

Neighborhood Roundtable Meeting
March 14, 2012
1:00 pm.

The meeting was called to order by Beverly P. Johnson, Administrator, Department of Neighborhood Services and Community Development. Ms. Johnson thanked everyone for coming and made announcements. Ms. Johnson introduced Donna Thomas, Chief Neighborhood Code Enforcement Inspector, Department of Neighborhood Services and Community Development.

Ms. Thomas stated that changes are being made regarding the upcoming overgrowth seasons. Inspectors will be asking for fines and court costs for properties that have not been brought to compliance within the specified time period. Citizens may be able to make arrangements with the inspector if more time is needed to bring the property to compliance. Property owners experiencing problems with gang tagging (graffiti) may soon be able to receive assistance utilizing volunteers to paint over the tagging with the owner's permission. Ms. Thomas stated that complaints may be called into the 311 Call Center or she may be contacted to answer any questions regarding code enforcement. Ms. Thomas is also available to speak at neighborhood association meetings. She may be reached at (423) 425-3700.

Mrs. Johnson introduced Boyd Patterson, Gang Task Force Coordinator, and Fred Houser, Outreach Coordinator of Chattanooga Area Gang Enforcement (C.A.G.E.), who are focusing on the gang-related issues concerning the city. Mr. Patterson stated that the city is utilizing the National Gang Center model, the comprehensive gang model, in their efforts to address the gang problem in Chattanooga.

The comprehensive gang model consists of five strategies:

1. Community mobilization – getting everyone in the community together (residents, agencies, etc)
2. Opportunities – providing real educational and vocational opportunities
3. Outreach – finding youth to participate in the programs
4. Suppression – arrest and prosecution
5. Organizational change – sustainability, where all the agencies provide long term commitments.

There are four basic dimensions to execute the strategies:

1. Prevention – reaching out to youth before they become involved in gangs.
2. Intervention – reaching out to youth that are contemplating joining a gang or in a gang, but can be reached.
3. Suppression Level 1 – prosecution of minor offenses with the goal of having reentry into society.
4. Suppression Level 2 – federal prosecution of offenses with long term incarcerations.

Mr. Patterson stated that an assessment of all services provided in the area is being conducted by the Ochs Center for Metropolitan Studies and will be collecting information on gang and criminal activity. Affected communities will be able to give feedback during the assessment.

Mr. Houser stated that it is extremely important to understand the RICO laws. The intent is to target the worst of the worst offenders to bring down the leaders of the top of the criminal organizational

structure. Suppression is the last resort to deal with offenders; prevention and intervention is the preferred method of dealing with the youth.

One of the requirements of the comprehensive gang task force model is to organize a steering committee. There are approximately 30 members on the steering committee; they represent the key decision makers in the community and all elements of the community are represented. Several sub committees are being formed to assess the different aspects of the community, such as jobs, economic development, education, faith-based, etc., to help make young people successful.

Dr. Kenneth Chilton, President and CEO of the Ochs Center for Metropolitan Studies stated that the agency is conducting research, collecting and analyzing crime data, and collecting community perception data regarding criminal activity. Focus groups of citizens, especially middle and high school students, are being utilized to capture the information.

Dr. Barbara Medley stated that the addition of the school component is to get the voices of the children talking about the gang problem, how it affects them in school, in the community and in their families. Gathering information from the Hamilton County Department of Education regarding attendance, disciplinary actions, and related actions is also a part of the data to be captured and utilized in the assessment. This information along with information from surveys from students in middle and high school and HCDE employees would be used with other information collected to compile the assessment. This goal of the assessment is to provide a comprehensive picture of the relevant issues in affected communities.

There was a brief question and answer period after the presentation.

For more information, please contact the following:

- National Gang Center - www.nationalgangcenter.gov
- Chattanooga Police Department - General inquiries (423) 425-2525
- Chattanooga Police Department - Crime Suppression Unit (423) 643-5796.
- Chattanooga Gang Task Force – Boyd Patterson, Force Coordinator, and Fred Houser, Gang Task Force Coordinator, at (423) 425-7800.
- Ochs Center for Metropolitan Studies - www.ochscenter.org, Dr. Kenneth Chilton, President and CEO, or Stacy Richardson, Research Fellow at (423) 425-5610.
- University of Tennessee at Chattanooga's Center for Applied Social Research, Dr. Barbara Medley, Ph. D., Director, or Marclyn D. Porter, M. Ed., Research Associate, at (423) 425-2342.

The next Neighborhood Roundtable is May 9, 2012 at 1:00 p.m. in the Mayor's Conference Room, Third Floor, City Hall.

Submitted by:

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