

Upper Albany/Clay Arsenal Weed & Seed Steering Committee Minutes from 6/21/06 Meeting

WSSC Members Present (22/32): *Charles Barrow, Alston Belfast, Denise Best, Kenneth Callahan II, Chuck Cummings, Albert DiChiara, Lynn Ford, Duckworth Grange, Glendowlyn Hall, Jackie Hardy, Hattie Harris, Jean Holloway, Isabel Osorio-Vasquez, Lori Potter, Bea Powell, Edwin Rivera-Pacheco, John Schmaltz, Clorinda Soldevila, Rev. Don Steinle, Gerald Thorpe, Kevin Waite and Patricia Williams.*

Total Attendance: 43 persons, including 21 guests signed in.

The UACA Weed & Seed Steering Committee regular monthly meeting began at its new starting time, 4:00 PM, to accommodate the bifurcated format of the executive session preceding the 5:00 PM public forum.

This WSSC regular monthly meeting was opened by Law Enforcement Subcommittee chair *Lt. John Schmaltz, HPD Zone Four Commander*, in place of WSSC co-chairs *Assistant U.S. Attorney John Danaher* and *HPD Deputy Chief Neil Dryfe*. *Mr. Danaher* was at trial in New Haven and *D/C Neil Dryfe* was attending a three-week law enforcement leadership program at the John F. Kennedy School of Government (Harvard University) in Boston.

The minutes of the May 17, 2006 meeting were approved, and introductions of WSSC members followed.

Lt. John Schmaltz presented the Monthly Crime Report that reflected year-to-date decreases (-12.6%) in Part 1 crimes. Monthly totals were down (-33.3%), as well as shooting incidents (-33.3%) and shooting victims (-33.3%). Narcotics arrests were up (53.2.7%) compared to May 2005. Robbery (-16.7%), burglaries (-20.0%), aggravated assaults (-23.8%), auto theft (-29.4%), and larceny (-43.2%) have decreased for this reporting period. Overall May 2006 compares favorably with last years figures and continues the positive trending for Part 1 crime statistics. However murder and burglaries remain the categories requiring improvement.

Lt. Schmaltz also presented Operation "True North," announced by *HPD Chief Patrick J. Harnett* on June 7, through its task force commander, *Lt. William Long, HPD Zone One Commander*. "Operation True North" is the response by the Hartford Police Department and its law enforcement and community partners to stabilize those neighborhoods plagued by recent high levels of criminal gang activity and gun violence. The mission is to "identify, aggressively pursue, and bring to justice those individuals involved in gangs who are responsible for committing acts of violence in the Northeast sector of our city," per *Chief Harnett*. The overall goal is to stop the violence in the affected neighborhoods, reduce fear, and improve the "Quality of Life" for residents, business owners, and visitors to the City of Hartford.

Lt. Long cited that the members of Operation “True North” will identify and aggressively pursue gang members to seize guns and to prevent further violence in this seven days per week tactic. They will also seek to develop information leading to the arrest and incarceration of those gang members responsible for the past shootings. Operation “True North” consists primarily of officers assigned to the Northeast District as part of the HPD’s Neighborhood Policing Plan. *Sgt. Emory Hightower*, one State Police supervisor and twelve officers, six each from HPD and the State Police, will be paired and spearhead the operation. Through mandated three hour car/foot patrol shifts, the officers will cover the “hot spots” of the Northeast District. The State Police will also provide investigative resources to be partnered with HPD detectives.

The Northeast Neighborhood Policing Team also includes officers from the HPD’s Conditions Teams, Narcotic/Gun Teams, and detectives from the Major Crimes and Juvenile Investigation Divisions. In addition HPD detectives, federal agents from the Alcohol Tax and Firearms Bureau, and U.S. Marshal’s Service, who make up the federally funded Violent Crime Impact Team (VCIT) as part of the HPD Intelligence Division, will be part of Operation “True North”.

Furthermore, Operation “True North” will aggressively solicit help and cooperation from the community through effective communication, including opening an easy to remember TIPS HOTLINE 860-527-TIPS that will be staffed by experienced investigators.

