

Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee Meeting Minutes

July 23rd, 2020 | 8:00 AM | | Online via Microsoft Teams

Meeting Called By Jill Hermanutz
Facilitator Catherine Johnson

Committee Members/Representatives Present
Toddrick Barnette, Steve Fletcher, Michael Freeman, Tamara Garcia, Laura Hoffman for Marion Greene, David Hutchinson, Catherine Johnson, Jeff Johnson, Sarah Lindahl-Pfieffer, Jeff Lunde, Julie Maas-Kusske, Mary Moriarty, Mary Ellen Heng for Erik Nilsson, Michael Risvold, Rolf Sponheim, Mark Thompson and Jonathan Wetternach for Eric Werner
Guest Presenter: Shawn Sorrell
Guest: Huda Ahmed
Staff: Jill Hermanutz

AGENDA TOPICS

Time allotted 8:00-8:10 | Agenda topic: Welcome Introductions, Announcements, and Approval of Meeting Minutes | *Presenter:* Catherine Johnson

- Motion to approve the minutes from the May 2020 meeting was made and seconded. The motion was carried by the committee.
- Catherine Johnson welcomed new members:
 - Mayor Julie Maas-Kusske, the new suburban mayor representative following the retirement of Mayor Winstead
 - Chief Judge Barnette
 - Criminal Presiding Judge Tamara Garcia

Catherine Johnson welcomed Huda Ahmed, who had been invited at the request of Commissioner Greene. Ms. Ahmed will be leading a new collaboration among the Greater Twin Cities United Way, the Minneapolis Foundation and the Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation. The collaboration will be looking at dismantling inequities in the criminal justice system.

- Check CJCC website for agendas and minutes

Time allotted | 8:10-9:10 | Agenda topic: Vision of CJCC
Lead: Catherine Johnson, CJCC Chair

Catherine Johnson said that, as outlined in her email and in light of the recent public safety crisis, she felt this was a time to revisit the vision and strategic goals of the CJCC with this unique body of criminal justice leaders in one place. She hoped to take advantage of the opportunity to find unifying themes and actions moving forward similar to what was done last summer with the juvenile crime issues. She referenced the death of George Floyd along with the public response and violence that occurred, particularly in Minneapolis, since the last meeting. She said she hoped to identify issues that this unique group could tackle as a collaborative to improve equity, reduce violence and have a positive impact for the public. She asked committee members to share thoughts on the top priorities facing the community and consider areas where action was possible. She posed these questions to attendees: What might we be able to do? What are the issues?

Thoughts shared by committee members included:

- Sheriff Hutchinson said that he felt there was a duty to intervene and the Sheriff's Office had been making changes for the last 1 ½ year such as the wellness options for officers and working to change public opinion. The legislature was revamping the way law enforcement does things, but he felt that the blame can't be laid solely on the police on the street. He spoke about the need to hold repeat offenders accountable, but that first-time nonviolent offenders should receive assistance. He noted other factors including mental health and addiction where partnerships with other experts are needed.
- Michael Freeman mentioned the efforts made within the criminal justice system over the last year, particularly noting the decrease in jail population in response to COVID-19. The jail population had been reduced from over 800 to below 400. He noted other successes including JDC population reductions, juvenile diversion efforts, placement of senior prosecutors in the MPD's sex crimes unit, and efforts starting on domestic abuse. These have not captured public attention. He added there are a lot of good law enforcement officers out there, but the system has not been doing a good job of rooting out the bad ones.
- Jeff Lunde said that police represent the equal sign in a long equation that includes economic disparities, trauma, mental health, education gaps and more. By the time law enforcement is involved, there has been failure at so many different levels. In talking about legal reforms, consideration needs to be given to why people feel there are no opportunities for people at 18, and then have to look back further to when the youths were 14-15 years old. He added while he supports the Governor's mask mandate, he commented on who would be expected to enforce this. While police reform is talked about, when in doubt, everyone goes right to enforcement.
- Rolf Sponheim suggested looking at pre conviction fairness, noting alternatives to bail, keeping victims safe and fairness to defendants. He asked to consider why booking photos are public prior to conviction in data privacy rules.
- Mary Ellen Heng said one of her top issues has been driver's licenses and getting more people valid. She sees people with suspended driver's licenses where fines and fees are owed in the thousands of dollars; it is unrealistic to expect them to be able to get their licenses back under these circumstances and efforts have stalled at the legislature for the last three years in a row. She added that drivers with a valid license are less likely to be stopped and have better job opportunities.
- Steve Fletcher noted there has been a massive list of things that MPD has been asked to respond to that have accrued over time; as response codes are being reviewed, it appears that only 10-20% absolutely need MPD with an armed response and threat of arrest. He added there is a present challenge with lack of community trust and that the public safety system won't work if people don't call in – that trust needs to be rebuilt. He indicated here are currently vibrant discussions with the community on what belongs in policing and what things belong with a different type of response.
- Mary Moriarty said she thought this conversation was going the way most do in the county – all directed at MPD and police. She felt that there were a lot of problems that need to be addressed. She added that all agencies are part of the system and not trusted in the community, including the Public Defender's Office. She added that she expects the group will take the next year to talk about racial disparity and how to reduce it while never talking about accountability in depth within the system nor drilling down into the hard areas. She felt this was not just a policing problem. She added that to honor George Floyd's memory, the justice system needed to take a hard look at each agency / department and how each contributes to racial disparity in order to transform the entire system and help MPD and other law enforcement agencies.
- Commissioner Johnson agreed it was important to look at disparities, policing issues and race in the county. He said the Board often talks about disparities in income or the justice system while suggesting that systemic racism is the only reason for this. He felt in the bigger picture people's own behaviors need to be looked at and people have to be held accountable for and at the same time looking at government policies that while intended to help have actually made problems worse.
- Judge Barnette said he sees that there is not one particular issue, but it is the justice system as a whole. He said the group should pick something that the group can move forward with and take action – the community is asking us to act. He suggested finding something that all can agree on and move forward with action.
- Mark Thompson said he agreed with Ms. Heng on the importance of resolving driver's license issues – this has been brought to the legislature a number of times and now is the time to finally get legislation passed to

