

COMBAT Commission Meeting
November 14th, 2023 10:00 AM – 11:17 AM
Zoom Meeting
Minutes

Present: Liz Williams, Mark Bryant, Alfred Jordan, Arimeta DuPree, Larry Beaty, Lanna Ultican, Joseph Spalitto

Also Present: Vince Ortega, Dawna Shumate, Joe Loudon, Tammie Jordan, Shannon Bobo, Keron Hopkins, Santiago Garza, Bob Muenz

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 AM.

Minutes Approved:

Alfred Jordan makes a motion to amend the October meeting minutes to indicate that governmental agencies *do not* have to submit a financial audit to COMBAT. Mark Bryant seconds.

DISCUSSION:

Jackson County COMBAT: Director's Report

- In partnership with the Center for Conflict Resolution, COMBAT put on a Conflict Resolution Training at the Midtown STRIVIN Hub, Greater Impact. There was a great turn out of about 100 participants—many of which were agencies and schoolteachers who wished to learn about engaging with the individuals they serve.
- Vince Ortega thanks Commissioner Liz Williams for her leadership, her participation in the STRIVIN initiative, and her communication with COMBAT.
- Vince Ortega and Joe Loudon attended a firearm safety conference in Chicago where they presented on the STRIVIN initiative.
- Crime analysts Shannon Bobo (COMBAT), Joseph Cho (Prosecutor's Office), and Jeramiah C. Loomis (Prosecutor's Office) have met with several police departments in Jackson County to standardize the way crime data is collected and retrieved by using a simplified reporting system. The end goal is to produce a comprehensive, user-friendly platform for viewing crime trends across the county.

Kansas City Police Department

- Major Garza of the KCPD reports that Kansas City is trending one less homicide than the recording-breaking year of 2020 at 162 year-to-date homicides.
- Commissioner Bryant asks if crime statistics have shown a decrease in assaults compared to the previous year. Major Garza answers that yes, as of November 13th, there were 259 year-to-date aggravated assaults—which is a 4% decrease from the same period in 2022.
- Commissioner Bryant asks if armed robberies are similarly reducing. Major Garza answers that after identifying patterns in robberies, the Robbery Unit at KCPD has been

successful in suppressing robberies and bringing the perpetrators to justice in a timely manner.

Jackson County Drug Task Force

- Bob Muenz reports that Operation Pony Express continues with no notable issues. The Drug Task Force also continues to partner with several agencies in Jackson County to address violent crime operations.

NEW BUSINESS:

Mark Bryant, COMBAT Commissioner

- Commissioner Bryant takes issue with the length of the funding applications and requests that a synopsis of each application be made to indicate how the funds will be used, how many people the applying agency expects to serve, and how many years they've received funding in the past. He says that he is unable to absorb the information provided in the funding applications in the fashion they have been provided.
 - o Commissioner Bryant suggests holding special Commission meetings for prevention, treatment, and law enforcement applications. Vince Ortega says that this has been explained several times before: COMBAT is only allowed so many meetings and if the Commission holds a separate meeting for each type of funding, that will delay the funding process by 3 months.
- Commissioner Bryant expresses concern that not many members of the public are attending the COMBAT Commission meetings. He makes the claim that there is no notice of the funding recommendation meeting.
 - o Vince Ortega responds that the funding timeline has been publicly available via email blasts to 17,000 members of the general public and posts on COMBAT's website since April of this year. Commissioner Bryant responds that the description of the meeting, "Review 2024 Funding Recommendations for Approval" was inadequate.
 - o Tammie Jordan, a Program Administrator at COMBAT, adds that the budget is already set when COMBAT receives it—so it wouldn't do the public any good to attend the COMBAT Commission meeting to comment on the numbers after they've already been set.
- Commissioner Bryant expresses concern that many of the same agencies consistently receive funding year after year because of the requirement that each applying agency produce a two-year financial audit (see Step 4 in the funding process below). He asserts that requiring applying agencies to exist for 2 years, and thus will be able to produce a two-year audit, doesn't "leave room for new agencies that may have new approaches."

Liz Williams, COMBAT Commissioner

- Commissioner Williams proposes that the COMBAT Commissioners be more active in the community and participate in the STRIVIN initiative. She says the Commissioners might reach a better understanding of the STRIVIN hubs by seeing the work they do for themselves and use that newly acquired experience to be a voice for the community.