Connecticut Chief State’s Attorney Christopher Morano has pledged the assistance of his Witness Protection Unit offering protection to information sources/witnesses who aid in successful prosecution of offenders.

Edwin Rivera-Pacheco expressed the need for improved street signage, including prominent building numbers to assist the “True North” patrol and crime response efforts.

Isabel Osorio-Vasquez reported that she has noticed improvements on Edwards Street.

Hattie Harris cited that drug dealing on Vine Street is becoming apartment-based, especially in Building 40. The illicit activity is worst in the evening, and is aided by cellphone lookouts.

Al DiChiara asked for reporting on Part 2 and Quality of Life crimes. *Lt. Schmaltz* (re)introduced *CSO Craig Francis*, who returning to his assignment to Upper Albany. *CSO Francis*, in addition to his regular Community Service Officer duties, has been working to reestablish NEST (Neighborhood Enforcement Stabilization Team) as a critical partner in the Weed and Seed Community Policing strategy. *Kristen Clark*, *Community Ambassador for The Village for Families and Children*, and a key NEST member reviewed the history of this HPD and social service professional alliance that focused on direct intervention, prevention and mediation for approximately forty “high risk” youth (ages 11-16) that largely had been referred by the School Resource Officers at Fox and Quirk middle schools.

Captain Richard Kemmett gave a brief summary of Safe Haven/Summer Basketball activity at the Albany Avenue Substation in previous years and requirements for greater success this year. Specifically there is a need for bottled or fountain water and a public

restroom/locker facility. *Chuck Cummings* has put in a request for an outdoor water fountain, and continues to appeal for volunteers.

The reports for the Community Policing, Prevention, Intervention and Treatment, and Neighborhood Restoration subcommittees followed. UACA strategies were identified for each group and outcomes were prioritized.

Al DiChiara distributed minutes and reported on the June 15 Community Policing Subcommittee meeting. He reported that there has been considerable attention on the 10-Point Plan, which was presented by the North Hartford Legislators, including *Senator Eric Coleman*, and *Representatives Kenneth Green, Marie Kirkley-Bey and Douglas McCrory*. The 10-Point Plan largely reflects the strategic plan developed by the WSSC and indicates that new funds have been appropriated for neighborhood programs. Therefore *Dr. DiChiara* had invited *Representatives Green and McCrory* to the Community Policing Subcommittee, but had not received a response. Nonetheless the subcommittee voted to pursue contacts with COBRA to discuss coordination and to explore additional funds for Weed and Seed strategies.

Dr. DiChiara made additional outreach, including follow-up letters, to each UACA state legislators on June 19, 2006. In addition Rep. Kirkley-Bey will be contacted for her input and assistance in youth employment.

Rev. Patrice Smith provided an update on her work to create safe homes on Wilcox and Enfield streets, the creation of a hotline and her night basketball league at the Albany Avenue Substation.

The Community Policing Subcommittee continues to advocate for ongoing HPD foot patrols. It is also in the process of meeting with those subgrantees that have been designated to support Weed and Seed Community Policing strategies. However this work has been slow due to poor availability, outdated contact information, or other delays in establishing review meetings.

The Community Policing training session, to be provided by *Sgt. Hightower*, was not held due to Operation "True North" assignments. It will be rescheduled for attendance by the entire WSSC.

Progress has been made reestablishing a Police Explorer program at Weaver High School.

Duckworth Grange reported on the June 12 Prevention, Intervention and Treatment (PIT) Subcommittee, beginning with a "Preventing Gangs in Our Communities" summary and an update on the subcommittee's gang prevention efforts. PIT subcommittee member *Margie Hudson*, of *DPH Injury Prevention Program on Vital Statistics*, that relates to the homicide rate of black males and to look at the causation and prevention measures needed.

Mr. Grange re-emphasized the need to address the needs of youth during the summer, and will continue to support the basketball programs of *Chuck Cummings* and *Rev. Patrice Smith* at the Albany Avenue Substation. Referees, HPD and adult volunteers, and sponsors

(for tee shirts, Gatorade, etc.) are still scarce, yet the need persists. *Mr. Cummings* is hopeful of University of Hartford basketball player and student intern support.

