

CITY COUNCIL  
INFORMATION COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES  
Wednesday, April 22, 2009

ALDERMAN PRESENT:

Deb Hadcock, Ron Kroeger, Lloyd LaCroix, Malcom Chapman and Aaron Costello.

STAFF PRESENT:

Jason Green, Wayne Asscherick, Barb Garcia, and Katie LeClair.

(NOTE: For the sake of continuity, the following minutes are not necessarily in chronological order. All referenced documents are on file with the Master Minutes.)

Council President Hadcock opened the Informational Committee Meeting at 12:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers at City Hall, 300 Sixth Street, Rapid City, SD 57701.

TOPIC:

1. Rapid City ReEntry Initiative
2. Financial Empowerment Programs (currently in place)
3. A possible Bank on Rapid City Initiative

Council President Deb Hadcock opened the meeting, introduced the agenda, and welcomed presenter, Wayne Asscherick. Asscherick presented information on the Rapid City ReEntry Initiative. Asscherick stated that that idea of a Re-entry program was originally formulated by Police Chief Steve Allender. Asscherick stated that the program's intent is to give individuals that coming out of the correctional system every opportunity to succeed. He stated that it takes more money to have people stay in a correctional facility. He stated that it will ultimately save money to help the individuals be successful in the community. Asscherick stated that this program will also make the community safer. He then introduced a six minute video that was a "snap shot" of other ReEntry Programs that have been successful throughout the nation.

The video, titled *Outside the Wall: A National Snap Shot of Community Based ReEntry Programs*, showed individuals who participated in and administrators of ReEntry Programs. The program focuses on employment, health, housing, faith, family and public safety assisting individuals before they are released from prison and after their release.

Asscherick showed a video clip of a lady from the Boston Police Department stating that the ReEntry Program is not "hug a thug." She stated that the Boston Police Department has learned the importance of knowing what they are good at, and partnering with organizations that are good at other things. Asscherick stated that that is what the RCPD has done, they are reaching out to other organizations in the community that are already working with released offenders, and partnering with them. Asscherick stated at the conclusion of the video that the program looks at the whole person. He stated that this program is not "hug a thug" and stated that individuals who participate in the program are held accountable for their actions.

Asscherick stated that in 2007 the Pennington County Jail released over 11,000 people back out into the community, including repeat offenders that were in and out of jail. Asscherick stated that Pennington County has a program called Rebound, which addressed mental health and medical issues. The program helped people stay on their medication, because if the individuals went off their medication it was more likely that they would end up back in the corrections system. Asscherick continued, stating that the Rebound program saved Pennington about one million dollars, simply by keeping those individuals out of the county jail.

Asscherick stated that 90 percent of the people in prison will be released, and come back into our communities. He asked if the community wants to put obstacles in these individuals way, or if the community wants to help these individuals be successful upon their release from jail.

Asscherick discussed the average daily count of prisoners in the SD Department of Corrections system statewide, 3451, and the cost per day state wide, \$238,119. He then discussed the recidivism rates in South Dakota. Asscherick continued, stating that in the state \$60,906 per day is spent on people who recidivate. He asked how that number can be reduced. Asscherick stated that the goal will be to reduce the number of people who recidivate by ten percent each year. Asscherick stated that there are programs within the correction system, such as GED, that are available for inmates to improve their lives. He stated that the ReEntry program will encourage inmates to take advantage of the programs available in jail, while they are serving their sentence. To accomplish this, Asscherick stated that the ReEntry Program will need to get in contact with potential clients prior to their release date to create a plan and get them involved.

Asser stated that the ReEntry Center will need to keep it simple so that the client is not overwhelmed. Asscherick stated that an admissions committee would look at the information available on the client, formulate a plan, and then forward the plan to a mentor/primary case manager who will keep the plan on track. Asscherick stated that a ReEntry Coordinator who would oversee the whole process. He continued, stating that they would be seeking federal grants to help fund the program.

Hadcock thanked Asscherick for his presentation and asked if there were any questions. Lloyd LaCroix thanked Asscherick for his presentation and stated that he liked the idea of the program and getting to someone early on and helping them before they are institutionalized. LaCroix stated that he is eager to see how this program moves forward.

Chapman stated that he understand the goal to reducing recidivism rates. He asked if there was an opportunity to keep people out of the legal system initially. He asked if that would be a role for the Rapid City Police Department or if that is a role for other programs.

Asscherick stated that he looks at it as a role for both the Rapid City Police Department and other programs. He stated that he thought that the primary role for the Rapid City Police Department would be to do parole checks and to make contact.

