



CITY OF TOPEKA

CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

SPECIAL COMMITTEE: POLICE & COMMUNITY

CITY COUNCIL
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Date: February 24, 2022

Time: 3:30pm

Location: 1st floor conference room; Holliday Bldg 620 SE Madison (*virtual attendance was available as well*)

Committee members present: Councilmembers Karen Hiller, Sylvia Ortiz (Chair), Mayor Michael Padilla

City staff present: Major Stephen Purney (TPD)

1) Call to Order

Chairwoman Ortiz called the meeting to order at 3:30pm. Committee members introduced themselves.

2) Approve minutes from January 28, 2022 meeting

Committee member Padilla made a motion to approve the minutes. Committee member Hiller seconded the motion. Motion approved 3:0.

3) SAVE Program [*This presentation can be found on the Committee's webpage*].

Shawnee County District Attorney Mike Kagay and Lindsey Anderson introduced the Strategies Against Violence Everywhere (SAVE) program.

Highlights:

- SAVE focuses on the coordination of law enforcement, social service agencies, and credible community members.
- SAVE's singular goal is to reduce violence that destabilizes the health and well-being of our community.
- Shawnee County's key stakeholders have committed to building the community's capacity to prevent youth violence, use enforcement strategically, help the most vulnerable and at-risk youth individuals and their families with early intervention and preventative methods, and by improving the legitimacy of the police in the eyes of the community.
- SAVE uses the framework of Group Violence Intervention Model from the National Network for Safe Communities. The Group Violence Intervention model emphasizes on:

- Focusing on the youth population that is the most at-risk for violence or violent offending,
- Strengthening community norms against offending,
- Communicating directly with high risk people to deter violence,
- Offering extensive case management for those who want a way out of that lifestyle.
- Key roles in SAVE include a project manager, service and outreach coordinator, law enforcement operational committee, support and outreach operational committee, and community moral voice operational committee.
- The structure of SAVE explained:
 - Law Enforcement
 - Reducing violence is top priority
 - Identifying youth who are the most at-risk for violence or violent offending
 - Social Service Provider
 - Gives a path away from risky behavior
 - New and positive relationships
 - Community Members
 - Credible moral voices from the community
 - Outlines identified participant's role in the community to make it safer
- Six accomplishments listed to include a two year grant, funding for hiring of project manager and service & outreach coordinator secured, building the strategies teams and community partners, establishing key partners for SAVE referrals, and beginning to deliver custom notifications with identified at-risk youth and connecting them and families to services.
- Next steps include:
 - Continuing to mobilize the community.
 - Delivering custom notifications by Service and Outreach Coordinator, Law Enforcement, and Community partners for identified SAVE participants.
 - Establish tracking measures and intake assessments.

- Maintaining strong interagency partnerships, putting mechanisms in place to track youth violence, and helping each partner routinize SAVE activities within their agencies.
- Communicate with the community and reinforce the shared mission of the strategy to reduce violence, strengthen communities and their relationships with law enforcement, and use enforcement in a strategic way.
- DA Kagay added a few comments following the presentation. Law enforcement is a key partner in the endeavor with the City of Topeka and the Topeka Police Department have been very supportive partners. Additionally, the City has been financially supportive with being able to create the Outreach Coordinator position, which is another necessary component. The goal is to find other types of approaches, creative approaches, to curbing gun violence in addition to the traditional methods. He stated that we all have the responsibility to do what we can improve the safety of our youth.

Questions/Comments:

- Committee member Hiller referenced a former program that was aimed more for adults, and asked how some of those concepts are being used at the youth level?

DA Kagay noted that looking at the data, most of the violence was occurring within the pre-teen, teen, and young adult populations rather than at the adult level. There is no one-size-fits-all approach for how to reach out to the different ages. The goal is to identify individuals who are at-risk, and then help to connect them with people who may be able to help influence and relate to them in a positive way to create a support system. This may be teachers, coaches, social workers, faith based leaders. This program is not just based with supporting the individual, but also providing wrap-around support for the whole family. Some of the youth are choosing the wrong path as a way to meet the needs of their family. Being able to identify the needs and create opportunities for supporting the needs of the family and youth individual will put them on a better path. The goal is to utilize any person of influence within the individual's life to help reach them and turn them around. Ms. Anderson noted that the program is not only focused on the individual, but also the entirety of their family unit. It is understood that sometimes there are struggles with jobs or transportation, and that decisions are made from a feeling of necessity. By finding out that need and being able to support and address it, there is a lower chance of the individual making the poor choices.

- Committee member Hiller referenced recent fighting that had been occurring at a local park and the concern from neighbors that it was no one's problem but everyone's problem. She inquired if this program would seek to include instances like this where fights were occurring outside of school?

