



FINANCE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE STUDY SESSION

RE: American Rescue Act Funding

County of Champaign, Urbana, Illinois

Monday, August 30, 2021 – *6:00 P.M. *PLEASE NOTE TIME

Shields-Carter Meeting Room/Zoom

Brookens Administrative Center

1776 East Washington Street, Urbana, Illinois

MINUTES – Approved as Distributed on November 9, 2021

Members Present:	Samantha Carter, Lorraine Cowart, Aaron Esry, Stan Harper, Mary King, Jenny Lokshin, Jim McGuire, Brad Passalacqua, Chris Stohr, Jennifer Straub, Steve Summers, Leah Taylor, Eric Thorsland, Kyle Patterson
Member Physically Present:	Stephanie Fortado
Members Absent:	Jim Goss, Diane Michaels, Jacob Paul, Emily Rodriguez, Jodi Wolken
Others Present:	Darlene Kloeppel (County Executive), Kathy Larson (ARPA Project Manager), Megan Robison (Recording Secretary)

Agenda Items

I. Call to Order

Chair Fortado called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

II. *Roll Call

A verbal roll call was taken, and a quorum was declared present.

III. Approval of Agenda

This item was inadvertently overlooked.

IV. Public Participation

Lee Ann Kelly, Champaign resident, spoke about how gun violence has affected many people that were not the intended victims. She would like the Board to use 5-10% of the ARPA funds for a violence prevention plan. She believes the County needs to have a collaborative approach to comprehensively address the five categories of social determinants of health. She also explained how a wrap-around center in neighborhoods would be beneficial to violence prevention.

Creel Lancaster, Garden Hills resident, gave testimony about their personal experience with gun violence, how simple things like streetlights would be beneficial and how Swift Program could help with the prevention of violence.

Arthur Paganini, Urbana resident and member of the PSL, would like to see some concrete action on this topic. He collected signatures for the creation of the Swift Program, here locally. Also, he wants to make sure the residents of our community are not evicted due to financial hardships. When people lose their homes, this can lead to more violence within the community.

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April Thomas, Urbana resident, explained how she has been affected by violence. She found it very difficult to find resources to help her son. She would like to see more community programs to assist offenders and families after the violence.

Hrant Kebantsi, Urbana resident, mentioned how brute force does not solve the violence problems. He believes programs, like the Swift Program, and protecting the community from evictions can be beneficial to the prevention of violence.

Alex Rogers, Urbana resident and member of the PSL, believes the COVID-19 pandemic has been the sustained trauma that has left people in the “fight or flight” mode. He doesn’t think it is responsible community advocacy or responsible leadership to expect someone to work in unsafe conditions or risk eviction. He suggested the County Board makes sure no one in the County is evicted and create a Swift Program in the community as a way to prevent violence.

Vincent Andujo stated he works with the Housing Authority Youth Build Program and First Followers GoMAD Program to train young people. He believes with more resources we can better serve the community with these programs. He has been able to serve 60-80 individuals in three years and wonders what it would look like if he had a whole team of people working on this same initiative.

Josh Payne, Urbana resident, stated his opinion is that we are missing the overall bigger picture of violence. We have to address the wounds and symptoms first. He believes a wrap-around community one-stop shop for grassroots prevention would be helpful. He urges the Board to change their perspective of violence.

Ken Salo, urban planning teacher and volunteer tutor, believes this is a great opportunity to rethink alternative education as a way for violence prevention.

Jennifer Enoch, nurse, is asking the Board to add streetlights and sidewalks in the Garden Hills neighborhood along with fixing the drainage issues. She also would like to see the groups that already work in violence prevention within our community, receive funding to do more good work.

Traci Quigg Thomas, Champaign PTA Council President, stated the parents are concerned about the violence in their schools and the schools have really had to step up and play an increasing role in the social safety net. She has noticed with the absence of a strong social safety net; the schools are left to pick up the pieces and this shouldn’t be their role. She urges the Board to invest in the grassroots organizations and evidence-based programs to address the issue of community violence.

