

# **CITY OF ALBANY GUN VIOLENCE TASK FORCE**

PUBLIC SAFETY BUILDING  
165 HENRY JOHNSON AVE.

November 18, 2008  
4:00PM TO 6:00PM

## **Task Force Member Present:**

Rev. John U. Miller (chair)  
Dr. Rev. Edward B. Smart (vice-chair)  
Mark Harris FOR Hon. David Soares  
Allison Banks  
Leslie Fisher  
Dr. Leonard Morgenbesser  
Rev. Valerie Faust  
Dr. Robert Worden  
Robert Serenka, Esq.  
Mike McDermott, Esq.  
Judge Gerard Maney  
Hon. Betty J. Barnette

## **Members absent:**

Chief James Tuffey

## **Common Council Members Present:**

Hon. Councilwoman Barbara Smith  
Hon. Common Council President Shawn Morris

## **Members of the Community Present: 9**

**Rev. Miller** appreciates all of the hard work by the members throughout the course of the year.

**Dr. Worden** distributes the draft of the final report.

**Dr. Morgenbesser** distributes a memo re: Materials for Review, Meeting of 18 November 2008

**Mr. Fisher** distributes two emails regarding the roles of the task force members after the term is over. One email on the Task Force's potential ongoing advocacy roles to assure actions on the Final Report ; the other showing examples of cost containment and cost savings, to be added to our Final Report, from several of our Recommendations for prevention/ interventions.

**Dr. Morgenbesser** leads the task force members through the five points of his memo regarding the final report and recommendations. He wants the fact that 41.6% of children are living in poverty to be included in the final report. He also points to data from the Times Union regarding some 325 guns seized by the police department and, even though it was decided not to address gun trafficking in the final report, in accordance with the mandate of the common council this fact should be addressed. Dr. Worden cited

a 2004 National Research Council study but more data should be cited in order to provide a broader perspective. Information was requested by a council member on gang intervention and suppression. He refers members back to his previous mention of Judge Drago's policy of not granting plea bargains in cases involving guns. There should also be a mention of the link between firearms and domestic violence.

**Rev. Smart** recommends that Dr. Morgenbesser's information be added into the report.

**Rev. Miller** points out that much of this information was the reason the task force was created and the common council may already be aware of it.

**Hon. Barbara Smith** raised the point that there were no references in the final report about the causes of poverty. This is a major opportunity to address this issue.

**Rev. Faust** agreed with Ms. Smith. She liked the chart at the beginning of the final report draft and thinks that a narrative or an appendix about the causes of poverty would be beneficial.

**Rev. Smart** recommended that a vote be taken to include both Dr. Morgenbesser's and Mr. Fisher's suggestions.

**Mr. Serenka** said that the narrative Rev. Faust mentioned could go after the chart on page 5 but more specifics would be needed.

**Mr. Fisher** suggested adding the letter from the diocese.

**Dr. Worden** said that the letter could be added to the section entitled Gun Violence in Albany.

**Rev. Faust** stressed the importance of the report being specific to Albany and not too generic.

**Hon. Barbara Smith** said that it's important to include a statement that unless poverty is addressed we will most likely see a rise in gun violence.

**Mr. Fisher** said that Ms. Smith's recommendation and Dr. Morgenbesser's should be included on page 13. The importance of children services and a summary of what the map means and where the resources are should be included as well. Those included: Final Report Maps should show overlays of (1) the demographics of poverty areas, (2) to the major crime areas, and (3) to the current ( youth ) resources . The maps were shown at an earlier TF Meeting as prepared by a summer intern.

**Mr. Harris** pointed out that if a map is used, it should not be the crime map. Gun violence is not necessarily happening where all the other crime is occurring. A gun violence map should be used instead.

**Mr. Serenka** said that the Common Council's children services map would be useful too.

**Ms. Smith** said that it might be beneficial to compare the two maps and include an explanation as to their connection. There's a study that showed that the more resources and infrastructure within the impoverished community, the better.

**Ms. Banks** asked **Ms. Morris** if the cease fire work the common council is doing is different from what the Task Force is doing.

**Ms. Morris** responded that the concern of some council members is that if we accept the recommendations in total, will we then be responsible for all of the implementation.

**Ms. Banks** said that one council member expressed that there was no money for any of the programs.

**Rev. Smart** said that references to “African American males”, absent an explanation as to why they are being singled out is inappropriate. The reason they might break the law has nothing to do with the color of their skin and referencing it gives the impression that they are the only ones doing it.

**Dr. Worden** agreed to remove the references.

**Mr. Fisher** agreed. He also stressed the importance of mentioning the Cost savings aspect and Cost Containment aspects of preventing gun violence. We should also cite resources that are available. When the Task Force dissolves, we have a role in making sure the implementation takes place.

**Dr. Worden** suggested using Dr. Morgenbesser’s media report as an appendix.

**Mr. Fisher** believes the text of the report is sufficient in regard to the Mayor’s Council meeting. We should footnote select papers and provide a brief explanation of what they are about.

**Dr. Morgenbesser** expressed concern about the lack of information about where the guns are coming from, regardless of gun trafficking concerns. We need to deal with the issue.

**Rev. Faust** agreed that it should be discussed because it is specific to Albany and is something the Task Force has discussed.

**Mr. Harris** agreed that it should included in some form but, using the data table based on Times Union data, is not a good idea. The numbs do not relate to anything that any valid conclusions may be drawn from.

**Dr. Morgenbesser** said that there are some standard definitions for the terms used in the table.

**Mr. Fisher** said that the better parts of the paper should not be diluted with secondary data. Dr. Morgenbesser will surely provide the common council with updates.

**Dr. Morgenbesser** said that the 2006 and 2007 chart is from official Albany data. It is valuable information and we are not implying that anyone was lazy or committed malfeasance.

**Dr. Worden** suggested putting the information in context as was done with data on firearms and shootings.

**Ms. Banks** said that the root causes are not being addressed.

**Rev. Smart** said that the report does not talk about how we’re going to find jobs, eradicate poverty, etc. He agrees that whoever has any data should be allowed to include it in the report. However, the report

should send the message to common council that we need jobs and education. No recommendations have been made about how we are going to save the lives of these children. There is no passion in there at all.

**Rev. Faust** reminded everyone that community members have expressed that the Task Force was just another committee and the report is starting to sound like that. She agreed that more passion is needed.

**Mr. McDermott** suggested that all the members write a personal statement, expressing their own passion.

**Dr. Worden** agreed and said that the statements would be included in unedited raw form.

**Mr. Serenka** said that all of the statements should be emailed to both himself and Dr. Worden **by Friday at 5:00 pm.**

**Dr. Morgenbesser** also agreed to pull together some narratives regarding individual incidents of domestic violence as well as for the other parts of the report.

**Minutes Respectfully submitted by,**

Tehra Coles

Gun Violence Task Force Intern