained to do, while safely transitioning other police functions such as minor traffic stops, noise, non-violent/non-criminal calls, out of the police department.

Councilmember Taylor agreed that focus on the transition plan will be important later in the process; additionally, the Task Force should consider the aspect of where in the “equity stream” each recommendation and intervention will have an impact and the biggest challenge will be moving safely from downstream to upstream – i.e., how to shift resources and tasks in a safe manner.

8. Open Forum

There were six (6) public speakers for Open Forum.

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9. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11:10pm.