

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 4:04 P.M.

Due to the COVID-19 health concerns, the format of the Task Force meeting was held in a virtual video-conferencing environment with some Task Force members and City staff attending the meeting via a remote location using Zoom.

ROLL CALL/STAFF INTRODUCTIONS: Great Falls Crime Task Force Members (TFM) present: Sandra Guynn, Sara Sexe, Jeff Newton, Shane Etwiler and Ex-Officio TFM Rick Tryon. TFM participating electronically via Zoom Webinar: Dugan Coburn, John Parker, and Nichole Griffith.

City Staff present: Greg Doyon. City Staff participating electronically via Zoom Webinar: Jeff Hindoien

City Clerk Lisa Kunz was present in the Commission Chambers.

To honor the Right of Participation and the Right to Know (Article II, Sections 8 and 9 of the Montana Constitution), modifications have also been made for public participation as follows:

- Attend the virtual meeting utilizing Zoom Webinar. Attendees must register in advance for the Commission Meeting. After registering, a confirmation email will be sent containing information about joining the webinar by Zoom.
- Attend in person. Public may view and participate in the meeting from the Gibson Room. Please refrain from attending in person if you are not feeling well.
- Call-in. The public may call in during specific public comment periods at 406-761-4786. All callers will be in a queued system and are asked to remain on hold and be patient. Calls will be taken in the order in which they are received. Callers will be restricted to customary time limits. We ask for your patience in the event there are technical difficulties.
- Provide public comments in writing. Comments may be sent via mail to City Manager's Office, PO Box 5021, Great Falls MT 59403 or by email to: kartis@greatfallsmt.net. Include the agenda item or agenda item number in the subject line, and include the name of the commenter and either an address or whether the commenter is a city resident. Please ensure that comments arrive before 12:00 PM on Monday, September 27, 2021. Due to tracking and dissemination requirements, written communication must be received by that time in order to be shared with the Task Force and appropriate City staff for consideration during the agenda item and before final vote on the matter; and, will be so noted in the official record of the meeting.

Chairperson Guynn reported that she received no comments or corrections after submitting the updated recommendations to the TFM after the September 13, 2021 meeting.

TASK FORCE AGENDA ITEMS

1. **APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES, SEPTEMBER 13, 2021, GREAT FALLS CRIME TASK FORCE.**

Chairperson Guynn moved, seconded by TFM Sexe, that the CTF approve the meeting minutes of September 13, 2021 as amended:

**Last sentence of the Minutes page 2021.48/Agenda Packet page 5 and first paragraph of the Minutes page 2021.49/Agenda Packet page 6:
Change 6b to 6g**

**Fourth paragraph under the category “Communication and Education” of the Minutes page 2021.49/Agenda Packet page 6:
strike “move 5 and also”**

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 7-0.

2. **TASK FORCE DISCUSSION ON DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS.**

Chairperson Guynn commented that at the end of the last meeting the TFM agreed to consider changing the language of the draft recommendations on page 5, Item 1d of the Consequences section, after a resident called in about the needle drop for illicit drugs.

It was the consensus of the TFM to change the language of Item 1d under “Consequences” to read: Drug paraphernalia – the city should never allow safe injection sites, illegal drug needle drops or needle exchange.

Consequences (beginning with Item 3)

After TFM discussion on the items under this category, the TFM agreed as follows:

Item 3 – remove “January 2022” and replace with “as soon as possible during the first six-months of 2022.”

TFM were in agreement with the recommendations set forth in Items 4 and 6 as written.

Item 5 – delete in its entirety.

Item 7 – delete the last sentence.

TFM Parker moved, seconded by TFM Newton, to strike a, b and c under Item 1 of the Consequences section.

After lengthy discussion pertaining to the language as written inferring panhandling, loitering and public nuisance are criminal offenses, Title 45 of Montana Code Annotated versus what the City can revise in Title 9 Public Peace, Morals and Welfare section of the City Code, proactive safety measures in collaboration with downtown organizations to deal with panhandling, loitering and public nuisance at a root cause level, and education versus consequences, Chairperson Guynn called for the vote.

Motion carried 4-3 (TFM Etwiler, Sexe and Guynn dissenting).

After further discussion, it was the consensus of the TFM to add non-criminal panhandling, loitering and public nuisance as Item 2e under the Communication and Education section.

Partnerships and Collaboration

After TFM discussion on the items under this category, the TFM agreed as follows:

Item 1 – edit the first sentence to read: We recommend that the City Commission begin taking the necessary legal steps, as soon as possible during the first six-months of 2022, such as through zoning, public referendum or other measures to prevent the coming proliferation of recreational marijuana shops in Great Falls.

TFM Parker noted that, because of his position in the judicial branch, he would be abstaining from all discussion and votes pertaining to enforcement measures.

Item 2 – edit the first sentence to read: We recommend that the City Commission and City Manager identify and assign a city representative or department, as soon as possible during the first six-months of 2022, to devise and implement an ongoing lobbying and communications strategy with State and Federal elected and other officials to coordinate state, local and federal crime prevention measures.

