

**NEW COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE POLICY GROUP**  
**September 11, 2008 MEETING SUMMARY**

**Policy Group Attendees:**

Councilperson Lavonta Williams  
Councilperson Sharon Fearey  
Secretary Roger Werholtz, State of Kansas  
Secretary Roderick Bremby, State of Kansas  
Scott Moore, City of Wichita  
Susan Addington, Koch Industries  
Gary Allsup (for Steve Weatherford)  
Craig Perbeck (for Secretary Don Jordan)  
Mary K. Vaughn, Housing and Community Services Department  
Commissioner Russell Jennings, State of Kansas  
Commissioner Kelly Parks, Sedgwick County  
Keith Lawing, Workforce Alliance of South Central Kansas  
Dennis Schoenbeck, Greater Wichita YMCA Association  
Brian Black, Spirit AeroSystems

**Pillar Group Attendees:**

Chief Norman Williams, Safe and Secure Neighborhoods Pillar Group Chair  
Rachelle Moody, Workforce and Economic Development Pillar Group Chair  
Mark Stanberry, Housing for All Pillar Group Chair  
Debbie Donaldson, Physical, Mental, and Behavioral Pillar Group Chair  
Mary K. Vaughn, Housing and Community Services Department  
Brad Snapp, Housing and Community Services Department  
Anne Duncan, Housing and Community Services Department  
Sally Frey, Kansas Department of Corrections  
Chris Morales, Sedgwick County Department of Corrections  
Gail Lotson, Housing and Community Services Department  
Stephen Banks, Wichita Area Metropolitan Planning Department  
Michelle Rucker, Housing and Community Services Department

Sandra M. Moore, Urban Strategies  
Esther Shin, Urban Strategies

- I. **Welcome and Introductions** – Councilperson Lavonta Williams opened the meeting with a welcome and thanked everyone for coming. She noted that Mayor Brewer was travelling and she also welcomed back Councilperson Sharon Fearey. Wichita City Council can now have three elected officials in one place at one time without calling a media alert. Councilperson Williams asked for introductions from Policy Group members and all others in attendance.

II. **Program Spotlight** – Mary K. Vaughn reminded the group of that genesis of the New Communities Initiative was based on a desire to positively impact persons returning to Sedgwick County from Kansas prisons. The majority of the persons in Kansas prisons come from Sedgwick County, and the majority of those from Sedgwick County come from 67214 or the northeast area. The thought unless something different happened, these results would not change. Representatives of City, County and State government met and agreed to identify new ways of providing services in order to achieve new results. Those conversations led to the desire for a comprehensive look at the area. However, because it all started with prisoner reentry, Sally Frey was asked to provide an update on that program.

Sally Frey gave an overview of the Sedgwick County Re-entry Program. In 2006, there were 5575 offenders returning to Kansas, 70% of them on parole, another 30% were discharged without having to be on parole. Three years ago, 9000 in prison, 5700 on parole, 50% were returning within 6 months of release for parole violations, averaging about 200 per month. The high risk/special needs offenders were returning at the rate of 70%. There were multiple factors that contributed to this: mental illness, drug & alcohol issues, criminal history, inability to find housing, finances, attitudes, etc. So with 14% were for new crimes, the rest for non-compliance. Nearly 70% of admissions are probation or parole violators. The Secretary was challenged to try to figure out how to make changes, and Sally was hired to follow the direction of the community and what was laid out.

Following a community "Assembly", a City/County task force began identifying strategies to address the key areas of focus from the: community safety, housing, employment and support services. The result was the Prisoner Reentry program. Following are key features of the program:

- The target population is 150 of the highest risk offenders returning to Sedgwick County, which represents approximately 10% of all annual returns to Sedgwick County.
- The program is voluntary.
- Participants are identified 18-12 months prior to release on the following criteria: Returning to Sedgwick County or have pro-social ties to Sedgwick County, and they're high risk to re-offend.

Program staff first look at the risk/needs and develop a case management plan that will help each individual person reduce their risk factors. The Reentry Program offers classes on job readiness, how to think about things differently, and tenant responsibilities—how to be a good tenant. There is a police liaison who talks about detainers, warrants, anything they need to take care of while they are still incarcerated so that can have a smoother transition into the community. They engage the offenders, families and supports to the point that if there was criminal activity in the home, they would find another placement or get the family help.

