

ATLANTIC CITY EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Tuesday, November 24, 2020

Zoom Conference Call

1) REMARKS FROM DCA CHIEF OF STAFF AND ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KIM HOLMES ON BEHALF OF LT. GOVERNOR SHEILA OLIVER

- a) Acknowledged Lt. Governor Oliver's Chief of Staff Terry Tucker and DCA Deputy Commissioner Rob Long, who were both present for the conference call.
- b) Explained that the Lt. Governor was at a bill signing with Governor Murphy.
- c) Said Lt. Governor Oliver wishes everyone on the Executive Council a happy and safe Thanksgiving holiday and to keep hope alive in these difficult times.
- d) Happy to read last week about State Attorney General Gurbir Grewal's amazing experience with Atlantic City youth on a Zoom call. To hear the state's chief law enforcement officer speak so highly of the city youth he met with and the hope they gave him in these difficult times is a proud moment for the city.
- e) Continually impressed with intelligence, poise, and determination of the city's young people and their ability to express their opinions and their goals.
- f) Issue of homelessness in Atlantic City came up during last Executive Council meeting and is one that DCA is well aware of.
- g) Deputy Commissioner Long, DCA Division of Housing Director Janel Winter and I met earlier this month with representatives from Atlantic City, staff from the New Jersey Department of Human Services, and the City of Newark's homelessness czar to discuss Atlantic City's strategic plan to address homelessness.
- h) Also, City's Sub-Committee on Public Health and Wellness, which is led by health director Dr. Wilson Washington, is working to improve collaboration with key stakeholders such as the AC Rescue Mission, Covenant House, AtlantiCare, and Reliance with the ultimate goal of effectively reducing and ultimately eliminating chronic homelessness within Atlantic City.
- i) Focus right now is on establishing efficient protocols for securing safe, clean, and accessible shelter for the upcoming "Code Blue Season" as the temperatures drop. This includes identifying emergency housing locations with capacity for homeless individuals, identifying available supportive services, and coordinating resources to relocate homeless individuals from city streets to a local shelter or substance abuse treatment facility.
- j) The sub-committee is also looking for ways to address homeless persons relieving themselves in the public and on private property. Consideration is being given to funding port-a-pots and temporary shower facilities that are placed strategically in the city.
- k) Future homelessness prevention strategies include securing grant funding to:
 - i. Expand Code Blue and temporary winter shelter capacity at the AC Rescue Mission;
 - ii. Hire social workers and blend them into the police department to work directly with the homeless population in the city;
 - iii. Convert vacant city-owned properties into short-term/transitional housing for the homeless;

