

**Far East Area Commission**

**Meeting Minutes**

March 5, 2013

The meeting was called to order at 6:45p.m. Those in attendance were: Jennifer Chamberlain, Chair; Scott Gallagher, Treasurer; Larry Marshall; Eric Watson; Max Lallatin, Education Commissioner-At-Large; Mark Hutsko, Religion Commissioner-At-Large; and Catherine McKinley, Secretary. Absent were: Summer Moynihan, Vice-Chair; Dustin Thompson; Wayne Hamner. Also in attendance: Lynn LaCour, Director of the Far East Pride Center; and Officer Keckley, Precinct 14 CLO.

Guests appearing before the commission: Shannon G. Hardin, Community Affairs Coordinator from the Mayor’s Office, speaking on a Commission for Education. Absent: Larry Price, Commission on Education from the Mayor’s Office.

From here forward, the Far East Area Commission will be referred to as FEAC.

The meeting was called to order.

Jennifer handed out the meeting agenda.

**Report of the Chair (Commissioner Chamberlain)**

Jennifer opened with a mapping of public meetings of the Commission on Education and none are on the Far East Side. Each Commissioner received a copy of the map.

Jennifer mentioned that there are five (5) of the elected Commissioners present that would be a quorum, if necessary.

Shannon Hardin introduced himself to the commission and will discuss the process and where things are at this point. He has been with the Mayor’s office for about three and a half years. His primary focus is the APPS program that works with the four most at-risk areas around Columbus (North, South, East and West). They work with kids as preventative measures and also intervene when needed. The preventative measures are conducted 7:30pm-11:30pm. They ask the youths in these areas, what would it take for them to come into the community center instead of being out in the streets; what would it take to get them engaged and peak their interest? One of the programs that have begun is Midnight Basketball. Around 11:30pm about hundred kids come into the community center to play Midnight Basketball. This is on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. These are kids that are not from the wealthier neighborhoods and they don’t have the opportunities to go to the movies or such things and at least they are coming in off of the streets, getting them engaged and knowing they are in a safe environment.

There is staff at the centers who work with the kids. There are other programs offered, such as videography, life classes, GED classes within those hours. The goal is to keep them in the recreation centers to keep them productive. If these kids were on the streets, they could be influenced into getting in trouble.

The intervention work is working with the kids that have crossed-over, maybe a couple of times, with run-ins with the law and are harder to get to come to the rec centers. The commission believes that these kids cannot arrest their way out of these situations. They will get released back to the streets and it becomes a revolving door for them.

Before this commission began, Shannon went to Los Angeles (L.A.), California to visit an area that has implemented a similar commission. They have had this program for about eight (8) years now. They hired intervention workers who are officially ex-gang officials who have lived that life. Shannon stated that he could go out and speak to these kids but in reality, he can’t connect with them, especially in a suit and tie. The intervention workers have gone through the legal system or some changes in their lives are able to connect with these kids. They go and find out who these kids are and are considered the ‘ears on the ground’ for the commission. They try to find out what is stopping them from living a life of productivity. A lot of it is social economic issues and they couldn’t get a job or they didn’t graduate or child support issues.

The commission tries to make it as clear as possible to show them the way to get back on the right path. There are some successes. There are about 56 young people in the system that are working through this process and will keep in the program for about six and a half months. They have to show some willingness to want to get through the program. They are given every opportunity possible and then are graduated out of the program.

Commissioner Marshall asked Shannon if there were any contacts that our area commission could reach out to. Shannon stated they looked at certain crime areas to see what areas needed the most attention. Just like in L.A., eight years ago it started out in two communities and is now functioning in thirty-two (32) communities. L.A. commissioners told Shannon that you know the program is a success when other communities want to implement it. Shannon stated the commission’s program is just now getting to that point. They have expanded the APPS budget each year since 2011 with the hope to expand to other communities.

Commissioner Marshall asked Shannon, if he has three groups interested in this, which he does, who should they contact and how should they contact? Shannon stated to go to StateofOhio.Columbus.gov and the APPS program is under the Parks and Recreation Department. The director of the program is Corey Lethridge.

