

March 2nd, 2020

To: City Council Members
From: Jillian Johnson, Mayor Pro Tempore
Subject: Durham Community Safety & Wellness Task Force

Background:

A robust community conversation has taken place over the past several years about public safety in Durham. In the Spring of 2019, during conversations about the Durham Police Department's budget, community members requested that the City of Durham create a task force to explore and recommend community-based public safety models and interventions. City council members and staff believe that this effort will be best served by the participation of both Durham County, which administers and funds public health initiatives, and Durham County Public Schools. As a result, this proposal will create a joint task-force with the City of Durham, Durham County, and Durham County Public Schools as partners. This joint community-led task force will be charged with examining the public safety & wellness needs of Durham residents and communities, educating residents on existing safety and wellness resources, and providing recommendations for additional programs to enhance public safety and wellness by focusing on community-based prevention, intervention, and re-entry services.

Task Force Goals:

1. To provide a forum for residents to generate and evaluate ideas for community-based violence prevention & intervention initiatives.
2. To provide resident input on community-based violence prevention & intervention initiatives proposed by governing boards & staff.
3. To gather and provide ongoing resident input from throughout the community as the governing boards implement and evaluate violence prevention & intervention programs.
4. To align City, County and Durham Public Schools response and action plans on decreasing violence.

Task Force Objectives:

- Conduct a comprehensive review of existing institutional and community-based public safety and wellness resources. Identify community safety needs that are not currently being served and provide recommendations for how to add new resources to fill these gaps;

- Conduct at least three (3) listening sessions in the first ninety (90) days, as well as a public meeting after the release of recommendations, to discuss community concerns about safety and wellness, gather information from residents, and educate the public about existing resources.
- Provide public quarterly written reports on action steps and deliverables to all governing bodies.
- Evaluate and make recommendations for the implementation of or improvements to the following current and proposed programs to the Durham City Council, the Durham County Board of Commissioners, Durham Public Schools, and the Durham County District Attorney's Office:
 - The existing school resource officers program, which places a law enforcement official into every Durham County middle school and high school.
 - The existing Durham County drug court, which provides an alternative court system for some drug-related charges.
 - An expanded violence interrupter program (Bull City United) which trains formerly justice-involved residents to intervene in situations of violence to prevent escalation -- including a specific domestic violence cohort to focus on intervention and domestic violence cases.
 - A new community nonviolence, mental health first aid, and de-escalation training program, focusing on residents who are most likely to be victims or perpetrators of violence.
 - A new on-call crisis response, which would allow certain calls for police assistance to be handled by other trained professions such as social workers, crisis counselors, psychiatric nurses, etc.

Task Force Makeup:

The Task Force shall consist of 15 racially and culturally diverse members who represent and serve communities who are most often impacted by violence and the criminal legal system. The Mayor and the Chair of the County Commission shall designate two residents as chairpersons of the Task Force, who shall also be members of the Task Force. Each governing body shall appoint a member as a liaison to the task force. Prospective members shall reside within Durham County.

The City of Durham shall appoint five (5) members from the following categories:

- Public policy (1)
- Community organizing (1)
- Justice-involved (1)
- At-large (2)

The County of Durham shall appoint five (5) members from the following categories:

- Public health (1)
- Justice-involved (2)
- At-large (2)

The Durham Public Schools Board of Education shall appoint three (3) members from the following categories:

- Education (1)
- Youth under age 25 (2)

The chairs of the Durham County Board of Commissioners and Board of Education are supportive of this initiative and have agreed to present these bylaws to their respective boards for adoption.