



MINUTES
SPECIAL COMMISSION FOR SAFE COMMUNITIES - REGULAR SESSION
THURSDAY, JANUARY 25, 2024, 1:00 PM

The Special Commission for Safe Communities convened in regular session at 1:00 PM, January 25, 2024. called the meeting to order.

Roll Call

Attendee Name	Title	Status
Timothy Harris	Commissioner	Present
Scott Denton	Commissioner	Present
Aron Klein	Commissioner	Present
Cathy Lust	Commissioner	Present
Kaitlyn Selman	Commissioner	Present
Jay Shannon	Commissioner	Present
Elizabeth German	Commissioner	Absent

Staff Present: Commissioner Harris arrived at 13:29 hours.

Public Comment

Individuals wishing to provide emailed public comment must email comments to publiccomment@cityblm.org at least 15 minutes before the start of the meeting. Individuals wishing to speak in-person may register at cityblm.org/register at least 5 minutes before the start of the meeting.

Surena Fish Public Comment - Surena advised she was unable to locate the agenda or minutes from the previous meeting. She suggested setting a reminder to ensure there were no issues with the website.

Approval of Minutes

The following item was presented:

Item 4.A. Consideration and action to approve the Minutes of the December 28, 2023, Regular Special Commission for Safe Communities Meeting

Commissioner Klein made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Shannon, to approve the item as presented
Consideration and action to approve the Minutes of the December 28, 2023, Regular Special Commission for Safe Communities Meeting

directed the clerk to call roll:

AYES: Shannon; Selman; Lust; Klein; Denton

Motion carried (viva voce).

Regular Agenda

The following item was presented:

Item 5.A. Presentation and discussion by Jack McQueen on current and historical information on gun violence.

Mr. McQueen provided a historical summary of gun violence and the steps taken to reduce in the Bloomington Normal Area, and how gun violence differs today (Summarized).

In 2016, there were 222 incidents involving gun fire in the Bloomington Normal Area. There were 8 in 2015 and 56 in 2020, of which 21 people were shot and there were three homicides. During this time, 57 guns were seized from members of one group. At one point, five guns were located on one juvenile, but, despite multiple charges, he was released. Today, 23 of the 43 members of that group are incarcerated.

Over the last two to three years there has been a shift in gun violence and they appear to no longer be gang motivated. There are still gangs but they are unknown. Instead, individuals are settling personal quarrels immediately, with no need for approval from a gang hierarchy. This coupled with readily available weapons means these quarrels often involve firearms.

Mr. McQueen drew attention to the presence of online rap videos that groups will make in order to antagonize one another. These videos often lead to shootings. He advised these groups have a gun culture, and many times their first offense involves a gun which harms intervention efforts. Often, the one with power in the gang is the one with the gun or is charismatic. He advised we need to dismantle the gun culture and the obsession with guns.

Mr. McQueen advised current enforcement tools are lacking in that legislation was not written to address juveniles. He expressed that non-law enforcement tools would be beneficial, but that anti-gun programs have lost much of their funding.

The shootings over the last five days are unrelated to one another and do not appear to involve gangs. They were just people who had handguns readily available to use.

Mr. McQueen advised most guns today are still obtained illegally and possessed illegally before their use. Guns are typically supplied by a friend or girlfriend who purchases them legally. Often times, this is from a neighboring state with less stringent gun laws. However, he advised there is not a large quantity of guns out there. He advised 40% of all the shootings were traced back to the same gun passed from person to person. He advised this occurs so often that these individuals are unaware that the same gun they are using had previously been used against them.

Mr. McQueen spoke about the Shot Spotter technology and that this is something not needed in our jurisdiction because we still have a community that is willing to call the police. He estimated the cost of Shot Spotter technology is approximately \$4500 per round fired.

Mr. McQueen showed a YouTube video from a local gang antagonizing another group. Numerous guns were present in the video. Commissioners called attention to the high

quality of the videos and how they were paid for. Mr. McQueen advised that many times these videos are paid for with illicit funds.

Mr. McQueen concluded that to address gun violence we need to focus on prevention, intervention, and suppression. He advised prevention doesn't get enough focus.

Commissioner Shannon drew attention to the fact that prevention is the hardest thing to get funding for. There is no way to measure whether it is working, which is often required for grants.

The following item was presented:

Item 5.B. Presentation and discussion by Commissioner Shannon regarding how Project Oz interacts with local youths to help curb gun violence.

Commissioner Shannon provided an overview of Project Oz (Summarized).

