

Regular Crime Task Force Meeting

Civic Center, 2 Park Drive South,  
Gibson Room 212, Great Falls, MT

**CALL TO ORDER:** Chairperson Sandra Guynn called the meeting to order at 4:00 P.M.

**ROLL CALL:** Great Falls Crime Task Force Members (TFM) present: Sandra Guynn, Nicole Griffith, Jeff Newton, Sara Sexe and Dugan Coburn. Also present was Ex-officio TFM Rick Tryon. Jesse Slaughter was absent. Shane Etwiler arrived at 4:18 p.m. and John Parker arrived at 4:43 p.m.

Chairperson Guynn announced that Shawna Jarvey resigned due to work obligations.

**RECOGNITION OF STAFF:** City Manager Greg Doyon, Police Captain Rob Moccasin, Police Lt. Mike Grubb, Deputy City Attorney Jeff Hindoien and Deputy City Clerk Darcy Dea.

#### **TASK FORCE AGENDA ITEMS**

**1. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES, JULY 26, 2021, GREAT FALLS CRIME TASK FORCE.**

**TFM Sexe moved, seconded by Vice-Chairperson Newton, that the CTF approve the meeting minutes of July 26, 2021.**

Chairperson Guynn asked if there was any discussion amongst the TFM or comments from the public. Hearing none, Chairperson Guynn called for the vote.

Motion carried 5-0.

**2. BRIEFING FROM GREAT FALLS PRE-RELEASE CENTER.**

Great Falls Pre-Release Services, Inc. Executive Director Alan Scanlon reported the screening process that determines whether an individual is accepted into the Pre-Release Center is a very thorough process. An individual completing the six-month program correctly, leaves the Pre-Release Center with \$5,000 that they have saved up, has a sponsor, a place to live, a job, all fines, fees, child support and restitution are paid and is established in a treatment program. An individual released from prison and not sent to the Pre-Release, leaves with \$100 (gate money), does not have a job, a place to live and is not enrolled in a treatment program. The Pre-Release Re-Entry Services Program helps individuals become productive members of society and provides community safety.

Executive Director Scanlon explained that individuals who reoffend after being released from prison and are sentenced to the Pre-Release Center might be more difficult to manage because they are not appreciative of the Pre-Release Center. There has been a big push

for years to not put individuals in prison because prisons are overcrowded, short-staffed and expensive.

Chairperson Guynn received clarification that residents who escape from the Pre-Release Center may not receive additional time to their sentence and that there are relatively no consequences if caught.

Ex-officio TFM Tryon received clarification that the Great Falls Pre-Release Center has an approximate 200 male, female, state and federal capacity. The Pre-Release Center is currently not at capacity due to COVID-19. The Department of Corrections stopped intake and the City-County Health Department ordered the facility to lock down due to an outbreak. The majority of individuals sentenced to the Great Falls Pre-Release Center are local residents.

Executive Director Scanlon explained that the screening criteria for the Great Falls Pre-Release Center is very rigid. The Pre-Release attempts not to accept violent offenders or individuals who might be a threat to staff or the community. The Great Falls Pre-Release implemented a sex-offender treatment plan with safeguards in place because the waiting list in the Montana State Prison for treatment is so long that offenders may be untreated before returning to the community.

TFM Etwiler received clarification that the passing of the 2017 Justice Reinvestment Act allowed for criminals to stay in the community rather than being incarcerated and makes it so there are no consequences for bad behavior.

**3. PROJECT SAFE NEIGHBORHOODS (PSN).**

Vice-Chairperson Newton explained that the Department of Justice (DOJ) Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) program consists of a collaborative team of federal, state, local and tribal partners. The PSN program is a strategic plan for investigating, prosecuting and preventing violent crime in the respective districts. The PSN program is a three-year grant awarded by the DOJ and funding allocations are based on crime data from each respective municipality or area to include population.

Vice-Chairperson Newton explained that the Great Falls Police Department and Cascade County Sheriff's Office currently collaborate with other federal, state and local partners with regard to a Violent Crimes Prevention Task Force.

TFM Sexe received clarification that if the Crime Task Force has a specific recommendation working within the goals and objectives of the PSN grant, there would be potential to obtain some of the PSN grants to supplement the Crime Task Force.

Vice-Chairperson Newton further explained that currently there are local Task Force Officers (TFO) with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF). The advantage of TFOs is that they are certified to access federal databases and local law enforcement

are not certified. TFOs provide law enforcement other avenues and options with regard to pursuing criminal cases.

