

# **GUN VIOLENCE TASK FORCE**

## **Meeting Minutes**

Tuesday, February 5, 2008

4:00 PM

Evangelical Protestant Church, Albany, NY  
(Clinton St & Alexander St)

### **Task Force Members Present:**

Allison Banks  
Leslie Fisher  
Hon. Gerard E. Maney  
Michael P. McDermott, Esq.  
Rev. John U Miller  
Dr. Leonard I Morgenbesser  
Robert L. Serenka, Esq.  
Rev. Dr. Edward B. Smart  
Mark Harris, Esq. FOR Hon. P. David Soares  
Police Chief James Tuffey  
Robert E. Worden

### **Task Force Members Absent:**

Hon. Betty Barnette  
Rev. Valerie Faust

### **Council Members Present:**

4<sup>th</sup> Ward Council Member Barbara Smith (Vice Chair of Council's Public Safety Committee)

### **Members of the Public Present: 3**

Task Force Chair Rev. John Miller called the Meeting to order at 4:00PM.

Rev. Miller asked for a moment of silence for the three recent shooting victims on Delaware Avenue.

Rev. Miller commended the Albany Police Department for their good police work, by the quick arrest of the alleged gunman----- and his comments were met with unanimous applause.

A brief discussion was held concerning the origin of the gun. Chief Tuffey could not comment in great detail beyond stating that the gun used in the crime was not stolen.

He did, again, reiterate that factors such as turf, vengeance, personal relationships, often enter into gun violence crimes. Rev. Miller said that it's like having a ticking bomb ready to go off.

Rev. Smart said that he knew many of the family members affected by the loss of a loved one in this recent tragedy. Some of them are pillars of the community.

Dr. Morgenbesser reminded the Task Force that he is still trying to get Albany Medical Center to have a program at Albany Medical Center for gun violence victims and their families.

Rev. Miller asked for, and received, approval to accept the minutes of the January 15<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Rev. Miller asked if there are any subcommittee reports.

Mr. McDermott presented the Task Force with a Prevention Issues Subcommittee report. Their next meeting will be on February 8, 2008.

Mr. Worden said that the Data Committee did not meet but that he did undertake some analysis of shootings in the City of Albany, with the assistance of data from the Albany Police Department.

Dr. Morgenbesser showed a chart that he said revealed some startling data—that an analysis of guns used in NYC crimes, showed that the highest percentage of guns come from New York State itself. Not outside of New York State, as one would think!

Chief Tuffey said that there is a lot more to it than what the chart shows. Were they stolen? Were they purchased legally? It still shows that 85% of the guns originated outside of New York State.

Mr. Fisher wondered if the victim and perpetrator are usually from the same general area.

Mr. Worden stated that the sex, race, socioeconomic background, criminal history, are often the same.

Rev. Miller said that he had seen some scary things in parts of the south, where guns were displayed openly.

The Community Action Subcommittee (a/ka education, a/ka street subcommittee) did not meet since the last general meeting.

Ms. Banks spoke about the DCJS program/conference she just came from. There was a lot of useful information about how important data is, and how the various police departments and schools can work together. She was disappointed that there were apparently no local school officials there, with the exception of newly elected Albany School Board member, Melissa Mackey.

Chief Tuffey mentioned that there are 17 Project Impact areas in the state, and Albany is one of them. He is looking at getting a crime analyst center sited in Albany, and he is meeting with the District Attorney and NYS DCJS on Friday to discuss.

Mr. McDermott said it would be useful to have some school district people in to speak.

A discussion was commenced when Dr. Morgenbesser brought up the possibility of having an emergency room version of scared straight. Some members of the Task Force thought that it was not clear that this would have a beneficial impact; in fact, it may have the reverse effect of glorifying the event like wearing a badge of honor.

Chief Tuffey reiterated previous remarks that we should not lose our focus. Look at family issues, and intervene before someone even picks up a gun.

Rev. Smart reminded the group that the majority of these crimes are not seen by the family as a glorified thing. Mothers lose their children in these crimes. Chief Tuffey agreed that it is a small cadre of these guys who wear their wounds like a badge of honor.

Ms. Banks said that the key is to prevent the event before it gets to the point of someone ending up in the emergency room of the hospital.

Rev. Miller wanted some suggestions on who should be on the list of invited guests to speak to either one of the subcommittees, or the whole Task Force. Some of the initial names/positions are as follows:

- Harris Oberlander- Trinity Institution
- Principal of Albany High School
- Teacher's Union representative
- Dr. James Crucetti, Commissioner, Albany County Health Department

Chief Tuffey said that there should be protocols put in place. Open forums? Restrict to the subject/topic

Mr. Harris felt it was important to set up a meeting later in the day for public input.

Mr. Fisher and Rev. Smart spoke about the Community Action Committee (a/ka education committee/street committee) sending out questionnaires. Perhaps there are things not being done in the schools.

Mr. Worden said we should look at what programs the school district has, and compare them to evidence-based programming.

Ms. Banks said that we should get the power point presentation that DCJS used at the recent conference she attended.

Other possible presenters:

- Cook Barrett, Gang Prevention Coordinator
- John Cutro, Restorative Justice Program
- Lisa Good, Drug Treatment Program at the Homer Perkins Center
- Representative of the *All City PTA* (different than PTA that conducts fundraisers, etc.)

**Rev. Miller now wanted to discuss ideas on how to give the public the opportunity for input at Task Force Meetings.**

It was decided to provide the public with an opportunity for input, during a half hour segment at the end of the first meeting of each month (1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday of each month). Those meetings could begin a half hour later and give the public an opportunity to be heard from 6:00PM to 6:30PM.

These "public input opportunities" are different than those when a specific issue is being discussed. For example, if the Task Force is having a "public forum" on a specific issue---not one of its regular meetings---the public will have an opportunity to weigh in on the particular subject being addressed at that public forum.

The date and site for the first forum to be decided.

NEW BUSINESS:

Dr. Morgenbesser spoke of the need to study of what resource exist—and what resources are needed---when situations of gun violence arise.

Rev. Smart spoke about the many efforts that take place, particularly in the black community—to provide guidance and support to family members impacted by gun violence. There are many ways---not the least of which is spiritual—in which the community demonstrates their support.

Mr. Harris wished to inform the Task Force that Mr. Soares was unable to personally attend the meeting, due to an emergency

The next meeting of the Task Force will take place at the Sweet Pilgrim Baptist Church (Clinton & Ten Broeck Street, just up from the Palace Theatre) on Tuesday, February 19, 2008 at 4:00PM. Judge Maney said that members of the Task Force may use the parking of the Albany Family Court Building (across the street on Clinton Avenue).

A motion was made to adjourn.  
Meeting adjourned.

*Respectfully Submitted*  
*By John Marsolais*

**THANKS TO REV. MILLER FOR THE BEVERAGES AND COLD CUTS**