



Reimagining Public Safety Task Force Meeting Minutes

February 10, 2021, 5:30pm-8:30 p.m. CST, Zoom

Members Present

Reimagining Public Safety Task Force Members, City of Austin Staff

Agenda Items

1. Addressing Technical Issues and Welcome from Co-chairs
2. Update and Possible Vote on Adding New Task Force Members
3. Update and Decision-making on New Consultant/Facilitators
4. Work Group Updates
5. Confirm Dates and Times for Following Meetings
6. Conversation re: Meadows Project
7. Closing

Item 1. Addressing Technical Issues and Welcome from Co-chairs

Co-Chair Paula Rojas welcomed group sharing highlighting the efforts that it has taken to get to this point in time and the transformative work the Task Force will perform to define what safety means.

Co-Chair Brion Oaks greeted the group and quoted Grace Lee Boggs, expressing that the time has come for us to reimagine everything and perform visionary work. The group will need to be courageous and creative on how they bring forth recommendations.

Item 2. Update and Possible Vote on Adding New Task Force Members

Facilitator Maya Guevara indicated that the three of the groups that expressed interest in participating on the Task Force, were connected with appropriate working groups. Maya indicated that there are a couple groups that would still like to be on the Task Force; however, voting is not necessary at this time.

Item 3. Update and Decision-making on New Consultant/Facilitators

Co-Chairs Rojas and Oaks looked into new consultants/facilitators. They reviewed the competencies and values needed for working with the Task Force. Three responses from potential facilitators were distributed to the Task Force for their review.

Co-Chair Rojas indicated that they identified one that was very strong and aligned with values of the Task Force that will serve as a compass to move forward. That facilitator identified is Racial Equity Transformation, Facilitator Rosana Cruz. The new facilitator will facilitate Task Force meetings and help develop new programs to reimagining public safety. Rosana (RC), racial justice facilitator, is also an organizer and has been performing this type of work for the past 30 years. Policy Link is another facilitator that can bring learning from other cities doing the same kind of effort. Rojas proposed that these are the companies that the Task Force uses.

Task Force Member Quincy Dunlap asked if there was a scoring process for identifying this facilitator. Co-Chair Oaks stated that the respondents were asked six questions. He and Rojas reviewed the responses and have also had the opportunity to participate in the work that the respondents have offered on other projects.

Task Force Member Farah Muscadin made the motion that RC and Policy Link be facilitators for the Task Force.

Task Force Member Amanda Lewis seconded the motion.

Task Force Member Chris Harris indicated a verbal vote to approve. Vote 18-0 unanimously approved RC and Policy Link.

Final vote: 18 In Favor, 0 Oppose, 0 Abstain, 0 Did Not Vote

Participants (55)

17 Panelists (27) 1 Attendees (28)

Find a participant

- TF - Jessica Johnson
- TF - Priscilla Hale allgo she/...
- TF - Rey Arellano
- TF - Amanda Lewis (she/her)
- TF - Monica Guzmán, GAVA ...
- TF - Farah Muscadin
- TF - Paula X Rojas (she/her/...
- TF - Cate Graziani
- TF - Dawn Handley
- TF - Brion Oaks
- TF - Kathy Mitchell

Co-Chair Oaks indicated that they are reaching out to RC and Policy Link to begin work and bring them in around mid-March and then there will be transitional period, with the goal of a smooth hand off.

TF Members Lewis, Oaks and Rojas expressed deep gratitude for Facilitators Maya Guevara and Kellee Coleman. RC will begin work late-February and RC's pronouns are they and them.

Item 4. Work Group Updates

Meaningful Community Engagement – Task Force Member Alicia Torres asked to create a form for the community may use to provide feedback on the Task Force’s recommendations. This Task Force will schedule a community feedback session and recommends that each work group hold a community engagement session to help inform recommendations. Guidelines created by this work group were shared with all Task Force work Groups. TF Member Torres asked that all work groups determine a good date for their community feedback sessions.