Strike “Stacy Zinn” from the last bullet point.

Item 3 – strike the word “continually.”

Item 4 – edit section a) to read: If state funding is approved, we recommend that the City Manager assess and report to the City Commission on the details and options for implementing the Pre-Trial Services Program.

Item 5 – edit the beginning of the sentence to read: “We recommend that the City of Great Falls reach out to other educational partners, such as Great Falls Public Schools, MSU-B, Great Falls College-MSU and others to support education programs” . . .

Item 6 – edit the first sentence to read: We recommend to continue working with the Department of Justice and Project Safe Neighborhoods, the cost of which is grant dependent.

Item 7 – include the words “Criminal Justice System” (CJS) in the first sentence.

Item 8 - delete the paragraph in its entirety beginning with “Currently, the GFPD does not . . .”

Item 9 – move the first sentence to the Communication and Education section as Item 1f, and strike the question.

Item 10 – edit the beginning of the sentence to read: “We recommend continued support” . . .

Item 11 – edit the first sentence to read: We recommend continuing to work with Veteran’s Court, and Mental Health, Drug and Juvenile Drug Treatment Courts . . .

TFM were in agreement with the recommendations set forth in Item 12 as written.

Item 13 - include a second sentence to read: “The Community Impact Study could help with this.” Delete the remainder of this item beginning with “Sheriff Slaughter . . . relationships.”

Chairperson Guynn asked if there was any further recommendations, corrections or amendments to the Great Falls City Crime Task Force Draft Recommendations. No one responded.

TFM Sexe moved, seconded by TFM Newton, that the Great Falls City Crime Task Force compile the recommendations as discussed today and submit those to the City Commission.

Chairperson Guynn asked if there was any further discussion amongst the TFM.

TFM Sexe noted reading some of the submitted written comments and clarified that the recommendations are not in any particular order or priority.

TFM Etzwiler thanked the public and the organizations that participated in this process and in particular the Downtown Safety Alliance and Downtown Great Falls Association and other groups that have provided input.

Chairperson Guynn asked if there were any comments from the public.

Participating via Zoom was:

Reverend Stephen Underwood, City resident and Pastor of Central Christian Church,

applauded the task force for striking the panhandling, loitering and public nuisance language from the Consequences category of the draft recommendations. Patrons and proprietors of City business do not possess a special right of freedom from discomfort that supersedes the right of unsheltered people to exist in public and conduct activities necessary to their survival. He implored the task force to remember that the City of Great Falls has the same obligation to serve and protect its homeless residents as it does the patrons and proprietors of its businesses.

Pastor Underwood objected to the recommendation that the City never allow the harm reduction measures of syringe exchanges or safe injection sites. It has been apparent to the experts that addiction, in particular Opioid addiction, is a disease and not a matter of morals. Not only do syringe exchanges curtail the spread of HIV, Hepatitis C, and more among intravenous drug users, they also help reduce drug use. Addiction thrives on shame and harm reduction is the first step in breaking through the shame of addiction. Pastor Underwood concluded that criminalizing harm reduction measures would be a grave mistake resulting in the exact opposite of its intended effect.

There being no one further to address the CTF, Chairperson Guynn called for the vote.

Motion carried 7-0.

Ex-Officio TFM Tryon commented that, although addressing poverty, homelessness, mental health and addiction are important and worthy goals, they are not and should not be the primary focus or mission of local law enforcement or the local criminal justice system. The most important priority is to protect the lives, property and the safety of law abiding, tax paying citizens and not to ensure that criminals get all of the help they need. That responsibility falls to other entities and agencies.

Ex-Official TFM Tryon expressed appreciation to the TFM for their contributions and public service rendered the City of Great Falls in this effort.

TFM expressed appreciation to Chairperson Guynn.

TFM Guynn responded that she appreciated the opportunity to sit on this task force and serve as the Chair.

City Manager Greg Doyon reported on next steps: the recommendations would be consolidated into an appropriate format to be received by the City Commission; once consolidated, Chairperson Guynn will review for accuracy; and then the TFM will be invited to present the task force activities to the Commission at a work session. At that point, he will ask the Commission to formally accept the document at a Commission meeting. There has been a tremendous amount of work done, which the Commission will very much appreciate. Staff will review the recommendations to consider the resources the departments may need in order to carry out recommendations, the timeframe to carry out recommendations, and for policy or code changes that would be required as a result of recommendations.

Manager Doyon expressed appreciation to all of the task force members.

MISCELLANEOUS REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM TASK FORCE.

None.

PUBLIC COMMENT.

Written communication was received from:

Gordon Whirry, City resident, expressing support of addressing the root causes of mental health issues and drug treatment rather than a “tough on crime” agenda.

ADJOURNMENT.

There being no further business to come before the CTF, TFM Sexe moved, seconded by TFM Guynn to adjourn the **regular meeting of September 27, 2021, at 6:01 p.m.**

Motion carried 7-0.

Sandra Guynn, Chairperson

Acting Secretary – City Clerk Lisa Kunz

Minutes Approved via individual review by the TFM.