Hadcock asked how the ReEntry Program would be promoted. Asscherick stated that the program is promoted by individuals who work the corrections system already and know that Rapid City has a program. Asscherick continued, stating that they are in the beginning stages and may want to create a brochure. He suggested that a brochure be handed out to individuals when they enter the program that the state has. Asscherick stated that the reentry program will be there to assist the inmates once they are out in the community.

Hadcock stated that it seems that some people want to be educated while they are in prison. She asked if there is a segment of people in prison who will be targeted, like people involved in education programs. Barb Garcia took the floor and stated that all people that enter prison are informed of the programs that the state has. The goal is to have this program presented to all prisoners as they exit. She also stated that there are already programs in the community which assist released prisoners. Garcia discussed transition housing for released prisoners.

Hadcock stated that she thinks that they are doing a something very positive, a good thing for the community which will have a great savings.

LaCroix stated that he understands that there is a lot of work involved in the pre-release. He stated that he would like to be a part of it when they move forward with the program.

Asscherick resumed the presentation and showed a slide that listed all of the people that are involved in the program already. He stated that there is a lot of support in the community for this program.

Asser stated that he thinks that the future of the ReEntry Center will be a “one stop center” will be a place, not only for offenders, but for anyone in the community that needs assistance.

He stated that some of the barriers are social barriers and bureaucratic barriers in the community. He stated that there are some work place issues. He stated that he would like each person to have a state ID card issued to each person before they leave the system. He would like to help remove barriers that keep people from being successful when they reenter the community.

Asscherick showed a map of where offenders live in the Rapid City community. He showed a map of community safety zones. He showed a map of where sex offenders live. Asscherick stated that the most difficult people to place will be their focus clients.

Costello stated that he noticed that drug dependence was listed as the most difficult to place released prisoners. He asked if individuals with mental illness were difficult to place as well. Asscherick stated that they are, because those individuals have difficulty finding employment. Asscherick discussed drug dependence amongst released prisoners. Costello stated that he appreciates the effort being made.

LaCroix discussed affordable housing and assistance available for individuals who have committed a felony. He discussed that he thinks that this program can make a difference in a lot of people's lives.

Costello asked who are the easiest to place. Asscherick stated that the people that are easiest to place are those that have been in [prison] for a short amount of time, like for a DUI. He stated that those individuals have not lost their ties with the community and may need little or no help.

Council President Hadcock asked if there were any more questions, there were none. She thanked Asscherick for making his presentation today and introduced Barb Garcia who would be presenting next.

Garcia took the floor. She stated that she would be discussing the new programs and initiatives in the community: Second Chance Act Grant Application, Strengthening Families Task Force for Better Outcomes for Youth and Children and Bank on Cities Campaign.

Garcia discussed the Second Chance Act Grant Application to reduce the recidivism rate. She stated that the DOC is offering to front the upfront cash required for the grant. She discussed the focus for the state: high risk inmates returning to Sioux Falls and Rapid City. Garcia discussed intensive case management and cultural awareness for the program. Priority activities will be housing assistance; family reunification; mental health, brain injury, and fetal alcohol syndrome treatment; mentorship; and local coordinator for program management.

Garcia asked for questions. There were none.

Garcia moved onto the Strengthening Families Task Force. She stated that the task force identified the high priority issues in the community which needed to be addressed. Fifteen high priority issues were identified and eventually narrowed down to six: truancy and drop out, creation of youth council, early childhood development, transportation, mental health and substance abuse prevention, and mental health and substance abuse treatment. Committees were formed and tasked with creating one or two goals for the first year.

Garcia stated that the subcommittee for truancy and dropouts was led by Jeff Norris and Jud Thompson. She stated the goal for the truancy and dropout subcommittee was to amend legislation to change the dropout age to eighteen years old, previously the dropout

age was sixteen. She stated that they are attempting to abolish chronic truancy. They have done some truancy sweeps, and parental workshops.

Garcia discussed the creation of a Youth Council which is being led by Paul Wilkinson-Smith. Garcia stated that they have conducted a survey to see what the children want. She stated that they will use the information collected to they will form a Youth Council that will represent a broad spectrum of kids.

Garcia discussed the Early Childhood Development Subcommittee, which includes childcare, is being led by Rebecca Andrew. Their goals are to build public will in the community regarding child care and early education and to identify and understand needs of pre-K and Child Care in the community. The group has done a survey in the community and should have the results back soon.

Garcia discussed the Transportation Subcommittee, which is headed up by Alderman Lloyd LaCroix. They are working with the school district to make the bus times and bell times at schools match. She stated that they are working on bus times for swing-shift workers. She stated that they are working to accommodate appointment schedules and work schedules of offenders and homeless. She stated that often, bus schedules and work schedules don't match up.