Commissioner Shannon started by recognizing what an asset Mr. McQueen is to the city and that he is recognized nationwide.

Commissioner Shannon advised Project Oz was started in 1973 by an ISU Student through a grant for homeless youths. It later expanded into prevention and education. They had several programs to include a presence in schools for drug prevention called "Too good for drugs", and a program called "Ending the Silence" which focused on mental health. From 2001-2002 Project Oz received a gang diversion grant and they deployed outreach workers in the schools and community. Outreach workers would be assigned to multiple schools, but this was found not to be sustainable. The relationship was the most important part. The outreach did not just focus on the individuals within gangs, but fringe kids as well. They found that if they could get to the fringe kids and mentor them, they wouldn't become involved in gangs. Ultimately, they started to assign social workers to schools. They found that if they could build a relationship with the families, they would have access to all the kids associated with that family. Today, they are starting to see the children of parents they originally helped with similar issues.

The program had to transition due to funding, but now has a social worker in all local high schools, BJHS, and two elementary schools. Since the legalization of Marijuana, the state has mandated that 20% of the funds received go towards prevention. As a result, they were able to fund the additional workers. He advised there is a lot of funding, but that the funding is going to stop in January and be paused until August due to issues the State of Illinois was having with administering the grant. He reiterated that prevention money has been hard to come by nationally.

Commissioner Shannon then went through some of the other programs Project Oz has to include:

Run Away Network used to assist police agencies with youths.

Transitional Living Program in which Project Oz covers rent for 9 months provided they stay on track. This program has limited resources.

Street Outreach for homeless youths who do not have the same access to services as adults

do.

Various life skills classes

The ability of individuals to get mail at Project Oz to help them get on their feet.

Commissioner Shannon advised that the commission could assist with getting the R3 Grant program going again. He suggested a letter by the commission.

Commissioner Shannon spoke to gun violence. He stated being in a gang is no longer a prerequisite. There is no fear currently for a young person to possess a gun. Social media allows quarrels to spread quicker than social workers can respond. As such, they have become more reactive than proactive.

Commissioner Denton asked about the Regional Alternative School. Commissioner Shannon stated it is a phenomenal opportunity school, but there are limited spots. He advised 90% of the spots within the school come from referrals.

The following item was presented:

Item 5.C. Presentation and Discussion by Commissioner Selman on a research article.

Commissioner Selman gave a presentation on several research articles:

Farias, C. (2023, July 20). *On both sides of the gun: Community -based gun violence prevention is at a crossroads. A group in Chicago shows how abolition may hold the key to its future.* Inquest. <https://inquest.org/on-both-sides-of-the-gun/>

Henson, A., & Rosenthal, J. (2022). The importance of investing in policies beyond ‘the basics’: Perspectives from black fathers in Philadelphia on how to Increase Community Safety. *Critical Social Policy*, 43(3), 536-556. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02610183221125390>

Sharkey, P., Torrats- Espinosa, G., & Takyar, D. (2017). Community and the crime decline: The causal effect of local nonprofits on violent crime. *American Sociological Review*, 82(6), 1214-1240. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122417736289>

South, E. C., MacDonald, J., & Reina, V. (2021). Association between structural housing repairs for low-income homeowners and neighborhood crime. *JAMA Network Open*, 4(7). <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2021.17067>

The following item was presented:

Item 5.D. Presentation and Discussion by the Commissioner on the current status of the creation of an inventory of resources.

Commissioner German was absent for this meeting. An update should occur next meeting.

New Business

The Commission agreed to create a letter regarding the R3 Grant. Commissioner Shannon advised he would get the information to Commissioner Denton so the letter could be drafted before the next meeting.

Commission Member Comments

Commissioner Shannon and Mr. McQueen spoke about gun prevention in schools. Two years ago, SRO's started having conversations with kids about guns. Project Oz and the SRO's have a great relationship, but advised more relationships need to be built with kids. Commissioner Shannon advised each kid needs three adults they feel comfortable with that will listen to them.

Adjournment

Commissioner Shannon made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Lust, to adjourn the meeting.

directed the clerk to call roll:

AYES: Shannon; Selman; Lust; Klein; Denton;

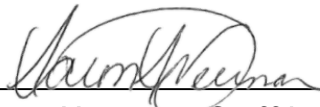
Harris Motion carried (viva voce).

The Meeting Adjourned at

CITY OF BLOOMINGTON

Scott Denton

Scott Denton (Feb 22, 2024 18:13 CST)



Aaron Veerman, Staff Liaison