Ms. Anderson stated she felt this example could be something that the program addressed. Figuring out how to identify and connect with those kids, and communicate with them may be a slight challenge, however it would be a great example of things the program could do.

- Committee member Hiller inquired about petty crime such as shoplifting, and if those stores were reaching out to seek help with stopping those crimes?

DA Kagay stated the program may expand to include some of those less violent offenses but currently it is targeted toward violent crime. This could be a program that could expand out, but currently the focus is seeing the end of the violent crime.

- Chairwoman Ortiz voiced appreciation for this program. She stated that we, as a community, needs to find a way to reach the troubled youth and find a way to help them feel included within our community. Until we all stand up and claim these kids as “our kids” things will not change.

- Chairwoman Ortiz inquired about the ages for the SAVE program.

DA Kagay stated the focus age is school age, mainly the middle and high school age. Part of that is due to the availability of the partnerships with the schools to help identify individuals. The other part is that violent crime that occurs with individuals over the age of 18, makes it too late for the SAVE program to intervene. SAVE is designed to intervene before a violent crime is committed.

- How are we identifying the individuals?

Currently, it is through referrals. Typically the school has initiated the referral, however if a parent called to state their child was struggling with these behaviors, the program would also respond to that situation. As the program becomes better known, referrals could even come from neighbors, coach, teacher, or anyone with a relationship with a youth.

- What about kids who are on probation?

Participation is not limited based on if a youth has already had a prior conviction. DA Kagay noted that in addition to age, the seriousness of the crime must also be taken into account. If an individual is on probation or are dealing with a lower-level misdemeanor or felony, then that is someone the program can still work with. However, once the line is crossed to violent felony conduct, or sexual offense, it is too late for the SAVE program to intervene.

- Is this currently for Shawnee County schools only? Yes.

- How does this affect kids with mental health/behavioral issues? Are they included in this program?

It would include them. Mental health is such a big piece of what drives insecurities.

- Committee member Padilla inquired about the Law Enforcement Operational Committee component, and asked who the members of the committee were? And how does it function within the agency? How does it interact with Ms. Anderson in the DA's office?

MAJ Purney answered that two TPD Lieutenants from the Criminal Investigations Bureau represent on the committee. They both deal with person crimes, special victims unit, as well as the juvenile pieces that they can interdict with at that level. Ms. Anderson added that the School Resource Officers, both Topeka Public School's SRO's and TPD's SRO's, were part of the committee as well. MAJ Purney stated that this information needed to be filtered down to the patrol officers, as they are front line to seeing these types of situations every day. Right now, we are working on a case by case basis, but there is room to expand.

- DA Kagay stated there had been a question about a phone number, at this time, there is not a designated number to call for the SAVE program, however he would hope to see that changed in the next few months. Chairwoman Ortiz suggested making magnets with contact information for the program, once established.
- Committee member Padilla rephrased his question about the Operational Committee, and stated that he would define that as a group that would assist with coordinating the information and putting together the operational piece that would communicate to both the TPD and the DA's office?

MAJ Purney noted he understood the idea, and would take the suggestion back to Chief Wheelers. Committee member Padilla wanted to ensure the Command Staff kept this communication piece alive so that the program could be successful. He understands that the department is supportive of the program but noted that in order for it to remain successful, continuous discussions needed to be had, and clear and defined roles needed to be understood.

- Committee member Padilla inquired as to who was involved with the Support and Outreach Committee, and how they contribute to the effort?

Ms. Anderson responded all of the social service agencies that are part of the SAVE program are on the committee. They are holding meetings with the Service and Outreach Coordinator, and herself. They are currently working to

gain a better understanding of the services that the agencies provide and how they do assessments. The goal is to also be able to remove any barriers that would cause delay in referrals receiving immediate service. As some of the cases progress, we can touch base again to seek additional agencies that could offer assistance.

- Committee member Padilla noted the mental health resources is a key piece. That being able to help fill that gap is important.
- Who comprises the Community Moral Voice Operational Committee, and what is their role?

Ms. Anderson responded that this could be anyone in the community. There have been faith-based leaders, people who had been incarcerated and are now rehabilitated back into the community who want to make a difference. The group is designed to be individuals who perhaps do not fit into the law enforcement or social service agency category, but want to be part of SAVE. When we have the interventions, these are the people who want to be that voice within the community who want to support those individuals and families to make the community safer.

- Do you find the parents/guardians are receptive to the program?

Ms. Anderson responded that so far, the families have been very receptive and supportive of the program. However, she noted that not all will likely be that way in the future. When that occurs, space will be provided to allow the family to make their own decision, but will also provide the information regarding the list of resources that are being offered to assist the family and their individual.