Brandi McCoy, Urbana resident, is echoing the need to invest in the Swift Program in our community. She also believes that evictions should not be enforced either, as that will only increase the violence.

Meghan, Champaign School employee, believes that streetlights in the Garden Hills neighborhood should be the biggest infrastructure investment and believes funding should go towards many of the violence prevention organizations within our community.

Jenny Putman thanked Chair Fortado and the Board for giving the community two nights to contribute their ideas. She believes we need to fund many of the violence interrupter organizations within our community for them to do more effective work in our community.

Mike Ingram thanked all the participants and urged the Board to look at ways for the community to interact virtually when the meetings go back to in-person. He encouraged the Board to work with other bodies to add streetlights and other things to better the Garden Hills neighborhood. Also, he would like many of the successful programs within the community to receive some extra help from the ARPA funds

as they are all doing their own part in the prevention of violence. Finally, he asked the Board to do some research into a gun buy-back program and how that can help to prevent the violence.

V. Communications

Ms. King read a letter from Barbara Kessel. Ms. Kessel is advocating for community-based solutions and does not want to see the majority of this federal funding go to the County Jail.

Ms. Straub read a letter from Anita Young. Ms. Young is requesting some funding be used to create an interactive street level map that community members can report gunshots and other violence in real time. She explained how this type of application could benefit the community.

Mr. McGuire said he understands there is a need for the programs and resources we have in the community and that is why he supports them. He believes we need to fund the successful programs within the community but wants to make sure that funding doesn't go to duplicate programs. He listed many of the organizations, funded by the County Board, that provide the prevention services in the community.

Ms. Carter pointed out how she feels that many Board members are disconnected to what is going on in the community.

Mr. Summers would like the Board to strongly consider programmatic and brick and mortar projects to combat the violence within the community.

Mr. Thorsland read a letter from Carol Inskeep. Ms. Inskeep urged the Board to use funds to support community-based services, like First Followers, to make a difference in the community.

Ms. Taylor read a letter from a constituent who stated how well Ms. Carter communicated something that many Board members needed to hear.

Ms. Lokshin read a letter from Rebecca Motley. Ms. Motley asked that the Board support First Followers' request.

Ms. Fortado received several letters and summarized the letters. All of the letters expressed the desire to use funds for the community-based programs to invest in ways to combat the causes of violence within the community.

VI. Discussion – Community Violence

Ms. Fortado began this section of the agenda by explaining that she wanted the Board to have an opportunity to hear first-hand and learn from the people dealing with these issues on the ground. Ms. Fortado introduced all of the speakers: Marlon Mitchell, Thom Moore, Angela O'Neil, Dr. Regina Parnell, Richmond Hayes, Dr. Helen Neville, Dr. Gus Wood, Mark Pelmore and James Corbin.

Mr. Mitchell prefaced the conversation by stating this is not a presentation from First Followers, First Followers just happens to be involved in many of these conversations. He began by introducing himself; he is a PhD student at the University of Illinois and the founding Executive Director of First Followers. Mr. Mitchell continued by introducing their proposal, the H3 Coalition: Harm, Healing and Hope and what they will address in their presentation.

Mr. Mitchell explained that H3 is a Community Development Corporation and is an umbrella of agencies that come together to provide services in these five areas: counseling/support, general education, economic development, community outreach and civic engagement. He believes that all of the current agencies are

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operating in silos and they must all come together to give people the resources that they need. Mr. Mitchell gave a timeline for developing, implementing and sustaining this program. He wrapped up his presentation by explaining how community violence has affected him. This program is a promise to his family and commitment to his community to address this problem.

Mr. Moore began his part of the presentation by stating a quote from George Bernard Shaw: “You see things and say, ‘why?’ . I dream things that never were and say, ‘why not?’”. He stated the H3 innovation is a one-stop human service project. He went on to explain many of the issues that First Followers see each day, why a one-stop center would be most beneficial and how this center would help those in need.