TF Member Amanda Lewis asked if the City will help promote and structure the meetings and if there is a style guide the work groups should follow. The Community Engagement work group will push out to their contacts but the City should send out via the City’s Community Engagement website. TF Member Lewis asked that there be coordination among the work groups for feedback session dates.

TF Member Kathy Mitchell indicated that she is hoping her work group can do their community feedback session on February 20th, 3:30pm. TF Member Torres asked if City staff can staff and provide interpreters.

Co-Chair Brion Oaks indicated he will make a Zoom account available to the Task Force and will coordinate Spanish interpretation, and requested Task Force members to send details/requests to him as soon as possible. TF Member Alicia Torres asked all working groups determine a date, so they can get a list over to Equity Office and prepare communications for outreach. TF Members Amanda Lewis and Farah Muscadin offered their Zoom accounts as well.

Police Staffing: Patrol and Criminal Investigations - TF Member Kathy Mitchell stated she entered information into appropriate Google form that February 20th as is their meeting date. She provided a list of goals for and will include recommendations on mounted patrol, K-9 unit, nuisance abatement, park patrol, traffic enforcement, improvements to criminal investigations and staffing, reforms to patrol and appropriate size of patrol. The work group is looking forward to hearing from stakeholders.

Business and Economic Development - TF Member Cary Roberts indicated the work group held their second Zoom meeting that morning, which included 22 participants from organizations such as, the Austin Chamber, Equity Office, Downtown Austin Alliance (DAA), Greater Austin Crime Commission, SafeHorns, and community members. Trying to lock down dates for listening session. The work group is trying to nail down reports from other cities, to review their research and recommendations (e.g. US Conference of Mayors, Pittsburg, Houston) to better understand public safety in relation to economic development, how public safety influences companies moving into town, and crime statistics in relation to businesses. He indicated there has been some progress related to homelessness and that the DAA and Integral Care are rolling out a new model rolling out in February.

Public Health Reinvestment - TF Cate Graziani stated that the work group has had two meetings and additional meeting is scheduled for February 11th. The work group will prioritize community engagement. Because they are looking at reinvestment and reimagining public health, they have started to define what public health means and social determinants. They are framing their recommendations around their definition of public health. Some recommendations have come up such as peer support specialists, more public health resources, how to partner with the community health plan that Austin Public Health coordinates to prevent overlap. The Texas Harm Reduction through the equity grant is going to work on vetting the reimagining public safety recommendations.

Equity Reinvestment in Community - Co-Chair Rojas indicated that the work group has met and they have several agencies and affinity groups working with them, doing deep thinking on what equity reinvestment means. They are: examining root causes and how they got to where they are in relation to policing and inequities; looking at areas that overlap; shifting resources from over-policing to other areas for equitable resources; and looking into how can they reinvest in communities. They decided to not hold a big public Zoom session. Instead, they are going to host a few more smaller, intimate, language specific meetings garnering trust.

Uprooting Punitive and Harm Culture in Intersecting Systems - TF Member David Johnson indicated the work group met three times. There is nothing in place other than agreed upon values. They are trying to not duplicate systems and are working on a validating tool that the Task Force can use to validate if efforts are truly reimagining public safety or recreating old ideas.

Patrol and Surveillance - TF Member David Johnson stated that the work group recognizes that if they dig into any work without speaking to the community that are harmed, they would be not aligning with the validating tool. Their meetings with stakeholders will be small, and in some cases, one on one. They are responsible for creating a space with the goal of moving forward to do something better. They cannot have large scale conversation when healing trauma, it's not about being efficient, it's about being effective. Their work group is holding a series of conversations with individuals, at the speed with which the community feels that they can unveil their vulnerability. The work group will then carefully peel out common themes from those conversations.