- It sounds like this program is pretty new. How many cases have you begun working on?

Yes, the program is about 30-60 days old. We have about 8 cases currently. Any school-aged child could be referred. Principals have discussed that violent behaviors are being shown by children of significantly younger ages, and so there has been consideration of including information for younger aged children.

- Committee member Hiller inquired if Moms Against Gun Violence were involved?

Yes. They are part of the community support group. They offer programming but also advocacy.

- Have you ended up picking up anyone from Strategic Leadership Academy or SPCP?

No. DA Kagay stated he has engaged some individuals who have been part of the Strategic Leadership Academy to become part of the group. This is why the program will continue to grow, because the need will continue to change.

- Chairwoman Ortiz noted the schools all have social workers now, and that they will be able to identify children who may not have stable home lives, or other types of potential problems where early intervention can be helpful and set them up with services.

- Can you tell us more about what the custom notification process looks like?

Ms. Anderson responded that the custom notification is the first point of contact that the Service and Outreach Coordinator and Ms. Anderson have with the individual and/or their family, and who else is needed at the table. This includes law enforcement as well as the person in the individual's life who can be the mentor.

- Committee member Padilla inquired about the category of Restorative Justice Programs, and asked if SAVE would be part of that?

DA Kagay responded that he felt SAVE would fall into a category of restorative justice, in that behaviors are addressed in a way to seek out the root cause and support changing that rather than simply punishing the behavior.

- Can you speak to the impacts the funding has on facilitating this program?

DA Kagay responded that the funding for the consulting piece came from the Topeka Community Foundation grant. They put up \$300,000 to get the program started. In order to implement the program, he needed to create the Project Manager position. From there, we had to have the assistance of law enforcement and the Service and Outreach Coordinator to work hand-in-hand with the Project Coordinator. The Service and Outreach Coordinator is an employee with PARS, and the portion of their funding for working with the SAVE program is provided by the City of Topeka. DA Kagay noted the program had come before the Governing Body in the beginning to present information on the SAVE program. DA Kagay noted that it truly is a partnership to make this program successful.

- Committee member Hiller referenced the summer mowing program that was suggested in the Changing the Culture of Property Maintenance input sessions, and that perhaps something like that could connect into the SAVE program. She also noted the youth boxing program.
- MAJ Purney thanked the DA for establishing the program. DA Kagay thanked Mayor Padilla for his support from the beginning.

4) Discussion: Public Input Session planning (video 1:06:30 minute mark)
Chairwoman Ortiz noted there were a couple of items left. One was “defund the police” and the other was about scheduling public input sessions.

For input sessions, Chairwoman Ortiz suggested having a daytime session and an evening session to hear from constituents.

Chairwoman Ortiz noted that Committee member Hiller had suggested hearing from the Police Department about comments made by LT Jennifer Cross regarding the Mosaic Partnership program. LT Cross will present more about this at the next meeting.

Committee member Hiller stated she felt that many of the issues that were raised in the beginning had been covered. She suggested the committee create some preliminary conclusions to note whether these items were addressed and whether the subject needed to continue to be addressed or not, it may lead some of the public comments to then fine tune final recommendations.

Chairwoman Ortiz stated she would prefer to set recommendations prior to the public input meetings and add any additional recommendations following the input sessions, based on if the Committee felt they were needed. Committee member Hiller rephrased suggesting the recommendations be preliminary until the conclusion of the public input sessions, at which time they become finalized.

Committee member Padilla stated he felt ready for action. As the committee, he would like to have the committee set the recommendations and move to the Governing Body for action. The Governing Body could then chose to accept or deny the recommendations. He noted there would be time for public input when the item is brought to the Governing Body. Chairwoman Ortiz noted the public input at the Governing Body meeting, but had suggested setting an additional meeting(s) to receive public comment prior to the Governing Body meeting, and sought preference from the Committee.

Committee member Padilla stated he liked the idea of having a document with the recommendations listed, followed by holding a public input meeting where the public could speak to the recommendations, and after the listening session, the recommendation document would be presented to the Governing Body.

Chairwoman Ortiz stated she would like to have one more meeting in March. And to create the recommendation document in April and hold the public input session for a date in April, and then taking final recommendations to the Governing Body by May.

Chairwoman Ortiz scheduled a meeting for March, with direction to have the Committee send their list of recommendations to Liz Toyne, Council Assistant, by April 1st. The committee would have a final meeting in early April with the public input session also occurring in April.

5) Other Items

No additional items.

6) Adjourn

Chairwoman Ortiz adjourned the meeting at 5:02pm.

Meeting recording can be found at: <https://youtu.be/lstjqCLFkAfk>