The Accountability Panel is a unique feature of the program, which is made of volunteers that represent the community, i.e. employers, landlords, ex-offenders, staff, that welcome people back to the community. If things go awry, they come back in front of the Panel, who can recommend they go to a particular treatment, or back to prison if warranted. However, if they can successfully, safely maintain them in the community, they will try to match them with as many interventions as possible. The Accountability Panel also celebrates successes.

The Re-entry Program is being monitored/evaluated by Kansas University. Following is a summary progress to date:

- 216 participants enrolled, 50 women and 166 men;
- first participant returned to the community February of 2007;
- currently have 46 in the community and 67 in the facility;
- have graduated 27 participants;
- over the course of the year there were as many as 80 offenders on a waiting list.

Funding from the Workforce Investment Act allowed them twice to bring a sheet metal lab to Winfield and 18 offenders were trained. They have graduated and some are now in the workforce. However the funding was cut and the department is looking for new ways to fund this successful program.

Currently, there are 92 released participants, seven participants have violated parole and returned to prison, which equates to a 92% success rate.

There were questions regarding the Re-entry program. If a participant “graduates” means they completed their pre-release work, have had approx. 6-8 months outside in the community. This would be a joint decision between the offender, case manager and parole officer where they discuss and decide whether based on the goals that were set, do they think the offender successfully completed enough of the goals to be called a successful graduate.

Councilperson Williams posed the question what was needed with 80 people on the wait list. Secretary Werholtz stated that the reality of expanding their resources to put more people in place isn't realistic, but they're trying to get the entire department to use the same methods for the entire population. He said that too often people focus on the low-risk folks and try to apply the same for high-risk folks, which would work better the other way around.

The group expressed appreciation for the information.

### III. Old Business -

Ms. Sandy Moore, Urban Strategies, Inc, reiterated that the Policy Group was put together because they have either the responsibility or authority or both for implementing the kind of policy changes that are essential to ensure success of Reentry and the New Communities Initiative.

Pillar Group Reports – The Pillar Group Chairs highlighted one or two areas to conserve time. (Copies of all reports were distributed and are attached to the original copy of the minutes).

- Margie Phelps, Chair of the Children and Youth Pillar Group, was absent but submitted her report (see attached).
- Mark Stanberry, Chair of the Housing for All Pillar Group reported on his research of Hutchinson Correctional Facility Construction Program where homes are constructed by the Inmates in Vocational Education Training. He has seen the homes and provided slides for the Policy Group to review. Currently the Hutchinson program is at capacity. He indicated a challenge of this program was the significant upfront costs.
- Chief Norman Williams, Chair of the Safe and Secure Neighborhoods Pillar Group provided his report however he was not present at the time of the report so Esther Shin, Urban Strategies, Inc. reported on the graffiti removal in the 67214 area.
- Rachelle Moody, Chair of the Workforce and Economic Development Pillar Group provided her report. In response to a question at the previous meeting on education needs in the 67214 zip code area, Ms. Moody reported that based on the census in this zip code area, 36% of adults 25 years and older received up to a 12<sup>th</sup> grade education but didn't receive a high school diploma.
- Debbie Donaldson, Chair of the Physical, Mental and Behavioral Health Pillar Group provided her summary in conjunction with the next agenda item.

### IV. New Business

- a. **State Reinvestment Funding Request** – Ms. Moore stated that Secretary Werholtz and Debbie Donaldson, Pillar Chair of Physical, Mental and Behavioral Health, and the sub-committee which was formed, looked at potential strategic uses of any funds which may be available as a result of the legislation which was passed last year.

Ms. Vaughn stated that the summary of the committee's recommendation is included in the meeting packet.

