

# **GUN VIOLENCE TASK FORCE**

## **Meeting Minutes**

Monday, February 18, 2008

4:00 PM

[INSERT LOCATION], Albany, NY

(address or intersection)

### **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

Hon. Betty Barnette

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

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:**

revisions to the last week minutes: "Mr Fisher: pointed out that the information may assist in coming up with economic cost factors savings in gun violence prevention programs"

The Task Force unanimously decides to change the format of the meeting and allow for the public to comment first.

<b>CM</b>	<b>Comment</b>	<b>Response</b>
Donald Collins	(former homicide prosecutor from New Orleans who now resides in Albany) When he heard about this meeting he decided to come down and offer his support. He is concerned that he does not see where the Federal Government is represented in Senator Collins plan. This issue is more than a statewide problem. Is concerned with celebrities like Fifty Cent being used in any media campaign	
Laurie Meyers	(Colonie resident) Here son was murdered in Albany in 1994. She wants to know what the Task Force is planning on doing. What is going to happen beyond just meeting? We have to take back the streets. The National Guard used to have a program for at risk youth for 16 weeks. Many of them were not educated enough to know they had options outside of violence. We need to focus on education as well  Asks whether the Task Force has ever met with any kids and asked them about this issue.	Ms. Banks points out that it is the kids on the street that need to be canvassed more so than the ones in school.  Chief Tuffey says that they have met with kids at the YMCA.
Mr. Scarf		

Community feedback:

RS: Mr. Scarf, you and a few others have mentioned about meeting with people who are working with them → a gang seminar is in the works, because we believe as some of you believe that we need to → I believe as a community that the person should come forward themselves (who killed this little girl) admit that you made a mistake

Mr. Scarf (again) → I cannot in my wildest imaginable dreams I cannot imagine holding a child as it is dying. I was convicted of a felony, a white collar crime → I got to know a lot of people and to see a child die in your arms and to hear about it, there has to be answer to the problems that are happening in Albany → it doesn't matter if you're living in Delmar or wherever, but I would implore you to listen to people → Jenna Foundation for Nonviolence, this foundation should come in and speak with kids, it's a grass roots program

→ the stamp of a felony on the forehead, can it be held in abeyance b/c I'm luck enough to have the education but so many kids have to carry that from job to job and one of the reasons the recidivism is so high

John Coutreau responds: comes down to shame → the way that people respond to shame is to do one of five things, one of the main ones is to attack others or avoidance behavior (drugs, exhibitionist) the stigmatizing types of shame → we need to change our tactics to reintegrating change

RM: I have walked many people through the process of getting a certificate of relief of disabilities

Allah Son Allah: if you want to work then someone will hire you. I did 14 years and got to work. But in order to survive in jail I had to turn into a monster like the other prisoners but when you make it back out you're a monster and the federal programs have the halfway house program but the state system just sends them straight back out → you don't get hired b/c you didn't take advantage of the pre-release program → the problem is if you don't present yourself in a respective form

RM: the task force has filed an interim report with the task force and the final report is due in November. → a community has got to become so outraged by this that it identifies the person who fired the shots, there were all kinds of people who were on the scene who saw the shooter and by the next

Jose Lopez: applied to be a member of the board but wasn't selected → I know the police have to be involved in this solution but what are you going to do for people in the streets and the police have to do more than they are → don't want

Tom Scarf: I've lived in every district of Albany from west end to central and the problem transcends committees → the shooting the other day has no excuses or reasons, when you have a community where people will shoot a gun into a street filled with kids → I look at the panel and see that no members of gangs are on the panel. I look at Jose Lopez and wonder why he wasn't selected → in major cities around the United States cities have enlisted the help of gang members and I don't see anybody here who can give the same perspective → I can remember when I was a child in this city I remember when shootings were on the front page for weeks. What has happened to our city. He's the 6<sup>th</sup> chief (CT) under this administration and he's the first that's qualified to do this → it's not about white against black → it's about another little child was born and another child was killed in the ghetto → another little child was killed in the ghetto → we have to stop that → need to be able to profile the buses coming out of NYC into Albany → look at bad cops and implore the chief to tell the community who the bad cops are → need to go into the community and talk to the people

- until a 400 million dollar convention center maybe we should put it into putting more officers on the street. We don't know if the convention center is going to be good or bad