Garcia stated that the preliminary goals of the Mental Health and Substance Abuse Subcommittee are prevention (led by Stephanie Schweitzer Dixon) and treatment (led by Eileen Leir and Linda Colhoff). She stated that one of the biggest issues that affect offenders and homeless individuals is mental health and substance abuse issues. Garcia discussed that the goal is to create a sustainable model that all of the shareholders will be involved in. The model will focus on a whole new system of care for mental health. The model will address prevention, family advocacy, service integration, and service infrastructure.

Costello asked if the creation of a Youth Council, and the youth survey, is using tools other than the internet to contact the students. Garcia stated that there are paper copies in the schools, at the YMCA, at the library, and online as many of the students have access to the internet at school. Costello asked if they know what type of response they have received. Garcia stated that the information is still being collected and will be compiled by Dr. Usera. Garcia stated she expects that to begin next month.

Costello next commented on transportation, he stated that the steps that are being taken to accommodate the workers schedule will benefit the community as a whole. He stated that he thinks that it is something that should be perused aggressively and he hopes that he can play a part in the effort.

LaCroix thanked Barb for all of her work. He stated that they have changed their name from Youth Council to Youth Engagement Committee. He stated that they are trying to set up a meeting for the beginning of next month, [May]. LaCroix stated that the youth

that have been attending the meetings have given a lot of input and feedback to the community.

Hadcock stated that she would like to thank Lloyd LaCroix putting so much of his time into this program.

Garcia continued and discussed the Bank on Rapid City Initiative. She stated that Rapid City received a technical assistance grant from the National League of Cities. She stated that there were eight other communities chosen. She stated that this program will provide the technical assistance that they need to make this program a success. Garcia stated that many programs are reactive; they don't address the root problem of poverty. Garcia stated that the only way to move out of poverty is to increase the amount of money coming in. She stated that the way to do this is to get a job—or a second, third or fourth job—and get more education. She stated that they will have conference calls with the other communities to share ideas. They will also communicate with other communities that have participated in this program previously, to discuss what worked for them.

Garcia stated that the goal is to make available to all residents the tools and products needed to achieve financial self-sufficiency and to improve their financial situation through education, asset building, and life skills and job training. The second goal is to, reduce the number of people using high cost check cashing and title loans by 33% within two years.

Garcia stated that there are already some programs in place. She discussed the 211 Help!Line. She stated that an individual can call 211 and state how they need help, the individual will then be referred to organizations that can help them. She discussed the 211 website and how it will help people, it lists government agencies as well. She showed a search that she made on the 211 website. She stated that the 211 website is a tool that she uses to assist people who walk into her office.

Garcia discussed AARP and VITA free tax preparation. Garcia stated that one of the main sources of revenue that people are not tapping into is the earned income tax credit. She stated that many people who don't file tax returns are eligible for an earned income tax credit. She stated that through the program, people can open up a bank account and the tax credit will be deposited into their bank account within a number of days.

Garcia discussed Individual Deposit Accounts, which provides incentives to encourage people to save money, a 3:1 match up to \$2,000/\$6,000. Garcia discussed that there are limitations pertaining to this program. The funds are to: start own business, purchase a home, and continue education or job training. Garcia discussed Consumer Credit Counseling Service of the Black Hills program which is 2:1.

Garcia discussed poverty simulations. They have put on six poverty simulations since Sept 23, 2008 and have three more simulations requested in the next two months. Garcia stated that the program was purchased to help individuals, who do not live in poverty, understand what it is like.

Garcia stated that they are trying to address the “fringe banking” services. These services are payday loans, title loans, check cashing services, pawn shops, and used car dealer financing. She stated that these services have high fees, high interest rates (she has seen 300% and heard of up to 800% interest). She discussed the advantages of these programs, convenient locations, non-judgmental staff, little paperwork, and they can receive funds quickly. She stated that financial education is part of it. She discussed the options that are out there to educate people. She stated that they want to create options to people at reasonable interest rates. They will create teams and form partnerships to provide outreach and education.

LaCroix stated that all of the programs that Garcia just discussed were brought back from the National League of Cities. He stated that the council members and staff have received a lot of information and benefits from the National League of Cities. LaCroix stated that he wanted to thank Chapman for bringing National League of Cities forward and for working in the area of affordable housing. LaCroix stated that he would like to thank Mayor Hanks and Kevin Thom for giving Garcia more help/staff in the office.

Hadcock asked if there were any other questions. She stated that she would like to thank Garcia and Asscherick.

Hadcock asked if there was a motion to adjourn. Chapman made the motion and LaCroix seconded the motion. Meeting adjourned.