

Upper Albany/Clay Arsenal Weed & Seed Steering Committee Minutes from 3/15/05 Meeting

WSSC Members Present (16/23): *Alston Belfast, Denise Best, Kenneth Callahan II, John Danaher III, Albert DiChiara, Neil Dryfe, Duckworth Grange, Jean Holloway, Jackie Hardy, Isabel Osorio-Vasquez, Lori Potter, Edwin Rivera-Pacheco, John Schmaltz, Rev. Don Steinle, Clarinda Soldevila, Andre Wade.*

Total Attendance: 39 persons counted/ 34 persons signed in

The UACA Weed & Seed Steering Committee meeting was opened by the co-chair, *Assistant U.S. Attorney John Danaher*. Introductions of the WSSC members followed.

The minutes of the February 15, 2006 meeting were approved.

Mr. Danaher asked for an update from the Weed & Seed Coordinator, *Richard LeGrier*, who presented points from his quarterly report. He announced that other grants are being pursued and that *George Jones*, HPD Senior Project Manager, will be retiring shortly. Departmental realignments and other personnel changes have taken place, along with plans for capital improvements of the Albany Avenue Substation, to improve community access and the delivery of services to the UACA. However the substation will not be ready in the short term, so a number of alternate field offices are being explored.

Valencia Coar, an Institute for Law and Justice consultant for Weed and Seed shared insights into her February site visit, by telephone, with *Mr. LeGrier*. Based upon her observations, and input from the WSSC and UACA residents she recommended the following action steps: 1) Identify and move to a temporary community location as soon as possible; 2) Obtain clerical support (perhaps a qualified volunteer or P/T senior worker); 3) Increase the capacity within the WSSC and UACA residents; 4) Gain understanding of the neighborhoods, UACA Weed & Seed and Official Recognition strategies, and root causes of juvenile and adult crime; and 5) Identify and recruit the right players (including residents) on board.

Furthermore *Ms. Coar* recommended CCDO Site/Coordinator mentoring, board training, strategy development/implementation workshops and retreats. Through *Lori Potter*, *Asst. U.S. Attorney Danaher* and the U.S. Attorney's Office, *Mr. LeGrier* and *Capt. Richard Kemmett* (UACA's district commander) will be attending the upcoming CCDO Strategy Development Workshop, held in Birmingham, AL on March 27-30, 2006

D/C Neil Dryfe and *Lt. John Schmaltz* presented the Monthly Crime Report that reflected a slight (2%) increase in shootings. *Lt. Schmaltz* related the rise in this category to the preference of offenders to shoot rather than fight. The "Stop Snitching" culture of the street was also introduced and discussed at some length.

Jackie Hardy suggested that the Hartford Public Schools could restrict students from wearing the “Stop Snitching” gear in school and invited police and other concerned citizens to attend PTO meetings.

Extended discussion entertained various cultural and law enforcement perspectives but did not render a counter strategy to this prevalent street code of non-cooperation. It was also revealed that many were not aware of the HPD Gun Tip Hotline (860-525-GUNS) or the HPD Drug Tip Hotline (860-527-6300, extension 5297). Both are listed on the Weed and Seed webpage and various other locations on the Hartford Police Department website. *George Scott* asked if there could not be better publicizing of these phone numbers.

Denise Best followed up on her previous email about the Trinidad/Tobago Club being a constant source of noise and public disturbance. *Gerald Thorpe* asked how can after hours establishments that reportedly serve liquor beyond legal hours be shut down, or seized through the nuisance laws. *D/C Dryfe* assigned *Lt. Schmaltz* to follow up on these issues.

The concern of recent shootings and a murder on Garden Street reinforced the interest to better capture this activity, regardless of whether there is a fatality or cooperating victim. *D/C Dryfe* corrected the misinformation that the Trinidad/Tobago had been the location of a recent shooting, rather it had been the 24-hour Shell gas station.

Gerald Thorpe also made a request for any published information from the Mayor’s Office concerning strategies or plans to “improve the economics of the Upper Albany/Clay Arsenal communities.”

Weed and Seed subcommittee updates were presented by the chairs of Community Policing (*Duckworth Grange*), Prevention, Intervention and Treatment (*Al DiChiara*), and Neighborhood Restoration (*Marilyn Risi*). *Mr. Grange* and *Dr. DiChiara* reported in their newly exchanged roles. Juvenile crime was identified as starting at a very young age. Cases at Milner Elementary School were cited, and a March summary of the Milner Project was submitted to the Coordinator.

More discussion was held related to the ideology of “snitching.” *Alston Belfast* asked for considerations of how can the UACA bridge the community and communications gaps, and specifically broaden cooperation at the street level.

Service gaps in the areas of substance abuse and mental health (particularly preteen and adolescents) were referenced. More substantive reporting in these areas is required.

Marilyn Risi presented a concise report on Neighborhood Restoration activities, and submitted to the Coordinator a March summary under five headings: Crime, Image Improvement, Economic Restructuring, Micro Business Incubator, and Create a More Pedestrian Friendly District. Banners will go up shortly and Mac the Vac is under repair. Minutes from an Upper Albany Main Street Design Committee, held on January 12, 2006 were also submitted. It was reported that the Neighborhood Restoration subcommittee meets every month and averages 20-30 attendees.