RM: remember we have an overwhelming majority of young kids that don't do wrong

Robert Mosely: resident of city of Albany forever → I have a prevention type idea to stop this type of violence → the police officers should have the same type of "campaign mentality" and go into the community and in the neighborhood → have meetings where they can talk w/ the members of the community and police officers to get a handle or start working together to address the situation and both sides should try to come together → need have rapid response to the needs of the community not just to 911 calls →  
→ was in the service and part of a strike force →

Alex Jackson: I think police are trying to do the best they can but we have to come together more → the police get information after they make arrests and we have to start questioning and putting pressure on everyone including the adults that are rapping with the kids and see if they can give them information

→ as a community of black people we need to inform our community about what is going on b/c all officers aren't out to kill or shoot anyone → I wrote out something that maybe they could tell the gang members when they begin. We need more trust from the community when people come in and make sure that they are not doing the wrong thing and get them jobs in the community → we've got the power to get rid of them

we need to give these kids information and let them know → need adults to talk to kids and let them know the life they are living is wrongs

Senator Malcolm Smith (NYS minority leader of New York Senate ) part of the reason why it's important I got this invitation and decided to come today is because we recognize that this gun problem is a major problem in this state. What affects Albany

effects everywhere → we had a summit reasonably where we had members from Chicago Ceasefire and → we have a plan called Operation SNUGS → four components:

- 1) Site intervention, which involves the community partnering up with law enforcement
- 2) National, State, and local funding initiatives → we have project ceasefire that can do pilot program with intervention in the hospital →
- 3) Use of Celebrities and centers, we have engaged a number of celebrities from the Youth summit to say that guns is not something that is attractive and shouldn't feel good about it → Centers, there are a number in our community public and private
- 4) Gangs, guns, and gainful employment we are looking to get to companies where they are receiving state funding and state subsidies and ask them to make a serious effort to provide gainful employment → everyone is not going to be a lawyer, a doctor, etc. →

I know that Senator Breslin is also committed and I wanted to stop by and report the results of the summit → this is a state wide problem → we are all in this together

Ruth Pellum (founder and director of Music mobile) and I would like to speak to the tremendous need for programs on the street. We live in neighborhoods and we don't live behind barriers and we should be able to join together to provide leisure time and I remember in 1977 when I began music mobile when there were roaming jazz groups and puppet shows and I have seen when kids come to programs they are reminded of the way that we are with each other then the outcome is remarkable → I'd like to see if there is anyway that business and corporate people can come together during the off hours from 3pm to 12 am → violence doesn't follow a school schedule → there is also

CM: Jamaica, Queen → potential corruption in the police department and → I went to AHS and Philip Livingston school and I had 3 teachers that cared about us and Mayor didn't care → why is Mayor not here? There is a 15 million dollar debt and maybe that facility could have been built w/ that money instead. Why did it take a death to cause it

Allah Son Allah → I saw 14 years in jail for concealing drugs in the palm of my hands → and what I have been seeing is sickening and I don't know how to catch criminals → when I was a kid and saw CT coming I ran → I lost my sister 5 years ago --> the officers need to shake the people down that's hanging out in the corner → If he doesn't have id then he needs to go downtown until you know who he is that way when something goes down you know who was there and don't have to ask around → my kids are young and they can't play outside → my wife can't take 2 hours of their day and drive over to where you guys live to play → when we had Office Wilcox it was getting taken care of b/c he was from the hood → my family can't sleep at night → I have to stay employed → I'll be at every meeting and on CT's telephone everyday until I see result → I'm not leaving Albany or running to Schenectady or Troy → I don't see too many officials neighborhood maybe I need to bring my kids to your house to play → I've been there and I'm not afraid to talk to them → I've paid my debt to society and I need it today → I

can't afford for another little girl to die in vain → if they're on the street when they're not supposed to be then they need to go back → I've helped change laws and prevent laws from going down, I'm here to help with police or congress → downtown looks good Mayor Jennings, the Tulip Festival was nice but what about my neighborhood → I might even find a gun in the backyards → these people aren't going to just put their faces on the news and tell what they know because they are afraid → we need somewhere for our kids to play in their own neighborhood. We can't enjoy the neighborhood like this we have to be able to communicate and approach the officers and it's not always → have to approach the people on the corner → not checking the right pockets and ids → how you going to go to Afghanistan and catch bin laden but you can't catch an uneducated kid w/ a handgun → [has a t-shirt with pics of family who are all victims in some way] → those are the main concerns of Hoodcare, where are the kids going to go → I need to know where our kids are going to play at and after daycare → daycares that are available are in the crossfire where a lot of the shootings take place

Commenced the meeting:

(Speaker) **John Coutreau**: anyone interested in being paid to help address this issue should come see me and we are in the process of addressing this issue → Trinity House → those at the epicenter of violence who have the power to stop that violence → when we make judgments about who is committing the violence we make dangerous assumptions → we started doing interventions pro bono → what has happened as a result that the community has been doing to address the issues of gun violence the outcome of that work → we find out assumptions about who is committing the violence and why are wrong → we have a pretty simple process

→ we hear about an incident and look at who was affected by it and asked simple questions  
→

RS: We need to

CS: Need to let people listen to the people. I can't believe that it would be conducted this way but we need to let the people speak.

