

**GANG & YOUTH VIOLENCE COMMISSION MEETING  
November 28, 2011**

Minutes Prepared by Kerri Thompson

**Attendees**

Gary Lieberstein, District Attorney	Brad Wagenknecht, BOS Rep.
Mary Butler, NC Chief Probation Officer	Mike Donovan, D.A.'s Office
Jonathan Mills, Calistoga Chief of Police	John Robertson N.S.O.
Mary Butler, Adult Probation	Dr. Barbara Nemko, NC Superintendent of Schools
Ivan Chaidez, Community Rep.	Karen Slusser, Calistoga City Council Rep.
Richard Melton, Napa City Chief of Police	Jean Donaldson, American Canyon Chief of Police
Eric Dreikosen, Community Rep.	Amanda Bevins, Community Rep.
Dr. Patrick Sweeney, NVUSD	Alicia Jaramillo, Community Rep.
Alfredo Pedroza Community Rep.	Charles Rose, Community Rep.
Melanie Fae Garrett, At Large Member	Vanessa Luna Shannon, Parent Organization Rep.
Wesley Simpson, At Large Member	(Scarlett) Delaney Creswell, Youth Rep.

**ABSENT**

Am Can City Council Representative	William Imboden, St. Helena Chief of Police
Napa City Council Representative	St Helena Council Representative
Yountville Town Council Representative	Parent Org representative – (vacancy)

**Introductory Remarks – Acting Chair D. A. Gary Lieberstein**

Pursuant to Brad Wagenknecht's recommendation, an effort will be made to better communicate with City Council representatives so that they are aware of future meeting times, dates and locations. Mr. Wagenknecht stated that Napa has had a long-standing "simmering" gang issue that seldom "boils up" but that when gang problems do arise they become big and expensive to deal with. He said that hopefully this commission's efforts coupled with existing efforts by other agencies can mitigate and reduce the gang issues Napa currently has.

Gary Lieberstein said that community members have come together in the past to deal with gang and youth violence issues and that the District Attorney's office has had bi-monthly meetings on this topic for the past 12 years. The Napa County Gang & Violence Prevention Council was started in 1999 without a grant. Funding was provided 3 years later. It is comprised of a cross-disciplined group representing non-profits, education, law enforcement, the District Attorney and Probation. Minute orders from the last 3 meetings of this group have been provided. Mr. Lieberstein stated that the purpose of this commission is to coordinate and collaborate efforts countywide, to eliminate duplicate efforts, learn about new efforts in our communities, and engage the public and inform the public about what is being done to work on this problem. He said that we want the gang problem to remain "below the surface" and that Napa has been relatively calm compared to neighboring counties which have had a significant increase in gang violence. One of the purposes of this commission should be providing the public with

a better sense of the efforts in effect to combat this problem; invite more public participation; and to try to expand what we have been doing. It would be desirable to have a member of the faith-based community involved here. He said that there is not a budget for this commission but we have lots of energy and that over time, sub-committees might be formed. Napa does have an ongoing gang influence. Mr. Lieberstein stated that meetings will continue at the bi-monthly stage for the Gang Violence Suppression meeting, but at some point there will probably be some coordination of efforts between the Gang & Youth Violence Prevention Council with this commission.

### **Open Meeting Law Requirements under Brown Act – Carrie Gallagher, Dep. Cty Counsel**

Carrie Gallagher gave a Power Point presentation regarding Open Meeting Law Requirements under the Brown Act. (See Handout attached.) Ms. Gallagher has been assigned to this commission to address any legal issues that arise. Addie Harrold, Gary Lieberstein's executive assistant, will be handling any meeting announcements. If someone is unable to attend a meeting he or she should contact her directly.

### **Swearing-In of Commission Members (by County Clerk)**

Amanda Bevins, Erik Dreikosen, Alicia Jaramillo, and Alfredo Pedroza were sworn in.

### **Expanded Introductions by Commission Members**

- 1) Scarlett Delaney Creswell. She would like to be addressed as Delaney. Ms. Creswell stated that she was made aware of the commission by her mother. She has been a witness to youth violence and has had friends who were involved in youth violence. She wants to make a contribution through her participation in the commission. She is a junior at St. Helena High School.
- 2) Karen Slusser. She has served as a Calistoga city council member for 9 years and wants to ensure that our youth have alternatives to gangs.
- 3) Jonathan Mills. He has been a law enforcement officer for 25 years. He is here because he wants to be.
- 4) Dr. Patrick Sweeney. He is here because he wants to see all of our youth do well. He wants to focus on education and prevention.
- 5) Rich Melton. His agency deals with other organizations that deal with youth. He stated that a commission that encompasses representatives from diverse organizations can help to foster a strategic approach to dealing with youth issues. He also said that we need a wide strategic approach to deal with problems, not just to deal with things reactively but in a proactive way and that we need to support the efforts of organizations including education and youth organizations. There are a variety of organizations that do a great job. We need to promote these organizations and the positive work that they do and talk about the successes of the efforts and not just focus on the examples when things don't work.
- 6) Alfredo Pedroza. Mr. Pedroza was born and raised in Napa, has served with some of the organizations in town and wants to be part of the solution.
- 7) Erik Dreikosen. He is the Director of Operations of The Boys & Girls Club of Napa Valley which serves over 1200 kids from ages 6 to 18 every day after school. He said that he wants to be part of creating solutions to these issues.
- 8) Melanie Fae Garrett. Ms. Garrett lives in St. Helena, is the mother of Delaney, youth commission member, and has two grown sons. She is new to California and Napa Valley. She has observed in the past 2 years that our young people seem to be drifting, with considerable

lack of direction, She said that she is aware of others in St. Helena who are looking for alternative resources for youth involvement.