Lynne asked Shannon to tell the Commission the locations of these rec centers. Shannon stated in the North side it is located at Linden Recreational Center; on the Near East side it is at the Beatty Recreation Center; the South side is located at Barnett Recreational Center off of Parsons Avenue; and on the West side it is located at Glenwood Recreation Center off of West Broad Street.

Considering what areas to focus on, the commission looked at police reports where there were the most armed assaults and other reporting factors.

Shannon stated that there is more money in the budget this year to do a little more outreach. The commission hasn’t expanded and doesn’t want to expand until they have firm evidence of successes. He said probably next year they will be adding other sights.

Commissioner Chamberlain asked if there were any plans, similar to the Restoration Academy that helps those who had been incarcerated find jobs, to tack on a program as such to the APPS program. The issue is that there are only 15 hired per year into the Restoration Academy. There are approximately 12,000 ex-offenders released back into Franklin County each year. Shannon sees this as a safety issue because if they cannot find a job and they are not kept productive, it will be a recurring issue that they will offend again. Since the city doesn’t always have openings to place those that graduate from the Restoration Academy, they work with employers and will pay to train the graduates. They really need some private companies to step up. They are trying to get offenders to go through other programs before entering the Restoration Academy so that the Restoration Academy will get the ‘cream of the crop’, which are those who are serious about turning their life around. APPS can be one of these programs.

Commissioner McKinley asked when do offenders begin the Restoration Academy. Is it when they are still incarcerated or later? Shannon states the offenders have to be out of the system for at least a year. The Mayor’s concern with the year stipulation was what are these individuals doing during that year? The commission told the Mayor that there are other programs that work with the offenders when they first come out of an institution.

Commissioner Marshall asked if there is any way that our area can take advantage of these programs. Shannon stated that the Restoration Academy is open to anyone in the city. There is a lady that our Commission can contact, who is actually a graduate of the Academy, who the city hired as the point person for the program. Her offense was 10-12 years ago and she now has a Master’s degree in Social Work. Her name is Tearica Cradle. Her number is 645-8038. Soon they will be picking this year’s candidates to begin their 6-months process.

Shannon said last October, Dr. Jean Harris, President of Columbus City School Board, asked the Mayor to get involved in education in some way. She asked him to use his leverage in the community to take a look at education in a comprehensive way. The Mayor’s office has no jurisdiction over Columbus City Schools. Educating our youth is an economic development issue and a community safety issue that ties it to every facet of what the Mayor does for Columbus. The Mayor called together 25 individuals to form the Columbus Education Commission. This Commission is looking at how we are educating the children in Columbus in the city schools and the Charter schools. The Mayor believes the Charter schools are here to stay. The Mayor gave an aggressive timeline. The Commission meetings began in January 2013 and will end in April. They are to form recommendations for the schools. The only thing that is off the table is a mayoral take-over of the Columbus City Schools.

Shannon stated he would come back out in May to share the recommendations from the Commission.

Commissioner Marshall stated that we do have a little bit of a unique situation here because Shannon is here speaking about Columbus City Schools and part of our commission area is considered Licking Heights school district, which is Licking County, part is in Columbus City Schools, another part is Fairfield County school district and part is in Groveport-Madison School district. Commissioner Marshall also stated that he heard that the Columbus City Schools are going to spend monies to put remote locks on school doors. Some schools might be upwards of $30,000 to upgrade the wiring to accommodate the locks. These will be nice but have first responders been inside the schools to know the layouts? It has been discussed that the first responders go into the schools before or after classes to get familiarized with the layout of the schools in their areas. Larry asked Shannon if that is a recommendation he would want from the FEAC. Shannon said most definitely.

Shannon distributed recommendation cards, no postage needed, to each commissioner.

Commissioner Chamberlain stated that for our area, she went ahead and announced all of our meetings to all of her civic members and other civic associations. If anyone has any recommendations, is there any way recommendations can be sent electronically via an email? Shannon distributed his business card with contact information.

Shannon’s goal for attending the FEAC meeting was to let Commissioners know where things stood with education and to get FEAC engaged. Based on the Commission’s recommendations, there will probably be a levy in the fall.

