



City of Ridgecrest
100 W. California Avenue
Ridgecrest, CA 93555
499-5105

A.C.T.I.O.N. Task Force
Kerr McGee Community Center Meeting Rooms
March 12, 2007
6:00 pm

MINUTES

Committee Members: City Councilman Ron Carter, City Councilman Dan Clark, Chief of Police Mike Avery

1. CALL TO ORDER –An official meeting was called to order by Chief Michael D. Avery at 6:00 p.m.
2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA - None
3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES - None
4. INTRODUCTIONS –
 - a) Introductions were made by each individual in the room. Everyone stated their name and organization that they were representing.
 - b) Chief Avery gave a brief introduction of why the committee was formed and explained why he felt it was imperative that the lines of communication were open between all organizations that could be impacted by gang type activity. He also explained that this committee is not about how the Police Department will solve the problem or how the Schools will solve the problem but for everyone to bring their resources to the table. It is the goal of this committee to keep control on any gang type activity that we might see in our community. Chief Avery discussed meeting with other communities, specifically Lancaster and Bakersfield, and found out that they are just beginning to deal with the issues of gang activities. We are ahead of the curve and we might have a chance to prevent gangs from being in our community.
5. PRESENTATION - A PowerPoint Presentation was given by City Councilman Dan Clark to show the committee what the vision of ACTION is and what the thoughts are of the City Council. The presentation that was presented is not in concrete, the committee chairs want the input of the committee members. As we proceed through the process of forming this committee, who knows how this committee will grow or shrink. Councilman Clark stated that what he will be sharing is a communication model. In his research he has found that communities and agencies are not talking to one another, so what ends up happening is communities and agencies are reactive instead of proactive in their approach of gang activities. He is asking that the committee members commit to the program for one year to establish and open up the lines of communications.
6. STRATEGY SEGMENT
 - a. Implement Neighborhood Watch Block Captains – Chief Avery felt that it would take a year for 100 percent compliance to open up this line of communications. Chief Avery spoke to the group about the Districts that have been put into place. Everyone who lives within the City has an officer and a sergeant assigned to their district. It will take awhile to get the information out as to who your district officer is. It is a goal to have a Block Captain, one person in charge, in each district so that the citizen has a contact point with a Block Captain and an officer and together make sure that each district is safe.
 - b. Youth Employment Incentive Program – Statistics show that jobs are critical to youth and keeping them out of gangs. If you give a kid a job he will take pride in that job versus peddling dope on the street. If

youth can't find a job, they will get in trouble. The Yes program, a City sponsored program, gives to our youth the skills they need to write a resume, fill out an application, shake hands, make eye contact, oral interview process; but the funding is slowly going away. Also with the rise in minimum wage more of our youth jobs are going to older people and seniors. It is getting harder for the youth in our community to find jobs.

c. Tracking Transient Students – Passed out handouts about the LA Bridges Anti-Gang effort. This program is under scrutiny because it doesn't have a tracking system. Councilman Clark wanted to put out for the members consideration to look at what happens to transient student who are not only college bound but also students that have fallen through the cracks. Councilman Clark is making the recommendation that we track the students who have dropped out of school and ask how we are doing as a committee. There needs to be a mechanism to track the students who have dropped out of school. Handouts were passed out to show statistics that education is key in keeping youth and young adults out of gangs, criminal activity, and prisons. Distributed handouts and discussed prison populations in the State of California and the number of inmates to the ratios of ethnic groups. As our demographics change in our community, we need to look at these numbers.

e. Conduct Town Hall meeting – Next month we will conduct a Town Hall Meeting and invite the community to come and participate or brainstorm and see what issues they might perceive.

f. Research Other Communities and Liberate Successful Programs – Passed out Kern County and Bakersfield City Council Strategic Plan and discussed the highlights of the Strategic Plan. Sheriff Donny Youngblood was asked to comment on the Target Gang Unit. The Target Gang Unit is a group of Deputy District Attorney's who prosecute not only gang crimes and gang violent crimes but all crimes. Once someone is identified as a gang member they are prosecuted by the same Deputy District Attorney until they are taken off the street. Sheriff Youngblood also commented on the importance of not only providing an education to the at risk youth but also provide vocational programs. Not every child will go off to college and we need to encourage our school and businesses to offer vocational programs.

g. Big Brother and Sister Program for at Risk Youth

h. A Welcome Committee -

i. Encourage Church Mentors – Reverend Throckmarked felt that the faith based community needs training in "how to" mentoring the at risk youth or identified gang members. Also, at the 100 Voices Youth Conference, youth were concerned about where they could go if they knew someone who was doing drugs in the home, how they could get help. Reverend Throckmarked felt that somewhere in the strategies there needed to be in place a shelter or facility for these youth.

j. 50/50 Block Grant for 07/08 Budget

k. Explore Grant Opportunities

7. DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION – Leah Robles, a community member asked what type of gangs do we have in our community, money driven or territorial driven. It was commented that given our location it is easier to set up drug laboratories and so gangs would be more interested in the money. Gangs will prey on law enforcement and community mismanagement. Gangs will go where it is easy to go. Another member of the community, unidentifiable, stated that our children are telling us that they can't wear certain color of clothing because they might be associated with a gang or fear that a rival gang might misinterpret what they are wearing. This is usually a precursor to a gang issue. Kershawn Scott, a community member and former Crips gang member, gave praise to Chief Avery for starting this committee. Mr. Scott feels that Ridgecrest doesn't have a "home gang" but that most are coming from LA, Lancaster or Palmdale to sell drugs. While they are here selling drugs they are recruiting younger members. As members of gangs come and visit our community, they feel that they know Mr. Scott due to his past reputation. Mr. Scott offered Chief Avery his services and told him that he was at his disposal to help with any gang issues or criminal activity.

8. FINAL COMMENTS – Sheriff Youngblood encouraged the group to invite Supervisor Jon McQuiston to these meetings to help with the Strategic Plan. Sheriff Youngblood encouraged the committee to continue with the meetings because sometimes it is hard to mobilize people when they can't see the problem. He suggested that each member take home the Kern County Strategic Plan look it over and try not to reinvent the wheel. Walt Maurer, a community member, was happy to hear that our drop out rate was low if you calculated the total population of high school students to be 1700 and took 5 % of that is would be 100 or less students. He was also happy that the school was working with the college and implementing a vocational program for students at the high school level to

continue on at Cerro Coso Community College. Mr. Maurer believes that the gang problem is not because of a lack of tracking students or education but that gang issues are related to drugs and why hasn't Bakersfield been able to get control of the gang situation. Sheriff Youngblood stated that law enforcement has always been reactive instead of proactive in this area. Law enforcement in Bakersfield has yet to get in front of the curve. By increasing an 8 member gang task force to 33 members and then utilizing the unit in a 2 to 3 mile radius in a neighborhood, you will see a significant change. Louis Tankersley, an educator, stated that what she had heard from the youth at round table discussions is they would like to have a place to gather that is safe, has rules and supervision, with activities. Councilman Clark closed with having a Town Hall Meeting next month to brainstorm so that we can get strategies, prioritize them and create an action plan.

9. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- a. A Town Hall Meeting at the Kerr McGee Center on April 9, 2007 at 6:00 pm. .

10. ADJOURNMENT – Meeting was adjourned at 7:25 pm by Councilman Clark.