Ms. O’Neil spoke as a mother of a gun violence victim. She explained how she didn’t know where to go but she was finally referred to First Followers. She described all of the services that were provided to her and how those helped her. Ms. O’Neil believes this is a great program that needs to be extended to everyone in need.

Dr. Parnell explained how the families in our community are hurting. She spoke about coming together as a community to support these families, to support the entire family and community dealing with the violence, and the need for a hub within the community. Dr. Parnell is a service provider, but she also described how violence has affected her directly and indirectly. She believes that a coalition, like H3, is vital for the community.

Mr. Hayes, a Counseling Psychology PhD student, described the research he is doing to restore our communities. He spoke about the importance of healing and how he believes we need a framework to bring healing and the community together in a radical way.

Dr. Neville, Counseling Psychologist and university professor, began by thanking the speakers before her and First Followers for the work that they do. She continued by describing the different ways she has been involved with the community regarding healing from violence. She believes H3 is the only program that tackles all of the issues that go into healing from violence. Dr. Neville explained the different ways that H3 will help the community.

Dr. Wood, Labor Education professor, is here to discuss his research into local movement centers. He outlined the historical purpose of community centers and provided a case study to show how the H3 concept does work. He believes there is potential for this to work in our community.

Mr. Pelmore, Business Elevator CEO, provided a map to show the “hot zones” for violence in Champaign. He discussed violence from a business perspective. He explained how minorities in our community have a low rate of business ownership and educational degrees. The mission of Business Elevator is to change the landscape of minority-owned businesses to help disadvantaged neighborhoods become communities. He described how he became involved in this initiative and the ways his program works.

Mr. Corbin, Community Navigator and Resource Specialist, described why entrepreneurship within the minority communities would be beneficial. He spoke about the disconnect with the referral times from agency-to-agency for separate resources. He also discussed why having a community center to provide the services, proposed by the H3 Coalition, would assist with the prevention of violence. Mr. Corbin concluded his presentation by explaining how he has been affected by gun violence.

Ms. Fortado thanked everyone for their participation in this conversation and then she opened the floor to Board members for questions and discussion. Ms. Carter started this section by explaining how she relates to the First Followers and she asked if they have accountants that will be able to give the reports needed for the ARPA funds. Mr. Mitchell explained that they do have people in place but as they grow, they will need to expand that part of their program.

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Mr. McGuire gave an overview of the services provided by the Youth Assessment Center and the Regional Planning Commission's Economic Development Division. He stated we already have many of these programs within the community and he doesn't believe First Followers has the framework to provide the same level of service as these other programs. Dr. Parnell explained that many of the young people involved in the community violence are not being serviced by the Regional Planning Commission and that many of the speakers tonight have relationships with and live among these families. Mr. Mitchell stated these other programs are doing the same work, but they are working in silos and this is the problem. Mr. Moore pointed out that the H3 Coalition would provide services by the people that have been in the shoes of those affected by community violence.

Ms. Straub asked who they envision collaborating with for the H3 Coalition. Mr. Mitchell stated that they are willing to work with any community-based organization that has a passion, love and the wherewithal to work along with them to resolve the issues.

Mr. Patterson reminded the Board that the amount of money received was based on the population of the entire county and this money is meant for the whole county not just the unincorporated areas. He also pointed out how the programs we currently have are not solving this crisis on the ground.

Dr. Wood spoke about the studies showing there's difficulty for people to access/receive services. He has seen how these community centers help to build a preventative foundation within these communities.

Mr. Stohr wondered if computer and technology literacy would be a part of the services provided as this is really needed for those that have been released from incarceration. If not, he asked that it be incorporated as part of the general education.

Mr. Mitchell concluded the presentation by listing the educational background of this evening's presenters. He stated this H3 Coalition is a radical shift in the ways we address this problem, and he wanted the Board to know that First Followers has received many different types of grants, in the past.

VII. Adjournment

Chair Fortado adjourned the meeting at 9:37 p.m.