(CS) Mr. Scarf: has Malcolm smith ever been to a meeting before (CS)

CT: I don't think anyone is trying to exclude anyone and we have had two forums where the for → and I do walk the street → maybe let people speak for 15 minutes

AB: since the issue of gun violence has taken place, this is the most attention of this issue has gotten at all → we need to come out everyday → and we need have meetings everyday

**agrees to extend time**

CM: this wristband is worn because of a violent assault that took place more than a year ago → I can say that we all need to work together and I have devoted a great deal of my life to getting guns out of the hands of youth and I think that we need, especially at this emotional time, we need to try and find a way to work together.

my assailant used a brick not a gun and was 16 at the time, we are in the process of beginning the restorative justice program to see that his reentry into society is a successful one → the energy and anger in the room was palpable → I hope that the task force will take this experience that when a tragedy takes place it can't be meetings as usual

CM: I sat here a hour and a half listening to everyone express the emotions → (talking to RM) said he should be removed → CT, we need people like myself and others from the streets to speak with young officers →

Shawn Morris: they have to finish in November the Common Council meets the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursdays of the month and other things going on in the city trying to find out how to address this issue. The Public Safety meetings also take place.

John Coutreau: there's a meeting at 40 N Main of Family and Friends of violence victims → 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday @ 6:30 → it's an opportunity to connect with other people → we are looking to get people who are already doing this kind of work to become consultants for our organization → there are usually gang members, former gang members, people who have committed homicides and come out of jail and decided to help →

LM: restorative justice has been proven to work but it has been rejected in Albany → if someone 16 or under hasn't killed somebody

John Courtreau: a lot of the incidents we deal with never hit the system → there's a project in Harlem called the Harlem restorative justice program, which conferences homicides that have never been charged. the communities most effected by that have a place to go to take care of it w/o retaliation. → our process works by allowing the community most effected to determine the type of response that is going to repair the harm that has been done. We will run a program that works in parallel w/ courts or outside of court

RS: we need about 15,000 dollars to have a march for life to restore families to have to help to have a day where people can bring their guns in and so that it demonstrates to our entire community → can Common Council give the task force a money to get a well named person to come in so we can get 15,000 people to get people to come together.

Shawn Morris: we can talk about it

AB: I have proposed that when Nov. is up that we have a gang task force that doesn't sleep that is a group of trained individuals that are from the community to be out on the street

CM: who is putting the guns in our community?

LM: last night I spoke to the common council of the city of Albany and reported of 500 types of gun violence activity → my understanding is that, with very few exceptions, that the county attorneys look to the feds to take jurisdiction of this b/c if you are convicted of a federal gun trafficking crime you do more time → I've asked the Common Council to petition the US attorney to tell me how many people he's prosecuted or gun trafficking and bringing guns into Albany → if it's too hard I want to get that law changed → I will never accept gunfire in this community → if we had a disease that caused as much sorrow as this guns then the doctors would be all over the place

MH: the reason that the federal gov't prosecutes gun trafficking then it's b/c they cross state lines and that's a federal crime

LF: I am delighted to see this assembly → we have to start at the grass roots level →

John Coutreau: relayed examples of violence incidents they have handled → most of the time there is a gun near by so that if something happens they can get it quick → some kids sell drugs to support their parents drug habit → parents don't have the capacity to care for their children

Mr. Mosley: nephew said that they get their guns from Walmart and they are modeling what they see in the streets

CT: every state has their own rules, straw purchases, etc. that's the type of things the law enforcement struggle with

Terry O'neal: I think it would be very helpful if we were to tell the media to stop calling it a stray bullet

CT: we classify it that way b/c the girl wasn't the intended target

LF: would recommend putting it to the media in a constructive way

LM: when you have a city with a climate like this, we are damn lucky that more people haven't been killed by so called stray bullets →

Mr. Moseley: we have to address the southern states to stop making it so easy to get them guns

Meeting Adjourned

NEXT MEETING AT FIRST ISRAEL AME