Great Falls is the hub for the Big Sky Safe Trails Task Force Program, established nationwide in 1994 and locally in 2019. The program is a partnership between the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and other federal, state, local and tribal law enforcement that work together to combat the growth of crime in Indian country. The program allows participating agencies to increase investigative coordination in Indian country to target violent crime, drugs, gangs and gaming violations.

Ex-officio TFM Tryon received clarification that the Police Department has started to formulate draft recommendations with regard to PSN.

**4. TASK FORCE DISCUSSION ON FOCUS AREAS.**

Human Resources Training/Development Coordinator Mark Willmarth commented that processing all of the information that was presented has been overwhelming and finding solutions to crime is a huge task for the CTF. The CTF recommendations need to have the most impact on crime, be financially feasible, specific, actionable and within the purview and authority of the City. Training/Development Coordinator Willmarth suggested that each TFM list two or three priorities that they view as key areas with regard to addressing crime in Great Falls and why they are making certain recommendations.

TFM Etwiler's priorities included:

- Drug trafficking
- Leverage Neighborhood Councils to educate community and businesses and reinstate the Neighborhood Watch Program
- Consequences for criminal activity

TFM Sexe's priorities included:

- Public education - including the City's financial limitations with regard to enforcing the law to prevent crime (CARES Act Provider Relief Funds)
- Enforcement and capacity issues
- Public safety levy
- Making better use of existing partners

Vice-Chairperson Newton's priorities included:

- Enforcement
- Education
- Community Involvement
- Partnerships

Ex-officio TFM Tryon's priorities included:

- City-level resources for the Criminal Justice system (local judicial and corrections)
- Collaboration
- Public education and communication
- Consequences

TFM Griffith's priorities included:

- Public education
- Resources to law enforcement to continue and support existing efforts
- Victim Witness Services

TFM Coburn's priorities included:

- Public Service Announcements (PSA)
- Community Involvement

TFM Parker's priorities included:

- Victim Witness Services
- Pretrial Services
- Early intervention

Chairperson Guynn received clarification that the Montana State Legislature examines a County's Public Safety Assessments (PSA) with regard to becoming a pilot county for Pretrial Services. She further received clarification that the Police Department is currently utilizing volunteers as much as possible within the limits of what they are capable of doing.

Training/Development Coordinator Willmarth suggested that the TFM reflect about what the CTF collectively agrees are recommendations.

Chairperson Guynn expressed concerned about the flow of drugs sent through the postal system. She explained that two Postal Inspectors in Montana is not enough to intercept packages that might contain drugs. She mentioned that Manager Doyon had suggested that the CTF request that the City Commission consider, by either a letter or resolution, requesting resources from federal or state agencies with regard to hiring an additional Postal Inspector.

Referring to the TFM list of priorities, Manager Doyon explained that there might not be an immediate impact to one area; however, the CTF could make a recommendation to the City Commission to advise policy makers that crime is a concern in Great Falls.

TFM Etwiler commented that communication and education are key. He suggested that a way to notify citizens of steps they could take to reduce crime would be a Communication Specialist or PSA sent in utility bills.

Training/Development Coordinator Willmarth suggested that the CTF consider the four categories and determine other priorities that could be included under those categories. The list of priorities need to have an explanation, be specific and actionable. The CTF should determine what priorities they are willing to put time and energy into that will have an impact, as well as consider short and long-term recommendations. He provided a handout to the TFM that has a list of questions to use as a guide.

TFM concurred to consider the following list of priorities and to determine what could be included under the four categories.

- Resources for the Criminal Justice System (including Victim Witness Assistance Services and Mental Health Services)
- Consequences
- Collaboration/Partnership (Mental Health Services)
- Education

#### **MISCELLANEOUS REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM TASK FORCE.**

TFM Etwiler commented that collaborating with other entities in the community and state, if not already doing so, is important in order to leverage their resources.

TFM Griffith mentioned that the United Way of Cascade County has access to several community partners and she would like to utilize it as a resource.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT.**

**Joan Redeen**, Business Improvement District, presented the 2021 Downtown Safety Alliance Safety Plan and Achievements. She encouraged attendance at the Downtown Safety Alliance meetings held at 9:00 AM on the first Tuesday of every month at 509 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue South.

#### **DISCUSSION ON UPCOMING MEETING DATES.**

Chairperson Guynn announced that the next scheduled CTF meeting would be on August 23, 2021 at 4:00 p.m. in the Gibson Room.

**ADJOURNMENT.**

There being no further business to come before the CTF, TFM Sexe moved, seconded by TFM Coburn to adjourn the **regular meeting of August 9, 2021, at 6:13 p.m.**

Motion carried 7-0.

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Sandra Guynn, Chairperson

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Acting Secretary – Deputy City Clerk Darcy Dea

Minutes Approved: August 23, 2021