

**MINUTES FROM FIRST COMMUNITY FORUM**

Phillip Livingston School

March 25, 2008 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM

**Task force Members:**

Rev. John U. Miller (chair)	Rev. Valerie Faust	Michael P. McDermott, Esq.
Rev. Dr. Edward B. Smart (vice chair)	Leslie Fisher	Dr. Leonard I. Morgenbesser
Allison Banks	Mark Harris, Esq. FOR Hon. P. David Soares	Robert L. Serenka, Esq.
Hon. Betty Barnette	Judge Gerald Maney	Chief James Tuffey
	Robert E. Worden	

**Common Council Members Present:**

Hon. Barbara Smith<sup>1</sup>      Hon. Shawn Morris      Hon. Dominick Caselero

Hon. Carolyn McLaughlin

CM	Question/Concern/Recommendation	Response <sup>2</sup>
1.	(volunteer for courts) The US department of justice did conduct a survey that had alarming results. It said that a large number of kids entering the juvenile justice system cannot read. The ASTOR program in the family court was so successful that the other kids in the school wanted to be a part of it. Bedford Hills has a 90% illiteracy problem. One city required that every household had a gun and it reduced gun violence.	
2.	(Lestor Freeman) I have been inspired by Ms. Banks. I graduated from Albany High School and I know that the public school system can work. The moment is now for all of us. The Task Force is a great first step. The fact that we have more charter schools than community centers is a problem. It's hard to dream and the task we have as administrators is to make sure they have hope. There are some public officials who have said that they would not even send their kids to public schools.	
3.	(Frank E. Oliver, Westend Neighborhood Association), The only thing I hear is that there is no hope from the senior citizens down to the young kids. So many kids have nowhere to go because both parents are working. We need more programs.	
4.	(Jose Lopez) I was hoping to become part of the board but wasn't accepted. The Task Force needs more people from the community on it. I think it is too early to see how the board is going to work. I hope it doesn't become like the police review board.	

<sup>1</sup> Common Council liaison to the City of Albany Gun Violence Task Force and Vice Chair of the Common Council Public Safety Committee

<sup>2</sup> At an earlier meeting the Task Force unanimously decided that this should be an opportunity to hear from the community rather than for them to do a lot of talking.

5.	(Barbara Judkins, Arbor Hill) The Kids To The Court program was good. Too many kids are depressed. My kids and I all graduated without a fight. The community raised us. I still live in Arbor Hill and it doesn't have to be bad.	
6.	(Chris Higgins, Albany County Legislator for the 6 <sup>th</sup> District) The County Wide buy-back program was good and one of the most successful programs form Orange County when they tried it. We need to try and get people to turn in guns from off the street.	
7.	(Martha) Losing a child is the worst thing in the world that any mother can go through. My goal in life is to speak to students and educate about the dangers of gun violence.	
8.	(Annette) Suggests getting a collective of state, city, and county funds to make a documentary based on the streets of Albany about the danger of guns. We need to de-mystify the need to have a gun. We should have PSA's on major and local stations. Kids just don't get it.	
9.	(Ralph Pesno Jr.) Where are they getting the guns? Across the borders from China. Crimes aren't being committed by legal firearm. I want to make sure this group distinguishes between law-abiding gun owners and illegal gun owners. The state police can't protect everyone individually. It's not their job. We shouldn't go in the direction of making citizens the target. We need to urge stiff penalties and enforce them because the recidivism rate is ridiculous. When citizens are targets the whole nation falls to tyranny.	
10.	(Beverly Pagent) I have 11 grandkids in Albany. Six of them were put in danger by the shooting on Lark right outside their bedroom window. Where have you ever seen a city with less than 100,000 people with three ghettos? These children are dying. How can you be expected to know how to read if you get kicked out of school for 3 to 4 months for every little thing? It's not the charter schools that are the problem. Minority run programs are not getting funding.	
11.	(Phoebe Wilson) [announcing Personal empowerment workshop with Corey Ellis this Friday at Arbor Hill Community Center Firehouse 7 to 9 and also on Saturday morning from 9:30 to 2pm]	
12.	(Hon. Dominick Caselero, common council member) I appreciate the Task Force and know that a lot of good things are going to come from it. We need a program to help shuttle kids back and forth to the boys and girls programs.	
13.	(John Cousteau) There are drugs moving into the rural communities in Vermont and gun laws are relaxed. This may be a regional thing so we should take a multi-state view about some of what is happening. It is going to impact other locations as well.	
14.	(Viola Brown) I have been in Albany since I was 17. Crime was never this bad. Chief Tuffey is doing a wonderful job. A lot of kids don't want to speak up unless it is in privacy. They are afraid of gang retribution.	
15.	(Deretha Brace, Jalieq Rainwater Task Force) I could walk right out and buy a gun because it is not that difficult. Hope starts in the home with your mother and father. If the parent cannot instill that then what hope do they have? Unemployment, welfare, poverty are also issues. Most kids sell drugs to help their families.	
16.	(Epstenin Mackie, fireman) The problem goes beyond just guns. We see parents coming into the schools and sticking up for disorderly kids. We have to pierce our kids hears with love, compassion, and kindness. We need to teach our children to love	

	one another. We can basically pick out a kid at age 10 and say that they are going to jail.	
17.	(Tameka Freeman, homeowner in City of Albany) A lot of fault lies in the household. Roundtable discussions need to be held about how to help our kids. There should be more parents here tonight. More presence of the police would be good too.	
18.	(Ed Haddock, attorney) I have gotten to know a lot of judges since I graduated law school. The state of Florida made a law that you can presume deadly force, and when its self defense there is not prosecution. I am glad the task force is not polarizing itself against legitimate firearm owners. We should double the time served for someone committing a crime with a gun. I thought it was going to be firearm owners vs. the government. I'm glad it's not.	
19.	(Wanda Willingham) I am disappointed at the turnout because it's always the same people. I lost my child on the street right across from the fire department one summer. He was raised in the church and I was the choir director. Supposedly all the ingredients of a good child. When drugs hit Albany it hit hard and created a different culture. I went to Albany High and asked the kids who had been involved with any gun violence in their family and 75% raised their hands. Ninety percent of the kids knew someone with a gun. When kids go off to jail who do you think winds up with the gun? We need to educate about guns and need more programs for the kids. There is nothing for them to do.	
20.	(teenager) I've had a couple of friends shot and everybody knows what it's like. Parents need to get their kids off the street and the school system is a problem too.	
21.	I agree 100 percent with the call for more after-school programs. There is a building in Southend that is crying for a community center. It would be nice to get a handout. We can't even get zoning for a building. If we can reach the kids when there are 9, 10, and 11 then they won't have a gun at 12, 13, 14, and 15.	
22.	What about the 6 other nights when there is not a YMCA night? What about the kids on the corner. The County has cut a lot of programs and built juvenile detention centers. Three young black men have lost their lives and no one bought to justice because of it. A lot of seniors go to work and come home and lock their doors. What are we doing as a community?	
23.	(Hon. Carol McLaughlin, Majority Leader Ward 2) We have heard a lot tonight about resources, strategy and helping existing programs. A lot of people here are already involved in the community. We do need community centers in the city because right now it's the corner. We need to tap into the business and union communities because that is where the jobs are. Young people like to produce something and if we can provide them with the skill to produce something positive.	
24.	(Theo Levy) Thanks everyone for coming out and is thinking about how there are so few meetings in 2007 focused on the issue of youth violence in Albany. I think it's prompted by skepticism that the task force will ever really get off the ground. We need to have enthusiasm for the task force and figure out how to support the community.	

Minutes Submitted by,

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