

Criminal Justice Advisory Committee Minutes August 25, 2020

**Members Present:** Jesse Battle, Ben Haas, Ben Rose, Jodi Miller, Melinda Thompson-King, Dawn Baxton, Deborah Williams, Gudrun Parmer, Eric Johnson, Syretta Hill, Lao Rubert, O’Mar Taylor, Amelia Davis, Satana Deberry, Wendy Jacobs, Joseph Laizure

**Members Excused:** Rodney Jenkins

**Members Absent:** Alexander Williams, Don Baker, Shamieka Rhinehart,

**Staff:** Kelley Waggy, Christie Long, Roshanna Parker, Marc Strange, Demetrius Lynn

**Welcome and Introductions**

Meeting was called to order at 4:00pm, CJAC Chair Lao Rubert welcomed everyone and asked those present to introduce themselves.

**Review and Approve June Minutes**

Chair Lao Rubert asked the committee to review the minutes and minutes were approved.

**Governor’s Task Force on Racial Equity in Criminal Justice (TREC)**

Lao Rubert shared that the Governor had established this statewide task force that is currently seeking input from the community. Lao Rubert shared her hope that CJAC would submit recommendations for consideration and discussed her proposal that had also been shared prior to the meeting:

1. There is a need for funding for mental health and substance abuse treatment as well as housing through a stable funding stream for local programs, along with Medicaid expansion.

2. We have worked hard in Durham County to ensure that poverty is not the reason an individual remains in the county jail, we encourage bail reform statewide and funding for pretrial services to help decrease population. We also encourage data systems and evaluation to ensure that racial bias plays no role in pre-trial assessments and judicial decision making.

3. We know that people with mental illness are involved in as many as half of all fatal shootings by law enforcement, the national rate of fatal shootings of African Americans by police is higher than any other ethnic group and accurate data should be maintained. Funding is needed to divert individuals with mental illness from the Justice System when possible, funding for de-escalation training along with co-responder teams is need for when an individual cannot be diverted, and an officer is required to be on the scene.

4. We recommend that prisons provide linkages to reentry councils six months prior to release so returning citizens can begin to reengage with their communities and make realistic plans for housing and employment to return as citizens.

These recommendations were discussed by committee members who had the opportunity to add language as needed. The committee agreed that these were recommendations that addressed issues that the board had worked on for years. Lao and Gudrun will capture the provided suggestions and add to the document. The recommendations will be shared with TREC.

**New Members**

Syretta Hill and Deborah Williams introduced the new CJAC Members to the committee. Amelia Davis, Melinda Thompson-King and Dawn Baxton had been recently appointed by the BOCC. Melinda Thompson-King is the Regional Director of TASC, Dawn Baxton is the Chief Public Defender for District 14 and Amelia Davis, a psychiatrist at Carolina Behavioral Care, fills a citizen position.

Lao Rubert shared that her position, as the representative for the nonprofit sector, as well as Jesse Battle’s position, as a substance use treatment representative, needed to be voted on by CJAC. Jesse Battle is the Senior Director of Community Partnerships at TROSA and had been recommended by Kristen Rosselli. Lao Rubert asked for a motion to appoint Jesse Battle and herself to the above positions. The motion was made by Jodi Miller and seconded by Wendy Jacobs, all members approved.

**Update on Motions for Appropriate Relief**

Gudrun shared that D.A. Deberry had to step away from the meeting to handle an emergency. Motions for Appropriate Relief (MAR) is an effort taking place across the state with Durham County leading ahead. This effort takes a look at individual cases with the District Attorney’s Office bringing cases back in front of a judge for re-sentencing so individuals can be released sooner than originally sentenced. Funds have been raised through grants to assist the persons released early with all aspects of transition and reentry.

Demetrius Lynn shared that once individuals have been identified and released back to Durham County, the Local Reentry Council (LRC) steps in with an initial assessment and intake to see how the individuals can best be served. The LRC works in conjunction with Drew Doll with the Religious Coalition and Chuck Manning from the Welcome Home Program. They meet every Monday to discuss the individuals being released in hopes of making the transition as smooth as possible. Demetrius shared that they have had trouble with facility contacts and obtaining information from those facilities. He was able to speak with Ms. Wiggins with NC DPS about this issue and may have found a resolution. Durham partner agencies provide housing, employment assistance, supportive services, referral to the FIT program, referrals to StepUp Durham and any other resources a person may need for a seamless transition.

**Local Reentry Council**

Demetrius shared numbers for January 1 to June 30, 2020. The LRC has had 91 referrals and 70 intakes, 9 individuals gained employment, 12 individuals have received housing assistance, 17 individuals received transportation assistance, 3 individuals attended CDL training with 2 receiving their licenses. Demetrius shared that since July 1, 2020 hiring has picked up and 5 individuals have become employed with an average pay of $11.25 per hour.

**NC GARE**

Marc Strange shared that last October Durham County put together a team to start working with the Government Alliance on Race and Equity. The Durham County Cohort has developed three different prongs to looked at, with Criminal Justice Reform being one. The team is currently putting together data that identifies systemic racism. For example, in the 4th quarter of 2016-2017, 2,700 individuals were booked into the detention facility, in the 4th quarter of 2019-2020, 1,080 were booked. While these numbers show a huge decrease, it was noted there was no change in the fact that 72% of those individuals were African Americans. When looking at recidivism, the same reflection occurred: while 37% were repeat offenders, 74% were African American. The Cohort looks at these numbers, focuses on what the County can address and change, and is developing proposals.

**Updates on the Community Safety and Wellness Task Force**

Commissioner Jacobs shared that no action has been taken at this time. It had been discussed at a recent County/City meeting and she was asked to provide a liaison from the Board of Commissioners along with a city council member and a school board member. The discussions are ongoing.

**Meeting Adjourned at 5:21 pm**

**2020 Meeting Dates**

27 October 2020

29 December 2020- cancelled

**Next Meeting:** October 27, 2020, 4:00pm

Virtual Meeting