Reimagining 911 and Non-Police Crisis Response – TF Member Jessica Johnson indicated that the last couple of meetings for their work group has been doing research on how other 911 programs and EMCOT work, call taking from dispatchers. They are looking into a presentation from Denver Star Program and obtaining more information from the Meadows project.

Violence Survivors Services and Prevention - TF Member Amanda Lewis indicated that the work group had one meeting with crime survivors, Victim Services, APD, SARRT, Survive to Thrive, Austin Gun Violence TF, and SJP. Looking for folks that can speak to the experience who are often left out of the conversation. If anyone has connections, they would greatly appreciate any connections. They are looking at decoupling Victim Services, Office of Violence Prevention, and how Victim Services take reports from survivors without police involvement. They are looking at big picture ideas, budget implications, and restorative justice.

TF Member Amanda Lewis asked if the City will compensate people for the one to one focus groups.

Facilitators Guevara, Coleman and Co-Chair Oaks indicated that they have paid persons in the past for projects. Facilitator Coleman recognizes that the expertise of the community voice and individuals have been compensated for their involvement with the Equity Assessment and Video Review Panel through providing funding and gift cards, and that it's a good strategy moving forwards. TF Member Rey Arellano stated that the City could explore this idea further.

TF Member Alicia Torres stated that she is aware that there was a grant period that is no longer available, also that its good to hear that the City is open to exploring it and inquired if the City can create a process to be compensated soon. She also inquired if there is a single point of contact to provide resources from the City, bus passes, gift cards, interpretation. Facilitator Coleman indicated that the Equity Office is available to help and that the City's Community Engagement division with CPIO can also assist, but that the compensation or incentives ask is a longer discussion. Co-Chair Oaks indicated that it could be a recommendation baked into each project budget.

TF Member Amanda Lewis stated she feels pressed for time scheduling something, advertising and paying people. She would like to do it right and not rush but recognizes we have to rush.

TF Member Quincy Dunlap stated he feels like this has become an academic exercise, that will further exclude folks that are impacted by police. Noted that it's starting to sound very academic and when that happens the community gets marginalized and phased out.

Co-Chair Paula Rojas thanked TF Members Lewis and Dunlap and the Meaningful Community Engagement working group for bringing this up. The March 13th meeting is prioritizing those who are the most harmed by police and indicated that we get them gift cards. Then each working group make sure that the people who are most directly, negatively impacted by the police to have a say at the meetings. The March 13th meeting will give priority to folks who are most harmed.

TF Member Alicia Torres votes to recommend a way to compensate folks that show up at the March meeting for their expertise.

TF Member Chas Moore seconded the motion.

Co-Chair Rojas indicated that the Task Force elevate expertise testimony to \$50 to participate.

TF Member Rey Arellano recognized that we need to incentivize, perhaps something like \$50 or something that has been done for similar meetings, but not put a number on it.

TF Member Monica Guzman asked how they are going to prioritize and disagrees with disagrees with Rey that \$50 may be a nice meal for some but for others its how they worth keeping their lights on.

Facilitator Coleman as if the Task Force can pass the vote asking the City to try to figure out compensation.

TF Member Hailey Easley inquired who would fund the compensation and if they can set a minimum. She indicated that anything less than \$15 wouldn't be worth it.

Facilitator Coleman indicated that through the vote, the Task Force would be instructing City to find the money.

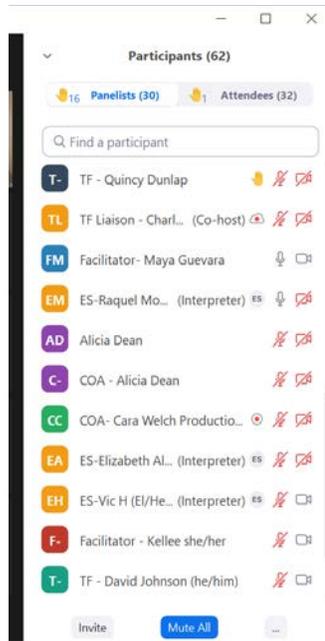
TF Member David Johnson stated he is working to make recommendations and until further notice, the City Council can dismiss but there are a lot underpaid and overpaid inappropriately. By reimagining and validating compensating each person \$50. He indicated to let the City explain how they can't pay.