Commissioner Marshall mentioned that we have a perfect location for a magnet school that is a vacant store. Commissioner Chamberlain mentioned that a guest speaker was to meet with the FEAC about a possible magnet school in our area but had cancel. Commissioner Marshall asked Shannon how many vocational schools Columbus has. He stated 3 maybe 4.

Shannon stated that he gets calls all the time from employers that say that have job openings but there isn’t any skilled labor to fill the jobs. High need is for HVAC skills and CDL license.

Commissioner Chamberlain asked if there was a way we can get information as to what employers are wanting from the city. She stated that it is very difficult to get information from the city. We are fortunate to have Lynne because she gets us information. The Web site doesn’t do a good job to find information. It would be nice if some form of communication could be sent out to say here is an initiative and here are businesses that we are trying to pull off with and set up a link system. The communication needs to happen. Commissioner Marshall mentioned that it would be nice because then the employers would see the communities are responding quicker to their worker needs and training those individuals. Shannon stated he would look into this recommendation.

Commissioner-At-Large Lallathin stated that it would be great to have educators that have the methodology of a skill and practice of an industry and bring it to a class as a resource person where it winds up being a teen taught thing. Part of the problem is that carry over from an education stand point is that an educator has a level of methodology in order to impart knowledge but they don’t necessarily have the practical skill application. The person in the industry has the skill application of what is demanded in that industry but they have no way of communicating that to a student. And that kind of cooperation is cohabitation in the setting of the industry might be a novel way to approach the bridge between those two and the more that that can happen, maybe the more successful the school will be in providing the kind of work the industry is wanting and the more satisfied the industry will be because these students have been groomed for that specific industry. It doesn’t just have to be in trades and mechanical, it can also be in medical fields, office work or fine arts or whatever it may be. Shannon asked that he write that suggestion down and send it to him.

Commissioner-At-Large Lallathin also mentioned that the leadership of the school has to be considered. Is the leadership’s best heart in the business or the kids?

Commissioner Marshall made a suggestion to the FEAC that since Commissioner-At-Large Lallathin is our education representative, that he creates a draft a recommendation for the commission. Commissioner-At-Large Lallathin agreed to do this task. Commissioner-At-Large Lallathin also mentioned that he came from a Charter School background and there is a misconception of Charter Schools. Shannon stated speaking to leadership that principals need to be given more flexibility because what might work on the North side might not work on the South side.

Commissioner-At-Large Lallathin mentioned C-Tec that is in Licking County. He has heard a lot of good things about it. It is in a rural community. Commissioner McKinley mentioned she teaches at C-Tec. She explained it has dual roles. One side is adult education where businesses from the area send employees that want to learn specific skills, like seminar learning. Then people can take classes and graduate. The other side of the school is for local high schools students to take college prep classes. Shannon asked Commissioner McKinley to write that up as a suggestion and use C-Tec as a model.

Commissioner-At-Large Hutsko stated that the Commission has chosen the 11:30pm delivery system for what they are trying to address and it is successful. His granddaughter attends a Charter School and their delivery system is successful. The question is what kind of delivery system of the Columbus City Schools and what are they trying to strive towards? This is not going to be an easy task. The responsibility is going to be shared with parents, the Mayor’s office, businesses, etc. It’s a tough conversation to have in some communities.

Commissioner Gallagher stated to Shannon that something, we as a commission, has struggled with, looking at the map of education meetings and it appears the meeting locations are along I-71. Commissioner Gallagher stated it appears there is nothing on the East side of I-71. It is as if the East side is not recognized. We don’t have any rec centers, good schools, and police and fire departments are spread thin in our area. Commissioner Gallagher also stated that the North and Northeast areas of Columbus have a lot of growth and they are probably the ones that should be addressed with this information. He doesn’t see where our part of town is being represented. Shannon said he can’t speak to the map but this is one way of getting to these areas that need help. This phase is for input. It is giving communities the opportunity to tell how you feel and give suggestions. Once the Mayor’s office has the recommendations back, there will be public meetings. Commissioner-At-Large Lallathin stated that Barnett is the closet rec center to our community that is on the map.

The next FEAC meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 5, 2013.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.