

Great Falls Crime Task Force

Purpose

The purpose of the Great Falls Crime Task Force will be to evaluate crime issues in our community and produce detailed actionable recommendations on how to reduce crime in Great Falls.

The primary focus of the recommendations will be on how Great Falls law-enforcement and the local criminal justice system can better protect and serve our community and citizenry and help ensure that we are safe in our persons and in our property.

The report and recommendations will be presented to the public, the Great Falls City Commission, and the City Manager for further action.

Members

Task force members will be individuals with expertise and experience in local law enforcement and local criminal justice system.

I suggest the following:

1. GFPD representative – (Dave Bowen has indicated an interest in serving on the task force)
2. CCSO representative - (Sheriff Slaughter has indicated an interest in serving on the task force)
3. Local criminal justice system representative – (a judge or prosecutor etc.)
4. Local business representative – (Chamber member or downtown business owner)
5. Local citizen safety advocate – (Sandra Guynn, president of local Crimestoppers and Chair of NHC 4 as well as Council of Councils, has indicated an interest in serving on the task force)
6. City legal staff?
7. City senior administrator (Chuck Anderson?)

My original thought was to form the task force primarily from City staff in order to ensure that the work would be done in a timely, serious and accountable way. That may not be the most practical or effective way to determine members, so we'll need to make sure the people on the task force are committed and able to devote the time necessary.

Some other possible members to consider would be representatives from the American Indian community, a local retired or State Legislator, and City finance.

I think it would be important to have a City employee serve as task force administrator/communications person, not as a member but as staff.

A City Commissioner, possibly two, could participate as ex-officio task force members.

It's my opinion that the City Manager should appoint/invite task force members with recommendations from the City Commission.

Process

Once the task force is in place they will choose a Chairman and Vice Chair etc. and determine their meeting schedule, based on the timeline given to complete their work.

Task force meetings should be public with the option of executive sessions if necessary to discuss legally private or sensitive options.

The task force may want to hold public forums from time to time and implement other ways to gather public input.

In addition the task force will probably want to invite input, written and in-person, from a large variety of community organizations and individuals who have knowledge and experience in local crime issues and causes.

Scope

The work of the task force and the recommendations it puts forward need to be narrowly focused on what the community, City Commission, and City administration can actually do in real terms. Broad, vague suggestions about how to solve mental health problems, addiction, homelessness, and poverty should not be within the purview of the Great Falls Crime Task Force. There are already multiple local agencies that address these issues.

The criteria for task force recommendations should be simple:

- What specific change in policy, personnel or other resources are you recommending?
- Does it fall within the power of the community, Great Falls City Commission, or a City department to make that change?
- How much will it cost and how will it be paid for?
- What is the anticipated impact of the recommendation on the goal of reducing crime and making the community safer?

For example, rather than a recommendation that states: **“We need more mental health facilities in Great Falls.”**, a recommendation that meets the above criteria would be something like: **“The task force recommends that the City Manager approves the hiring of one FTE to**

help the GFPD coordinate with local mental health organizations in order to free up 100 hours of police officer time. The cost of the FTE would be \$50,000 annually to come out of the general fund.”

The focus of the task force on locally actionable recommendations suggests that the following areas of concerns will be considered:

- More officers on the street and other LE related staffing needs
- More jail space, alternative sentencing/incarceration options
- GFPD policies and priorities
- Designated City resources/personnel to lobby for state and federal resources and/or policy/laws (DEA funding, state criminal code etc.)
- City code changes
- Public communications
- Citizen involvement (Neighborhood Watch etc.)
- Other criminal justice system needs (judges, prosecutors etc.)

Timeline

Because safety is the first priority of city government and public officials this should be considered an urgent matter.

I suggest that a resolution authorizing the City Manager to appoint/invite members to form a Great Falls Crime Task Force be considered and passed by the City Commission at either the April 6, or April 20 city commission meeting and that the task force begin its work in April.

I suggest a deadline of 3 – 6 months for the task force to complete its work and present its report and recommendations. That would allow for the community, the City Commission, and City Manager to begin considering and acting on, or not acting on, the recommendations by late summer or early fall of 2021.

City Commissioner Rick Tryon