Facilitator Guevara clarified motion, which is to ensure specifically for March 13th community engagement meeting, the Task Force prioritized those most harmed, by providing a \$50 gift card and the voices of those most impacted by police. She indicated members can send ideas to the Meaningful Community Engagement work group.

TF Member Chas Moore seconded the vote. TF Members Dunlap and Johnson indicated a verbal vote to approve. TF Members Farah Muscadin and Shannon Jones.

Vote 16-2.

Final vote: 16 In Favor, 0 Oppose, 2 Abstain, 0 Did Not Vote



Facilitator Guevara indicated that before the break there was an officer involved shoot incident, which is very heavy and impacts all of us and is the reason for the work they are doing.

Item 5. Confirm Dates and Times for Following Meetings

Facilitator Guevara indicated that Co-Chair Rojas' proposal was to have next meeting date on Wednesday, March 3rd focusing on the first draft of all working group recommendation. The second meeting is scheduled for Saturday, March 13th, which will be a larger community meeting (currently there is no set time). The third meeting is Monday, March 22nd, 5:30-8:30pm, before the March City Council meeting, which will be to discuss the Task Force's recommendations.

Co-Chair Rojas emailed the proposed dates to TF Members. Decided what time on March 13th Community Engagement meeting and follow Meaningful Community Engagement Workgroup to see if they have a recommendation. TF Member Alicia Torres inquired what is a good time that folks engage with on Saturdays. Whenever they do meetings on Saturdays, she has found that it works to have them in the morning before noon because people do things in the evening with their families. TF Member Priscilla Hale indicated that March 13th is the date that ALGO has their annual healing event (12-4pm), so ALGO won't be available.

Facilitator Guevara asked the Task Force to vote on a start time or ask the Meaningful Community Engagement work group to designate a time. TF Member Torres asked for the Task Force to confirm whether 9-2pm or 2-6/7pm works. TF Member Torres indicated she is fine with the March 13th date but cannot be present if it's in the morning. Co-Chair Rojas indicated that this is one of their Task Force meetings that they will hear from the community's expertise and that payment is not an incentive to show up, but rather it's a contribution for their expertise.

Co-Chair Rojas makes the motion that the of the three meetings in March, March 3rd - they will share preliminary recommendation (5:30-8:30pm), March 13th - hear from community members most harmed by the police (time TBD), March 22nd - consolidate recommendations for Council.

TF Member Monica Guzman seconds the motion.

Vote 18-0 unanimously approved.

Final vote: 18 In Favor, 0 Oppose, 0 Abstain, 0 Did Not Vote

TF Member Farah Muscadin indicated that there can be a conversation with Council regarding pushing back the date, to potentially go to Council in April.

TF Member Amanda Lewis asked about the Council meeting and how the recommendations will be presented to Council. TF Member Muscadin indicated that the recommendations will go to Spencer first for his review and that there could possibly be some flexibility to move to April but we would need a conversation with Council, and to dedicate time in March for community engagement.

TF Member Lewis stated that there is urgency because of the budget meeting with Council. If recommendations are going to Spencer first, then there is a tight turnaround. Since recommendations are going to Spencer first, that pushes back the time they go to Council.

TF Member Guzman supports what TF Member Muscadin says, because February is a short month and would like to see if Council can give them the month of March for community engagement. Co Chair Rojas agrees with TF Member Muscadin's proposal. She indicated that the resolution stated March, so if it can be pushed to end of March. The Task Force needs to have assurance that Council can wait and is hesitant that Council will make some mid-year budget decisions without their input. She understands that they can provide recommendations directly to Council.