Ms. Risi also distributed an invitation to attend an open house and community meeting for the Albany Avenue Safety Improvement Project, to be held on March 21 at the Artists Collective. This project is being designed by the City of Hartford, and recommended for construction under a Federal program administered by the Connecticut Department of Transportation. The estimated construction costs will be approximately \$12 million to \$15 million, \$2 millions of which will be paid for by the MDC. There will be an 80/20 split between the Federal Highway Administration and the State for the remaining costs.

Al DiChiara briefly reported on Community Policing and invited members to join this subcommittee. He spoke of the need of educating residents on principles and strategies, organizing change within HPD and Community Relations, and engagement through the NRZs and neighborhood block watches.

Richard LeGrier advised all chairpersons that the work within their subcommittees must be ongoing, and that activities and attendance should be reported at least on a monthly basis. *Dr. DiChiara* referenced the UACA Policies and Procedures for conducting all WSSC activities and related subcommittee business. He handed out a revised copy that highlighted input from our funder.

Additional revisions/additions will be required on our Policies and Procedures, based upon communication with *Erin Holbert*, Supervisory Program Manager, for the Office of Justice Programs, Community Capacity Development Office (CCDO) was presented to the Coordinator, and cited six critical findings (1) Election of Officers; 2) Nominating Committee; 3) Willful Misconduct; 4) Conflict of Interest; 5) Executive Committee; and 6) Funding Decisions).

Mr. LeGrier referenced the new UACA Steering Committee Attendance Chart and ensured that all present members sign in. He cited the mandatory attendance requirement, which stipulates that three consecutive absences by any member, without justifiable cause and advance notification of the Coordinator or Chairperson, will require the consideration of removal of that member.

Lori Potter will provide U.S. Department of Justice clarification on the Policies and Procedures based upon the recommendations of *Ms. Holbert*, and using examples from other Weed and Seed sites under her supervision.

Dr. DiChiara presented an “Initial Report on the Evaluation (Draft)” introduced the evaluation team of *Dr. Mark Beaulieu* and *Dr. Stephen Norland*, from the University of Hartford. Research and development of the evaluation tools has already started, and outside funding is being sought. Of critical importance is the establishment of baseline data (demographics, academic, economics, criminal, judicial, mental health, addiction, public perception, attitudes, etc.) to be able to measure the required outcomes. There will be a service focus related to residents and the catchment area. Neighborhood Restoration will document before/after conditions and be depicted with photographic histories.

Law Enforcement will be evaluated according to the effectiveness of patrol deployment, the employment of task forces, attendance at community meetings, and the allocation of dollars and non-budgeted resources.

The use of surveys, standardized data collection and ongoing process evaluation will be employed to encourage contract adherence. The approach will be designed to be both critically sound and instructive.

Duckworth Grange presented nine new members to be added to the WSSC, on behalf of the Nominating Committee: *Charles Barrow, Lynn Ford, George McDonald, Mark H. Kaczynski, Marilyn Risi, Gerald Thorpe, Denise Tillman, Kevin Waite, and Patricia Williams*. Outside of the determination that *Mr. Barrow*, having previously resigned, had to be formally re-elected there was no individual discussion of the candidates. *Dr. DiChiara* motioned that the candidate be voted on as a block, and was seconded. A majority of the quorum approved and voted in the block of new members. The number of UACA steering committee members has thus increased from 23 to 32 persons, including three new resident members.

No documentation of the new members, or the Nominating Committee minutes or attendance was submitted to the Chairman or the Coordinator.

Mr. Danaher suggested the need to orient the new members and give clarity to the roles and responsibilities of all WSSC members. A retreat was suggested and agreed upon after a short discussion. *Mr. Scott* volunteered to be the convener and the following eight WSSC members enlisted to join an ad hoc UACA WSSC Retreat Planning subcommittee: *John Danaher, Jean Holloway, Richard LeGrier, George McDonald, Marilyn Risi, John Schmaltz, George Scott and Denise Tillman*. The group will meet within the month and report at the April regular meeting.

The meeting was adjourned with the announcement that ***the next WSSC meeting will be held at Community Health Services, on Wednesday, April 19, at 5:00 PM.***

Respectfully Submitted,

Richard LeGrier, III
UACA Weed & Seed Coordinator

Attachments:

- A. UACA Weed & Seed Steering Committee Attendance Chart
- B. UACA Weed & Seed Core Strategies
- C. Weed and Seed Strategy Organization Chart
- D. The Roles and Responsibilities of Key Weed and Seed Positions
- E. Copy of email from Erin A. Holbert, Supervisory Program Manager
- F. Initial Report on the Evaluation (Draft)
- G. Working Draft Policies and Procedures of UACA Weed and Seed Program
- H. "Grants Are Targeted to Neighborhoods," *The Hartford Courant*, 4/7/06, pp. 3-4