- iv. Establish mobile health and sanitary units; and
 - v. Create a homeless census team to identify and map homeless hotspots and obtain an accurate count of the homeless population in the city by permanent residency zip code.
- l) Another issue that has come up in recent Executive Council meetings is crime prevention. Atlantic City is not immune to the gun violence trend impacting the state and nation during the pandemic and resulting economic crisis.
 - m) Atlantic City Police Department (ACPD), under the leadership of Officer in Charge James Sarkos, continues to work very closely with its law enforcement partners at the federal, state, county and local levels to address violence in the city through a variety of means.
 - n) For example, the ACPD continues to ensure that there is a higher visibility of officers patrolling neighborhoods, business areas, the boardwalk and areas of known or suspected criminal activity.
 - o) ACPD Neighborhood Coordination Officers (NCO) have started traveling to houses of worship in Atlantic City on Sundays to speak with the congregations about the tip411 anonymous texting tip system and about the importance of reporting suspicious and/or criminal activity whether by phone or tip411. These Neighborhood Coordination Officers, as well as Tourism District officers, are also spending several hours of their shifts riding bikes through the neighborhoods and shopping districts, which is an effective way to engage the community and provides officers with a different view of the neighborhood and its issues.
 - p) City will be rolling out its "ONE" program (One Neighborhood Evolution) that was announced to the public on November 11th by Mayor Small and Officer in Charge Sarkos. ONE is an anti-violence initiative where reformed gang members engage and interact with at-risk youth and young adults in an effort to intervene and resolve conflicts before they can escalate into street violence.
 - q) ACPD has also secured a couple of grants from the U.S. Department of Justice, including one for \$740,000 that will fund two mental health clinicians from Jewish Family Services to partner with ACPD officers in the evening and night hours to engage those suffering from mental health, alcoholism and/or drug addictions with social services. The police department anticipates that this program will begin in the second quarter of 2021 and will supplement the work the ACPD already does during the day with mental health clinicians from AtlantiCare, Jewish Family Services, and Volunteers of America.
 - r) Additionally, the ACPD has reached out to the NJ Attorney General's Office requesting that a gun buyback program be implemented in Atlantic City in the near future.
 - s) A common theme is how the pandemic has negatively impacted the social and emotional health of people, including children and young adults.
 - t) City is trying to organize an Arts in Atlantic City initiative by engaging arts and culture organizations in the city to find safe ways to give youth an artistic, creative outlet for their pent-up energy and emotions. City is working with the Atlantic City Arts Commission and Bishop Hargrove of the Fellowship of Churches in Atlantic City and is brainstorming what it can do to get the initiative off the ground.
 - u) Continuing to work to establish a search committee for the next chief of the Atlantic City Police Department. Looking for someone who will move the ACPD forward and lead a force

that provides optimal public safety so people of all backgrounds know they are safe in the city.

- i. Establishing a search committee doesn't mean the next chief is going to be someone from outside the ACPD.
- ii. In no way negates the expertise and experience of those currently serving in the police department. Want to consider all options as work to fill this critical position.
- v) The Atlantic City Fire Department is planning to swear in 16 firefighters at a graduation ceremony on December 2, 2020. The 16 firefighters are part of the most diverse class of recruits in the department's history. Congratulations to them.
- w) Atlantic City Restart and Recovery Working Group organized by the Governor in response to the COVID-19 pandemic continues to meet and plans to submit a recommendations report to the Governor's Office for review later this month or in the first week of December.

2) ATLANTIC CITY UPDATE: MAYOR MARTY SMALL

- a) Kudos to Boys & Girls Club of Atlantic City Executive Director Stephanie Koch and former State Senator Bill Gormley for their contributions to STEAM lab for city youth. Lab has latest Apple technology.
- b) Unfortunately, NJ League of Municipalities conference was hosted virtually this year because of the COVID-19 pandemic instead of at the Atlantic City Convention Center. City looks forward to the conference returning to the Convention Center next year.
- c) Waterpark at Showboat property cleared another hurdle last week. Waterpark project shows diversifying Atlantic City economy by providing family attraction.
- d) City doing turkey giveaway for families in need. Will also do one in December for Christmas.
- e) ONE program deals with violence overall; will collaborate with AtlantiCare on grant it received from NJ Attorney General's Office to prevent gun and street violence.
- f) Working to strengthen City's recreation department to create more opportunities for residents.
- g) Atlantic City Dolphins youth football program won two out of four championships for fall 2020 season.
- h) Represented Atlantic City on ABC News Live; talked about second wave of pandemic.
- i) Kudos to ACPD for getting justice department grant to hire mental health clinicians.
- j) Talked about his proposal for Atlantic City to get 3-5 year exclusive for recreational marijuana sales in the state. Said he won't apologize for advocating on behalf of the city even if it makes other people and elected officials upset.
- k) City received approval to replace curfew sirens; in addition to the sirens helping the City enforce the youth curfew, City will be able to make emergency announcements using the sirens.
- l) Received \$1.9 million in CARES Act funds to assist small businesses in Atlantic City; want to help businesses with commercial rent.
- m) Working with Greater Atlantic City Chamber of Commerce; Chamber's jobs partnership program wasn't renewed so City will use some of CARES Act funding to help continue this program, which will have reentry piece included in the program for people reentering