Item 6. Conversation re: Meadows Project

EMS Assistant Chief Andy Hofmeister and BJ Wagner, Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute provided an overview and update of the Austin Cares Program Implementation.

TF Member Cate Graziani inquired about the timeline and why some recommendations haven't been implemented. She indicated that their work group will propose recommendations that go above and beyond the work that Meadows is doing.

TF Member Amanda Lewis indicated she has questions for the work group, such as what kind of calls specifically fall into the 911 option and how will they be coded.

BJ indicated that what she has asked for from APD is a high-fidelity model of what works. Such as a dashboard displaying data on mental health calls, and the types of call coded as mental health but required police response and other various calls.

TF Member Alicia Torres mentioned that the contract signed with Meadows was in 2019, and why in 2021, is there a presentation on some developments and implementation timeline. BJ indicated that there was a year gap when the Meadows were not engaged. When the Meadows came back in 2020, they met with stakeholders. In addition, there was a gap from when recommendations were made to the implementation point, because they needed to regain stakeholder buy-in and though there has been

some delay, they must be respectful of different staffing and perspectives. By September 2021, the recommendations will be implemented.

TF Member Cate Graziani indicated the 911 work group is going above and beyond what the Meadows was tasked with. There are necessary actions including training for call takers and mental first aid is inadequate to be able to respond swiftly and adequately. She inquired what is going on with creating a more robust training and if a non-police crisis response has come up during Meadows' discussions. This information will help inform their work group's recommendations.

BJ indicated that when they look across the country at other agencies, there is no research regarding how mental health first aid will help move the needle. What the dispatcher tells the police officer when they are in route doesn't provide lived experience. There are examples from Chicago, Ohio, Florida and cities in Texas. We need to lay side by side what trainings will make a difference and then conduct focus groups with law enforcement and medics to make a better experience. What do you want the officer or medic to know and what can we tell call takers to enhance the training. Telehealth should be placed in both police cars and ambulances.

TF Member Chris Harris stated that the status of the Meadows work is extremely disappointing, and it might as well be 2005. The fact that Denver started before us is disappointing. This is not the model that we need to work on. Untreated mental health is 16 more times to be shot by police.

TF Member Kathy Mitchell would like BJ and Andy Hofmeister to plan on coming back to finish dialogue with 911 work group. She is hoping withing the framework of this report than we can maximize a non-police response. But it seems that we are still stuck, for instance are clinicians being brought on to determine metal health services. Assistant Chief Andy Hofmeister responded. BJ indicated they're working on a research informed call triage tree that within the first seconds, will identify if there is a mental healthcare need.

TF Member David Johnson inquired about the work. BJ explained what the Meadows type of work does. How does justice systems work with mental health. Mental health crisis should be medically focused but it's the only calls that we send police. We need to involve national and community stakeholders.

Assistant Chief Andy Hofmeister indicated that the EMS industry is working with Denver to learn and that every EMS agency addresses mental health services differently.

Co-Chair Brion Oaks asked about if there is an increase in volume since the fourth option was added. TF Member Dawn Handley stated that the call volume has increased the call load but they are working to develop tools to track and evaluate data so that they can shift accordingly so that they can respond. She indicated that it the process isn't perfect, but it is working. The recommendations form this work group will make it get better.

TF Handley indicated that what the working group is looking at with regards to the Meadows, are specific recommendations, and that they can always change what they are working on. This work group can make sure that they are working in the direction that is right for the community. The report is just a starting point and they can always make the changes needed.

BJ indicated that the Meadows is sticking to the six recommendations outlined in the report because they are part of the scope of work.

Facilitator Kellee Coleman indicated that TF Member Handley is committed to working on this.

Item 7. Closing

Closing remarks were provided. Task Force Member Cary Roberts made the request to work with the RPS Listening Session and Co-Chair Rojas.

Meeting Adjourned