Milner Elementary School, largely through the DCF-managed Milner Project remains a major focus. Intervention has been required after the recent playground shooting and with the recurring graffiti.

HPD presence has been requested at the Greater Hartford Pro-Am, hosted annually at Fox Middle School.

The PIT Subcommittee continues to work diligently towards the strategic plan, and considers itself on the right track, noting the need to concentrate more on re-entry coordination with Parole Services and Probation. *Mr. Grange* reported that approximately 100 youth, between 17 and 20 years, are scheduled to return from Manson Correctional Facility to their communities shortly. More attention should be put into building protective factors for re-entering youth; and faith-based approaches should be also considered.

In all areas of Prevention, Intervention and Treatment greater parental involvement should be cultivated.

Marilyn Risi and *George Scott* were in Jamaica, and *Denise Best* had been ill, therefore there was not a Neighborhood Restoration Subcommittee report. However it is an addendum to these minutes.

The Executive Session ended at 5:25 PM.

Richard LeGrier, UACA Weed & Seed Coordinator, opened the public forum session within the WSSC regular monthly meeting with his monthly update. Besides his summary, he distributed a draft of “*Upper Albany/Clay Arsenal Safe Haven Model*” to depict the current allocation of funds for UACA subgrantees and Safe Haven sites.

Mr. LeGrier reported on his attendance at the CADCA Core Competencies and Evaluation Workshop, in Minneapolis, June 7-9; and he announced the arrangement by *Glendowlyn Hall* of the WSSC Luncheon with *Mayor Eddie A. Perez* and *Chief Patrick J. Harnett*, on Thursday, July 13, at 12:30 PM.. The CCDO Law Enforcement Conference in Phoenix, scheduled August 14 through 17 was also announced.

Institute of Law and Justice consultant, *Valencia Coar* is scheduled to return to provide technical assistance the subcommittees on June 26 and 27. All chairs and subcommittee members were asked to schedule meetings within the two days of her visit.

Full WSSC participation on the subcommittee level remains a concern. WSSC members were reminded that their true responsibility lies within their subcommittee participation and contributions to the strategic plan—and that mere attendance at the regular monthly meetings is not sufficient. WSSC membership cannot be sustained without constructive fulfillment of appointed roles. All members were asked to come prepared for their meeting, which includes remembering to bring monthly packets, relevant documents and note-taking supplies.

Eight youth are expected to be employed through Weed and Seed this summer: Five (5) New Britain Rock Cats Interns and Three (3) City of Hartford College Intern II positions. Most should begin working the week of July 10. A couple of the Rock Cats Interns will work Session Two, which begins the first week of August.

At least one intern will be supervised by the Weed and Seed Coordinator for college credit. Selection(s) will be made from a pool of Trinity College and University of Hartford students.

There is a July 10 target for “Step’N Up,” the HPATV program to showcase Weed and Seed, HPD and effective community partnerships.

Mr. LeGrier also welcomed *CSO Craig Francis*’ return and his rolling up of shirt sleeves to re-establish NEST. The coordinator also cited *Lori Potter, USAO-CT Law Enforcement Coordinator*, for her leveraging of Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) resources on behalf of Weed and Seed Law Enforcement goals and objectives. Considerations are being made for the marketing/media deliverables of the Year 1 strategy.

The public forum diverted from its agenda, as *Representatives Green and McCrory* arrived to address the WSSC, concerning Coalition of Blacks Ready for Action (COBRA) and North Hartford Legislators 10-Point Plan for Safety.

Carl Shields, MS, NCC, LPC, Director of Recovery & Community Integration for Capitol Region Mental Health Center presented on the Mobile Crisis Team and the HOPE Team (homeless outreach). His agency provides comprehensive, bi-lingual outreach and forensics services, with expanded services in mental health and substance abuse.

The meeting was adjourned with the announcement that ***the next WSSC meeting will be held at Community Health Services, on Wednesday, July 19, at 4:00 PM*** beginning the executive session and followed by the public forum at 5:00 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Richard LeGrier, III
UACA Weed & Seed Coordinator