Secretary Werholtz reiterated the two purposes for this request was (1) to keep the momentum of the NCI alive until the Master Plan was completed and (2) to keep the project moving forward but not make the request so large that a significant adjustment would be needed once the Master Plan is completed. Secretary Werholtz reviewed the recommendations:

**NCI Corps** – provide vocational training for young men/women who are disconnected from school, other unemployed individuals living in the NCI area and on probation or parole, and persons in correctional facilities who will be returning to the NCI area. Training will result in the construction and/or rehab of homes in the NCI area, and in the development of marketable skills that will lead to permanent employment opportunities. 100 youth trained. Annual cost: \$530,000. Secretary Werholtz said \$60,000 - \$100,000 is potentially new money. The balance of that is from existing resources. Secretary pointed out that most of the ideas are tentative and require approval from the respective agencies involved and all is predicated on what happens through our process. He stated the first item that is a part of the \$530,000 is to fund an NCI Coordinator that will be located in Mary K. Vaughn's office and will take over the day to day tasks to get the NCI Corps project moving forward. The estimated budget for that is about \$75,000 and will cover salary, fringe, supplies, etc. These funds are currently available.

Secretary Werholtz stated the next item included is that Juvenile Justice Authority Commissioner J. Russell Jennings' desire to have a housing program at one of his facilities similar to the Department of Corrections' program. The goal is to identify some existing money within the Juvenile Justice Authority's budget to locate a housing program at one of the juvenile correctional facilities that will target individuals who want to reenter the Wichita area with the idea of returning them with skills to construct homes and to be hired by developers in Wichita. There isn't a solid commitment at this point, but they're going through the budget process.

Secretary Werholtz stated that a couple of other ideas talked about was vocational training in the community for youth here who either are involved in the criminal justice system, or are at risk of becoming involved in the criminal justice system. They were thinking in particular about the community corrections population, about at-risk kids who live in the neighborhood with the same goals. Secretary Werholtz told Keith Lawing that they were thinking about WIA funds for this within the area that he would have direct control over. Secretary Werholtz cautioned that it will be important to not mix the youth and adult populations.

Secretary said another piece of the proposal is there will need to be supervisors who can direct the work that's being done either through the vocational training process or work with the private developers. They estimate the cost of this to be about \$60,000 to \$100,000 depending on the scale. He stated that this is what they will include in the Department of Correction's budget submission. Secretary Werholtz mentioned Mark Masterson was included in the discussion that he has a couple of ideas he wants to pursue in partnership with faith-based organizations that again focus model patterned after the Homeboy Industries Program that provides training, counseling and entrepreneurial experience for at-risk youth in several communities around the country. The potential funding sources that are targeted would be prevention funds, liquor tax funds that come through the local government. That's the final component of the \$530,000.

Mr. Keith Lawing stated that some of their board members are construction industry employers. They will be hosting a round table discussion next week with other employers in the construction industry and have some folks from Greenbush come to talk about training programs that currently exist within the juvenile justice area. Mr. Lawing said they're not suggesting this might solve their labor needs, but this might be one of the avenues where they can increase their ability to get skilled employees. Mr. Lawing said there was success in the initiative in Winfield that Sally Frey talked about because it was the aviation company that helped design the curriculum that was used to train. He added that the curriculum that Greenbush uses is well recognized and is NCCR certified, which is the message they want to give employers. Mr. Lawing stated that one of the things they would like to give them is the example that the aviation company in this area invested some of their dollars to help offset some training programs. Mr. Lawing stated that even though their funds were tremendously reduced this year, they're going to be very aggressive in trying to find funds that apply to these types of programs.

Commissioner Jennings stated that everyone may not understand the context of juvenile correctional facility. When they hear this they may think of 13-year old kids, and wonder why they are training them to build houses. He stated that the average age is 18, and many of them are being released after age 18 and up to their 22 ½ birthday. He stated that each facility has a strong education component in post high school and they have the ability to earn college credits through the community college. He stated that Greenbush is one of the educational contractors at two of their facilities, and they're thinking of putting this type of vocational program in the Topeka facility. He wondered if there's an opportunity to create a satellite facility for a small core of youth, perhaps in partnership with City and County, to authenticate a community based vocational training center. It would be a cooperative venture with limited staff – similar to work

release where you might be able to build on site as opposed to or in addition to a facility-based vocational program. Commissioner Jennings said this may be something to discuss further to get kids closer back to their own community, working in their community there's really positive potential with that.

