

Work Group on Gang-Related Violence November 8-9 Meeting Summary

The Work Group on Gang-Related Violence held its fifth meeting November 8th-9th 2007 in Tacoma, Washington at the Tacoma Municipal Building and the Fleet Operations Training Room. Below is a summary of the two-day business meeting and community meeting.

Business Meeting 10:00AM-4:00PM

Workgroup members in attendance: Rep. Christopher Hurst, Rep. Charles Ross, Sen. Adam Kline, Sen. Jim Honeyford, Brad Blackburn, Dan Fessler, Ken Irwin, Ron Wilson, Bob Hicks, Tanya Kim, Chris Johnson, Terry Hayes, Steve Lowe, Bonnie Glenn, Gabriel Morales, Janice O'Mahony, Dave Gowan

The meeting began with a series of introductions. The purpose of this work group meeting was to begin drafting the report to the Legislature. Using a rough draft of the report provided by Rep. Chris Hurst, the work group discussed each recommendation and devised a plan to have it ready for the next meeting.

These discussions began with Dan Fessler and Steve Lowe presenting a gang definition that they drafted after the last meeting. The workgroup discussed the presented definition and made a variety of changes. The amended definition was re-printed and copied for distribution and continued discussion on the second day of the business meeting.

Following a discussion of the definition began consideration of the draft recommendations. The following highlights some of the key discussion topics:

- It was decided that the final report will include a summary of the trends in public testimony for each location. Steve Lowe volunteered to draft language that can be reviewed at the next meeting and included in the report.
- In light of the many city ordinances that have been passed, it was decided that a statement be included in the report, that the state should provide direction and guidance to cities struggling with a gang problem. Dan Fessler volunteered to draft language that can be reviewed at the next meeting and included in the report.
- There was also a recommendation that in the conclusion and executive summary of the report emphasis be put on the three-legged stool solution of prevention, intervention and suppression. Ken Irwin volunteered to draft language that can be reviewed at the next meeting and included in the report.
- The group discussed multiple elements regarding a statewide gang database include reporting, oversight, access, purge and inclusion criteria, etc. It was reaffirmed that the group has no intention of selecting a vendor, but rather providing guidelines for the state to aptly select an appropriate vendor. Brad Blackburn, Dan Fessler, and Ron Wilson agreed to collectively work together and draft language that can be reviewed at the next meeting and included in the report.

- The group decided that section 5 of the report on juvenile justice system modifications be expanded to include that there may be reforms after the pilot programs. Steve Lowe and Janice O'Mahony volunteered to draft language that can be reviewed at the next meeting and included in the report.

Community Meeting – 6:00-8:00PM

The Tacoma Community Meeting was held at the cafeteria at Lincoln High School. An estimated 75 members of the community attended, 16 of which testified and 6, including those who did not attend the meeting, left comments in writing. Below is a summary of the testimony presented and the comments submitted in writing.

Summary of community suggestions

- Responsibility lies with the parents. Parents need to be educated about the gang problem and encouraged to take an active role in the community.
- Elevate gang activity to terrorist/felony status for prosecution.
- Include educators in your recommendations. Need childhood education programs. Have gang intervention in primary schools. Increase communication between the police and the schools.
- The police are underfunded and there are more children than ever before joining gangs.
- Need to enforce current laws.
- Community involvement is an important element to stopping gangs from spreading into more neighborhoods. There are not enough evening activities for kids to become involved in. There needs to be more community-based centers.
- Increase resources to law enforcement to create task forces.
- Tagging should be a felony.
- Need firearm enhancements for gangsters. Redefine the crime itself for the enhancement.
- People need to report gun shots and other small incidences to help police track the crime.
- Don't slap a felony on people and then give them no guidance when they get out of jail; they will return to the gang.
- Privacy laws prevent the many different institutions that gang members are involved in from communicating (eg schools can't talk with community organization or the DOC).
- Make decisions with clear data – juvenile crimes are at an all time low.

The announcement for the community meeting was sent to the following people/organizations:

Tacoma Police Chief
 Tacoma City Manager
 Tacoma Mayor
 Tacoma City Council Members
 Tacoma Government Relations & Media Relations

Pierce County Sheriff
Pierce County Executive
Pierce County Council
Lakewood Police Chief
Lakewood City Manager
Lakewood Mayor
Lakewood City Council Members
Fife Police Chief
Fife City Manager
Fife Mayor
Fife City Council Members
Puyallup Police Chief
Puyallup City Manager
Puyallup Mayor
Puyallup City Council Members
Puyallup Lobbyist
2nd Legislative District Legislators
22nd Legislative District Legislators
25th Legislative District Legislators
28th Legislative District Legislators
29th Legislative District Legislators
30th Legislative District Legislators
31st Legislative District Legislators
Human Rights Commission
Commission on African American Affairs
Governor's Office of Indian Affairs
Commission on Hispanic Affairs

Business Meeting – Day 2, 10:00AM

Announcement: Members of the work group were encouraged to provide input on a second work group that the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction is hosting on gang violence in schools.

The workgroup debriefed about the community hearing and heard from the Chief of Police on the different law enforcement issues facing the Tacoma-area. Most recently, there have been reports of businesses fostering and promoting gang activity. Perhaps reforms can be made to the Liquor Control Board.

The work group continued discussion and development of the draft report.

- Discussion on integrating civil cause of action for graffiti has been delayed until the next meeting when everyone has had a chance to receive the information via e-mail.
- Discussion of the gang definition resumed and changes were made. A revised draft will be reviewed at the next meeting.

- The recommendation on civil gang injunction will allow the Legislature to determine the specifics. Dan Fessler volunteered to put together a bullet point draft of specific suggestions the work group will give the legislature. Then legislative staff can do a comparative analysis for the report.
- The group agreed to add community custody for felony possession of a firearm.
- Include a recommendation on adults recruiting juveniles. Discussed using a multiplying factor in sentencing.
- The group decided to continue discussions on enhancement for gang-related crime until the next meeting.

Meeting Adjourned.