

**Criminal Justice Advisory Committee Minutes Tuesday, September 28, 2021**

**Members Present**: Gudrun Parmer, Lao Rubert, Nida Allam, Dawn Baxton, Ben Haas, Jodi Miller, Melinda King, Omar Taylor, Jesse Battle, Deborah Williams, Christine Patterson, Tom Cote, Walter Tate, Celeste Kelly, Eric Johnson, Syretta Hill, Ben Rose

**Members Excused:** Michael O'Foghludha,

**Members Absent:** Satana Deberry, Rod Jenkins, Pierce Freelon, Amelia Davis, Shamieka Rhinehart,

**Guests**: Marcia Owen, Xavier Cason, Dwayne Campbell, Ryan Smith, Kristen Patterson (for Rod Jenkins)

**Staff:** Demetrius Lynn, Marc Strange, Beth Steenberg

**Welcome and Introductions**

Chair Lao Rubert called the meeting to order and asked that all members take a moment to introduce themselves.

**Review and Approve July Minutes**

Chair Lao Rubert asked those in attendance to review the minutes. Ben Haas made a motion to approve the July minutes, Deborah Williams seconded, a unanimous vote approved the minutes.

**Mayors for Guaranteed Income Pilot (EXCEL)**

Syretta Hill shared her excitement and the unique fit of Step Up Durham as the program administrator for the Guaranteed Income Pilot. Syretta shared that change is ever-present as they move through this Pilot program. Step Up Durham has renamed the Pilot. It is now referred to as the program "Excel." It was noted that the usage of Guaranteed Income could be a trigger; as such, they rebranded it to fall more in line with current Step Up Durham program names. Syretta shared that only two programs work with formerly incarcerated individuals, the one in Durham and one out of Gainesville. Syretta expressed that she had been meeting with them, this program was established first, and as a result, some guidelines had already been set.

The guidelines are as follows: 115 randomly selected individuals receive $500.00 per month for one year. These funds are untaxed (gifted) and come with no strings attached. The first disbursement would go out in December 2021 and end in January 2023. Individuals must be residents of Durham City/County, 18 years or older with a 60% AMI and within five years of incarceration.

EXCEL is currently in the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process. The goal is to receive an approval within the next 45 days. Step Up has eligibility prescreen set up so that once they receive the green light, they can move forward quickly. Two hundred forty individuals have already completed the prescreen. The enrollment will consist of a survey that will take 30-60 minutes to complete. Provisions are in place for those with connectivity issues. Ebony, a newly hired staff member, will be the point person. Ebony will not be able to complete forms for individuals; she will be able to read the questions to the individual but will not be able to assist any further. The 115 randomly selected individuals will be referred to as EXCEL Participants. There will be another group of individuals who are referred to as EXCEL Partners. These individuals will receive $30.00 for each completed survey. The third group of individuals will not qualify to receive any funds. Syretta emphasized that all individuals are randomly selected. Each pilot city has a Fellow position attached. Interviews for this position will be held in the next week. The City is also providing a social worker to help participants make viable, informed decisions.

Syretta asked that committee members disseminate this information (stepupdurham.org/excel). Once EXCEL is permitted to move forward, Syretta will call a convening to update all on the progress.

**Person-First Language**

Commissioner Nida Allam shared that Gudrun Parmer had shared a resolution passed in the City of San Francisco advocating for the use of Person First Language. Commissioner Allam stated she modified the Resolution to apply to Durham and emailed it to the committee earlier that day.

Commissioner Allam shared the need to recognize the harmful impacts of institutionalization and the use of pejorative language when referring to formerly incarcerated people. Using such discriminatory language can be incredibly dehumanizing.

Commissioner Allam asked that the committee offer their support of this Resolution. With this support, the intention is to present this Resolution to the Board of County Commissioners. Jodi Miller added that she would work with Commissioner Allam to modify some of the language and finalize the Resolution.

The Criminal Justice Advisory Committee was in full preliminary support of the Resolution and looked forward to its implementation. Once the Resolution is finalized, it will be brought back to the committee for final endorsement.

**Safety and Wellness Task Force**

Co-Chair Xavier Cason shared that the Safety and Wellness Task Force is the brainchild of Durham County Commissioners, City Council, and the Board of Education. The first few meetings were spent community building as the subject matter is intense. Having a solid community and a complete understanding of their bylaws was important. The next quarter is dedicated to examining Durham residents' public safety and wellness needs, the education of residents on the existing safety and wellness resources, and finally providing recommendations on additional programs and enhancements for public safety and wellness. Four Roundtables have been established to gather data on the following: School Resource Officers, Violence Interruption, Crisis Intervention, and the Criminal Legal System.

Co-Chair Marcia Owen shared that the Roundtables mentioned above are held weekly and are open to the public. Key stakeholders from the areas of concern are invited to these Roundtables to gather the most accurate data.

**CJAC Member Appointments**

Ben Haas (Faith Community) and Syretta Hill (Employment Services) have reapplied for their current positions. Lao Rubert asked for a motion from the committee to reappoint both. Jodi Miller made a motion to reappoint Ben Haas and Syretta Hill for a 2-year term. The motion was seconded by Jesse Battle and unanimously approved by all members present.

**Local Reentry Council (LRC) Update**

Demetrius Lynn shared that the LRC is completing referrals and intakes. They have been able to hire a Case Manager to assist with all LRC tasks. There are currently two individuals working in temporary positions with the County, and the request to extend these assignments has been made.

The Local Reentry Council continues to navigate, build, and collaborate with the community to address the needs of reentrants, assisting two new transitional homes to become established in Durham County. Demetrius shared that four individuals will be attending forklift training through DTCC.

To raise the number of referrals, the staff directly reaches out to prison facilities utilizing a list of individuals scheduled to come home in the next 6 to 12 months. The staff is sending information and referral forms directly to the individuals on this list. Individuals are asked to complete the forms and return them to their caseworkers to help guide them.

**Member Updates**

- Eric Johnson shared that Alliance is expanding to Orange and Mecklenburg counties. The official start date in the expanded counties is 12/15/2021.

- Ben Rose shared that two new programs are coming to DSS: The Low-Income Homeowners Grant Program and The Low Income Energy Assistance Program.

- Commissioner Nida Allam shared that the NC Department of State Treasury states Durham County has $57 million in unclaimed funds. To investigate this, go to NCCASH.com

- Lao Rubert shared that the LRC Housing Committee applied to the City for ARP funding to provide housing support and additional housing. The Housing Committee was invited to complete a full application.

- Gudrun Parmer shared that Randy Tucker, a long-time Durham County employee, will retire on 09/30/2021 and provided his email for anyone who wanted to reach out to him.

**Upcoming Meeting Dates**

November 30, 2021

Meeting Adjourned 5:27 p.m.