- workplace after incarceration. Atlantic Cape Community College (ACCC) will be involved in the reentry piece to make sure people reentering community are trained for jobs.
- n) Will start nine-week program for small business entrepreneurs; working with Stockton University and ACCC.
 - o) Working with the Casino Reinvestment Development Authority (CRDA) to provide city residents with funding to get CDL license; get them trained in how to operate and drive trucks; pandemic has showed that trucking is pandemic proof.
 - p) DJ Envy purchased a house in Westside neighborhood of Atlantic City; will renovate the house and pick a winner for the house. Mayor Small is encouraging DJ Envy to pick an Atlantic City resident for the free house.
 - q) Talked about meetings on Friday, November 20th with Moody's and S&P credit ratings agencies. Reported how impressed they were with City and its finances; optimistic City will not get a downgrade and could get an upgrade; City could see possible tax decreases over next three years.
 - r) AtlantiCare CEO Lori Herndon will advise about AtlantiCare's medical arts complex project in Atlantic City. Perhaps there will be a groundbreaking for that project in the near future. Eds and Meds is a great winning combination.
 - s) Applauded ACPD for saving life of person who was threatening to jump from one of the casino parking garages. ACPD received good press for great work.

3) PUBLIC SAFETY: ACPD OFFICER-IN-CHARGE DEPUTY CHIEF JAMES SARKOS

- a) Pandemic has resulted in uptick in gun violence in Atlantic City. Year-to-date 2020 compared to year-to-date 2019 – homicides at same level despite uptick in last month; Atlantic City has not seen massive uptick that other cities are seeing; compared to last year City is pretty much trending the same as last year.
- b) ACPD violent crimes unit has high solvability rate; at around 60% which is very high; anticipates will be above 70% by end of year.
- c) Talked about two competitive grants ACPD has received from US Department of Justice:
 - i. \$740,000 grant that DCA Chief of Staff Holmes mentioned in her remarks.
 - ii. \$700,000 grant that will fund stationary license plate readers at every entrance and exit of the city since Atlantic City receives many visitors; aimed at decreasing crime through applied technologies and improved justice information sharing; will help protect youth and elderly.
- d) Received a 'Drive Sober Get Pulled Over' grant. HERO campaign; will show videos on Impactivate screens on the Atlantic City boardwalk about the importance of designated drivers.
- e) Police officers will be deployed in The Walk in the tourism district during the holiday shopping season.
- f) Talked about bicycle training for casino security guards. ACPD provided bicycle training to 27 Atlantic City casino security guards in an effort to help expand the casino bicycle security programs for more presence outside the casino properties

- g) Met with ACPD's 13 chaplains via Zoom to discuss expanding Police Chaplain Program. The ACPD Police Chaplains have been integral in providing appropriate assistance, advise, comfort, counsel and referrals to those in need.
- h) ONE program will be great initiative for Atlantic City. Tried it on a trial basis about year and a half ago and found it to be helpful.
- i) Continuing partnership with Rutgers University and looking to expand the Risk Terrain Modeling Geo-spatial crime analysis program. This program identifies geographical features of a landscape that is attractive to crime. Partners then work to address these features to reduce crime.
- j) Continues to work with City's Code Enforcement office to hold landlords of problematic nuisance properties accountable.
- k) Talked about Project PACT (Protecting Atlantic City Together). Project PACT is a public/private camera sharing initiative which allows the ACPD access to cameras in an effort to detect and solve crimes.
- l) Shop with a Cop. ACPD will take 100 local youth on a Walmart shopping spree; will increase to \$200 gift card; last year was 23 youth.
- m) ACPD giving out 300 turkeys with all the trimmings; many other turkey giveaways in the city so hopefully all families in need will get a turkey for Thanksgiving.
- n) ACPD will give gifts to kids for Christmas season. Each police unit adopts a child.
- o) Engaging community virtually through Zoom meetings; will do more of this.
- p) Spoke publicly about police department initiatives on NAACP radio program and Mayor Small's radio talk show.
- q) Increased human trafficking investigations with the FBI as well as providing assistance and services to human trafficking victims through partnership with Volunteers of America.
- r) Talked about Stockton University training of officers in Procedural Justice and Interpersonal Communications Skills; started rolling out this training and all officers should be trained in it by end of 2021.
- s) Have request in to CRDA for cameras on Pacific Avenue and working with CRDA to expand NCO program so that there are NCO officers during the evening and night. Right now, there are NCO officers patrolling during the day.