resolve these problems. He mentioned other successes, including adult detention reform undertaken several years ago. He said he had asked a group within the Public Safety domain to look at the issues such as the ones being discussed as this was an opportune time to pursue action.

- Commissioner Fernando said that she would personally focus on age or policies affecting young people; she noted that healthcare has moved the age to 26 years old. She noted the importance of providing support so young people can become contributing members of society. She mentioned her strong support for ending sexual violence and that she was thrilled to serve as the commissioner sponsor to the No Wrong Door. She pointed out that a young girl could be trafficked at age 12, but then at age 22 could also go to prison based on the way laws are set up.
- Ms. Heng noted that diversion programs – all with outside vendors – have costs that require defendants to pay, which is prohibitive. She asked if there was any way this cost could be absorbed by the justice system to make it more accessible and affordable, which would result in saving money down the road by helping young people stay out of the justice system.
- Ms. Johnson added that in the COVID-19 response, everyone on work release had been placed on EHM and no one on work release was at the ACF; people were successful and there were very few violations. She added that everyone had worked hard to reduce populations at the jail, ACF and JDC; now the question is how to maintain this moving forward in a way that makes sense.

Ms. Johnson thanked everyone for sharing and said she had found it very helpful. The September meeting will have time dedicated to strategic planning / action planning around this conversation.

Time 9:10-9:30 | Agenda topic: Disparity Reduction Progress Report
Lead: Shawn Sorrell, DOCCR

Shawn Sorrell introduced himself, noting that he is the manager for Diversity and Equal Justice Unit in DOCCR and worked directly for Mark Thompson and Chester Cooper as the Domain Leader for the Justice Domain. He then provided a progress report on the efforts of Justice Domain, adding that the last report to the CJCC had been in January 2019. He noted that with the start of the pandemic, efforts were focused on stopping the spread of COVID-19, adding that some great things had been put in place such as expanded EHM. Since the death of George Floyd forced us to acknowledge that historical disparities exist and question what we are doing as a system to eliminate disparities, the group has had very candid conversations. He added that they are still moving forward and working on probation reform and enhancement of early discharge policy with the Court and County Attorney. Another project has been restitution and more than 35 partners participated in a virtual workshop earlier this year to discuss strategies. A restitution action team continues to look at strategies and what hampers peoples' movement through the probation system and early discharge. He said he felt that there was a renewed commitment in all Public Safety partners coming together, from elected officials to the community, to make a transformation of the justice system.

Time 9:08 | Agenda topic Adjournment

- Next CJCC Meeting is September 24, 2020

RELEVANT LINKS OR RESOURCES

[Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee Website](#)