- 9) Wesley Simpson . Mr. Simpson is a volunteer at the City of Napa Sergeant's Desk (NPD) and wants to be here to offer any help that he can. He has an extensive background with gangs; he grew up in a gang society, his older brother was in a gang and is currently in prison.
- 10) Charles Rose. Mr. Rose stated that he wants to give back to Napa. He currently serves on the Superior Court Juvenile Justice Committee and the Board of Directors for The Wolfe Center, organizations which serve the youth of Napa Valley. He grew up in New York City, where he witnessed gangs but avoided getting involved in them.
- 11) Amanda Bevins. Ms. Bevins is a criminal defense attorney. She has represented juvenile clients for 18 years and is passionate about juvenile work. She said that her clients include those who have been accused of gang related crimes. She currently has five cases where her clients are accused of gang crimes, including a 15 year old who has no previous criminal record who is facing life in prison. She sees the way that gang activity tears apart families. She said that gang association and labeling youth as gang affiliates is problematic and she suggests that a different approach is needed as an alternative to focusing on prosecution. Prevention, education, and activity alternatives are needed as well. Ms. Bevins serves on the Superior Court Juvenile Justice Committee and the Board of Directors of the Contra Costa Bar Association. She practices in Napa, Contra Costa, Alameda, and Solano counties.
- 12) Vanessa Luna Shannon. Ms. Shannon is currently employed as an academic counselor at Napa Valley College and is mother of two boys. She has previously worked at the Napa County Office of Education for 10 years as the Education coordinator. Her primary job as an Education Coordinator was to give community and parent presentations about gang identification and history in Napa. Her presentations also included information on the ways that parents and community organizations can prevent gang violence. She said that she is passionate about gang prevention and education and is on this committee to see where her interests intersect with the purpose of the committee. She also wants to see where some of the gaps are in our community.
- 13) Ivan Chaidez. Mr. Chaidez is the Director of English Language Learner and Alternative Education Services for Napa Valley Unified School District. He works closely with Napa's English language learner families which are predominately Hispanic. He conducts meetings and trainings for the parents and hears the feedback from the families about their experiences. He brings "the voice of our parents" to the commission's attention. In relation to the Alternative Education aspect of his position, he oversees all of the expulsions, suspensions, and truancy cases. He intervenes when students have been identified with gangs. He sees his participation on this committee as a natural fit with his position at NVUSD and is here to learn and to give back.
- 14) Brad Wagenknecht – Member , Board of Supervisors.
- 15) Alicia Jaramillo. Ms. Jaramillo has been in law enforcement for 20 years and is currently an Investigator with DA's Office. She is a Bilingual law enforcement officer and does a lot of Spanish presentations with Vanessa Shannon to parents and students countywide about at risk behavior for children, and what to look for. She also is part of the Napa County Hispanic Network, has been a Board member for 9 years and is a conduit of information between the Latino Community and law enforcement. She is also a new board member for Puertas Abiertas, a new local non-profit offering services to parents for at-risk youth.
- 16) John Robertson. Mr. Robertson is the Napa County Undersheriff and has 30 years in law enforcement, the last 20 in Napa County. He assisted in the development of the Sheriff's Activity League, an afterschool recreational program for youth. He was also a part of the Gang Task Force when he was an investigator. He has worked with Probation, the DA office, NPD and the

school district and has participated in the Juvenile Justice Committee. He currently sits on the mental health board of Napa County as a community member.