4) ATLANTIC CITY BOARD OF EDUCATION UPDATE: BARRY CALDWELL, SUPERINTENDENT

- a) Donald Harris, director of Secondary Education, gave remarks on behalf of Barry Caldwell.
- b) Thanked India Still, deputy executive director of DCA's Atlantic City Initiatives Project Office, for finding educational initiatives that the city school district wasn't aware of. These initiatives will improve STEM programs at Atlantic City High School with a focus on cyber security.
- c) Sept. 1 to Nov. 13 the school district was fully remote learning because of the pandemic. 98% of students had Internet access. For those who didn't have Internet connection, the district provided students with hotspots. The district has a 1:1 ratio of Chrome books to students; therefore, was able to provide remote learning to all students.
- d) Moved to hybrid learning model on Nov. 16.

- e) Should have every textbook digitized for grades 3 to 8.
- f) Talked about instruction that elementary, middle, and high school students are receiving with hybrid model. Teachers using Google classroom and 360 degree cameras in the classroom.
- g) Providing free breakfast and lunch to students – grab and go to ensure social distancing.

5) CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT/CIVIC ENGAGEMENT: LIBBIE WILLS & CAROL RUFFU

- a) Carol Ruffu, president of the Chelsea Neighborhood Association, said that pre-COVID the Association was having meetings at Stockton University. Now Stockton is helping the Association host Zoom meetings; started this in September. In September, City Licensing and Inspection Director Dale Finch talked with association members about short-term rentals which have been a problem in Lower Chelsea.
- b) Last week the Association introduced nonprofits to civic association members; very well attended meeting and many nonprofits spoke.
- c) Had a neighborhood cleanup on Saturday that was very successful. 125 people came out for cleanup many of them from nonprofits. Partnered with ACDEVCO and Stockton University. Put it together in 3-4 weeks. Had trucks there for people to discard their old electronics; had paper shredder. City Councilmen Zia and Tibbitt were there. 160 bags of trash collected on Saturday; another 20 bags the next day. 3,500 pounds of trash; lots of bulk items like washers/dryers
- d) As far as other civic associations down this end of the city, short-term rentals and recovery homes are an issue.
- e) Westside Civic Association was meeting outside in nice weather. City Councilman Shabazz working with them; their biggest issue is crime.
- f) Venice Park Civic Association has been meeting outside in nice weather; it has significant issue with short-term rentals.
- g) Libbie Wells, president of the First Ward Civic Association, talked about uptown neighborhoods.
- h) Residents asked for streets to be paved about two years ago and they have not been addressed; would like them to be addressed, i.e. Melrose Avenue and others.
- i) Concern with what's going to happen with all the vacant lots; need to put them back on the tax rolls.
- j) Would like to see beautification of Atlantic City; City and State have to put more personnel on public works and code enforcement. Need extra people to work on weekends, which is when many of short-term rental problems happen.

6) GOOD OF THE ORDER

- a) Elizabeth Terenik, a senior project manager with ACDEVCO and with the Chelsea Economic Development Corp., said the group continues to look for investors for the 2021 Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credit program; hopefully will have investors secured in next few weeks.

- b) Terenik encouraged people to do a Google search for 6abc Latin Atlantic City to watch a news piece that will warm the heart.
- c) Natalie Devonish of ACCC said the college is offering 14 programs in the month of December for workforce development – table games dealer, front desk receptionist. She will email the information to the Atlantic City Initiatives Project Office for distribution to Executive Council members.