Ms. Sandy Moore agreed, and said that's the way the Policy Group started the Summer Youth Clean Up program. Ms. Moore asked Mr. Mark Stanberry, Pillar Chair for Housing for All, to take Commissioner Jennings' idea to the Housing For All Pillar Group to further develop this idea. Ms. Moore also asked Mr. Lawing to remind employers if they are willing to take some risks, they have an entire safety net around the people they would be willing to take in. She stated that there were at least three case managers present at today's meeting. County Commissioner Kelly Parks recommended they speak with Prentice Lewis if they haven't already. He stated that Mr. Lewis has some programs for disadvantaged, at-risk youth, that he would like to get going, and that he's a critical player in this program.

Secretary Werholtz stated Mary K. Vaughn had identified locations and potential budgets to create the Model Block Improvement funding piece. This would create highly visible evidence of the NCI. He stated that this can be expanded or contracted based on the ability to put a financial package together to fund it. He stated they have had discussions with Gary Allsup, KHRC, and that the target funds would likely be tax credit dollars, federal HOME dollars, and potential rehab dollars. Secretary Werholtz stated that the City and State would need to work closely to scale for the project based on KHRC's ability to be the major financial player, with the local ability to actually manage the project.

Ms. Debbie Donaldson, Pillar Chair of Physical, Mental & Behavioral Health, was involved with the potential funding committee and reported that her Pillar held focus groups – went out and talked to the seniors in the community. She stated that what they heard over and over again in terms of their health is they don't understand the insurance companies, and they don't understand how to get certain things that they need. The Pillar group prepared a proposal to address those needs - a **Health Advocate** to outreach to improve access to and understanding of the health care system for older adults. The second funding proposal is for a **Kinship Navigator**, which will provide in-home support to grandparents and other relative caregivers needing assistance in raising children. The third proposal is for **Healthy Babies/Health Access** program which will address an epidemic of preventable infant mortality and low birth weight births in the NCI zip code, 67214, by recruiting prenatal residents for participation in the Healthy Babies Home Visitation and Group Education program. Ms. Donaldson had a Proposal Package on each of the three initiatives.

Ms. Moore asked Councilperson Williams if she wanted to get a consensus from the group on the State Funding Considerations that she want to pursue. Councilperson Williams said absolutely, because of the way all of the pieces support each other – there is a great opportunity within these programs.

- V. **Other Program Updates** – Ms. Vaughn reported that Ms. Rachel Moody, Pillar Chair for Workforce and Economic Development, in her report addressed Commissioner Welshimer’s questions from last meeting regarding adult education general results and how we’re preparing tenants for being a good tenant. Ms. Vaughn said she will do a quick summary and email it to everyone, because of time constraints.

Ms. Vaughn shared that Ms. Sandy Moore and Ms. Esther Shinn, Consultants, have been working with us a result of a grant through Council of State Governments, for almost 2 years. She stated that they have been invaluable in helping us understand how to do something like this due to their experience implementing similar types of successful initiatives in a number of communities. Ms. Vaughn stated that this will be their last meeting with us in the capacity of consulting facilitators because their contract with Council of State Governments has ended. She expressed her appreciation for all the work they have done. She stated that they’ve attended many community meetings outside the Policy Group framework, and have engaged a lot of community residents, advised us on everything, have been valuable resources for us. She stated that even though they had a contract, they are two very great and gracious ladies and have gone beyond what they were paid to do. The Policy Group joined Ms. Vaughn in thanking them for all they’ve done.

Ms. Moore said it was a pleasure doing this work. She stated that Wichita has come farther and faster than any community she’s worked with, and that she and Ms. Shinn are constantly in awe. Ms. Moore asked that we not take our eye off the ball. She said that because of the great leadership, we’ve created the vehicle for identifying problems, identifying and prioritizing solutions, and engaging the right people as evidenced by those in the room. Ms. Moore also thanked Ms. Shinn for all her support.

- VI. **Closing Thoughts** – Council Members Williams and Fearey thanked the Policy Group members for their continued support. The meeting adjourned at 3:15 p.m.