- Commissioner Williams asks if there are monthly or quarterly reports from COMBAT's funded agencies that they could share with the commissioners. Vince Ortega responds that COMBAT's budget coordinator, Keron Hopkins, receives monthly spending reports from the funded agencies—and that COMBAT would be happy to share those reports with the commissioners.

Tammie Jordan, Program Administrator, COMBAT

- Tammie Jordan explains the funding process:
 1. The annual budget is received from the Legislators; Funding applications are received from the agencies.
 2. Prevention, Treatment, and Law Enforcement applications are sent to outside reviewers, who score each application twice.
 3. An inside reviewing process is conducted via site visits.
 4. The applications are reviewed by Tammie Jordan and Deputy Director Dawna Shumate to ensure compliance (i.e. audits are up-to-date and the agency has paid their taxes on time.) Agencies that made a mistake on their application submission are emailed and given a chance to attach the correct paperwork.
 5. The scores are compiled together for a final overall score.

Regarding 2024 Prevention Funding

- Commissioner Bryant says COMBAT seems like an agency that funds mental health services and is spending too much money on the “after-effects” of crime instead of reducing substance use and violence. Vince Ortega responds that the funding amounts given are determined by the funding formula percentages under the charter, created by the Legislators—and that after tracking violence and social determinants of health for some time, COMBAT's findings have proven that trauma and mental health are the number one aggravator of those issues.
 - o Tammie Jordan later reiterates that trauma is the root cause of violence and that many of the agencies COMBAT funds are required to be trauma certified.
 - o Mark Bryant responds that COMBAT needs to provide proof that crime was prevented because of COMBAT's prevention efforts. Tammie Jordan responds that COMBAT requires their agencies to receive funding from other sources. Because COMBAT is not their sole source of funding, there is no way to determine the exact percentage of decreased crime as a result of COMBAT-specific funding.
- Larry Beaty makes a motion to approve the 2024 Prevention Budget. Arimeta DuPree seconds the motion.
 - o AYE: Lanna Ultican, Joseph Spalitto, Alfred Jordan, Arimeta DuPree
 - o NAY: [None]

Regarding 2024 Treatment Funding

- Commissioner DuPree asks why Sisters in Christ received a score of 93.25, and thus received an approved amount of \$300,000 instead of the requested \$375,000. Tammie Jordan explains that even though Sisters in Christ received a site visit score of 100, the

outside reviewers had given them a lower score—which negatively affected the overall score for Sisters in Christ.

- Commissioner Bryant asks how many Treatment agencies have inpatient beds readily available. Vince Ortega responds that Truman Medical Center does, Dawna Shumate adds that Imani House does as well—and that there is a nationwide shortage of inpatient treatment.
 - o Commissioner Bryant says he doesn't understand why there is a shortage of inpatient beds if COMBAT receives consistent funding through the quarter-cent sales tax. Tammie Jordan responds that local detox centers are already in short supply and it's even less common for them to apply for COMBAT funding.
 - o Commissioner Bryant suggests finding the services the public needs and then funding them. Vince Ortega explains that COMBAT already does that by issuing RFPs (Request for Proposal) that indicate seven areas of treatment COMBAT is looking for—and detox is one of them.
- Liz Williams makes a motion to approve the 2024 Treatment budget. Joseph Spalitto seconds the motion.
 - o AYE: Joseph Spalitto, Larry Beaty, Alfred Jordan, Lanna Ultican
 - o NAY: [None]

Regarding 2024 Law Enforcement Funding

- Liz Williams makes a motion to approve the 2024 Law Enforcement budget. Arimeta DuPree seconds the motion.
 - o AYE: Lanna Ultican, Alfred Jordan
 - o NAY: [None]

Regarding 2024 STRIVIN Funding

- Liz Williams makes a motion to approve the 2024 STRIVIN budget. Alfred Jordan seconds the motion.
 - o AYE: Alfred Jordan, Lanna Ultican
 - o NAY: [None]

MOTION:

Meeting adjourned at 11:17 AM

ANNOUNCEMENT:

Next meeting is TBA.