- 17) Mary Butler. Ms. Butler has been the Napa County Chief Probation Officer for over 9 years and works with the youth in our community who make mistakes (to join gangs, commit violence). She stated that the number of youth in trouble with gangs has decreased considerably and that her goal is to see this trend continue. She said that education and prevention are keys to attaining this goal and that it is important to promote positive alternatives for our youth.
- 18) Jean Donaldson. He has been the American Canyon Chief of Police for one year. He has been a member of the Sheriff's office for 23 years, most of his career being in investigations, and has been a part of investigating many gang-related crimes including homicide. He is also a volunteer coach at the sheriff's activities league. He is interested in the preventive component of gang /violence prevention.
- 19) Dr. Barbara Nemko. Dr. Nemko has been the Napa County Superintendent of Schools for 15 years and has been involved in previous gang task force committees and commissions. She said that the county Office of Education deals with the highest number of gang affiliated youth in the county on a daily basis other than juvenile hall. At graduations, law enforcement is required to be present due to "familial component." She said that they are more worried about families getting into trouble than the students at these types of events. She also said that the cycle has to stop and she will do whatever she can do to help.
- 20) Gary Lieberstein. Mr. Lieberstein has been a prosecutor in Napa County for 27 years and is finishing his 13<sup>th</sup> year as District Attorney. He stated that two major reasons he does what he does is to assist victims of crime to become survivors and not being re-victimized by the criminal justice system and to see that our youth overcome their "natural mistakes" and become productive citizens of the community. He said that once youths have become adults and particularly if they've become involved in the criminal justice system, we have lost many opportunities to make an effective change once they become 18. Mr. Lieberstein stated that he has many years of participation in the Peer Court Program, is active in State and National youth and victim-related organizations, is a Vice President on the Board of Directors of the National District Attorneys' Association, and is a Co-Chair of the national victims' rights committee. He stated he would like some of the best practices of organizations around the country to be incorporated into our community and hopes that we can share methods that are working well for us with state and federal organizations. He said that he wants to be able to contribute in any way that he can.

### **Nominations and Election of Chair/Vice-Chair**

The Chair is to serve one year (starting July 1, 2011) and will serve until June 30<sup>th</sup> 2012. The Vice Chair is to serve in the Chair's absence or if the Chair position becomes vacant.

Brad Wagenknecht addressed the issue of continuity of the Vice-Chair becoming the Chair. He said it is not in our by-laws but wanted to bring this idea to the commission's attention. Gary Lieberstein said that there should be a symmetry or off-set of experience for balance. Dr Nemko nominated Vanessa Luna Shannon as she is intimately involved with anything related to gangs, has worked with the community extensively, is very organized and would get the word out to the community about what the committee is doing. Ms. Shannon agreed to serve and said she would be happy to serve as Vice-Chair. Mr. Lieberstein was nominated as Chair and he said he is willing to serve.

TERM TO SERVE: 11/28/2011 through 6/30/2012, Election by Hand = unanimous vote

\*\*Chair – Gary Lieberstein

\*\*Vice-Chair – Vanessa Luna Shannon

**Public Comment on matters not on the Agenda**

- 1) Priscilla Silvie – St. John’s The Baptist Catholic Church. Ms. Silvie said that they are planning a new facility, the Napa Valley Youth Center {Try to obtain this handout} with after school hours between 2:30 and 7:00. She said that many children are left alone after school as they have working or single parents and that these children are at risk and susceptible for getting into trouble. She said that members of the parish have participated in the development of the project to begin mid-2012 to build a youth center (Plaza Property) at the corner of Caymus and Main which would be open to all children, non-denominational, free, and be a positive environment and an alternative program as a safe and activity filled place to come to after school. She said the center will be open year-round from 2:30 to 7:00, has a youth center gym, an 11,000 sq. ft. Conference Center, a 6,000 sq. ft. outdoor sports field, a gymnasium, classrooms, workshops, and a variety of other programs and services such as academic tutoring, mentoring/leadership workshops, computer technology, and classes on language, diet/exercise, art and music. They are a partnership with a variety of different organizations, including Kaiser and Queen of the Valley. Dr. Gutterson, author of the Sonoma Diet Cookbook will be a teacher. The building will be completed in 2014. There are 3,700 families registered at the parish for a total of 17,000 members of which 6,000 members are children. There is a school on campus for 220 students. Funding for services will be provided by the profits from the church’s thrift store. A nominal fee of \$5.00 may be charged at some point but for now the program will be free to all.
  
- 2) Leslie Medine, Executive Director of On The Move. Ms. Medine expressed some disappointment with the lack of youth turn-out for this first meeting. She proposed a subcommittee for this commission with Delaney as chair. She wants to see parents of former or present gang members at these meetings. Mr. Lieberstein suggested that if Leslie has a parent in mind, there is a vacancy on the commission for a parent representative.

**By-Laws/Mission Overview**

See Handout. Mr. Lieberstein read from these documents. He stated that Public and private partnerships are very important. Meetings are quarterly. An annual report will be prepared for Board of Supervisors at the end of June to share progress and recommendations for BOS consideration. He said that the commission does not have a budget, but this does not prevent the BOS from implementing our recommendations and that the BOS is looking for our expertise to guide them. The terms are 3 years and 2 years for commission members and will be alternating. When one’s term expires, one must reapply to participate again. Terms are renewable. Mr. Lieberstein said that we will be drawing lots for this at the next meeting. And that everyone is expected to attend all meetings. If one cannot attend a meeting, please contact Addie Harrold, Gary’s assistant, to inform her. It was asked if there were enough executive committee members or if there was one short. Elections were held for the two vacant executive board positions:

Melanie and Wesley were nominated for position one. Charlie and Erik were nominated for position two.

- Elected:**
- 1) Wesley Simpson (At Large) – Executive Board Member, 1 yr term
  - 2) Charlie Rose (Community Rep) - Executive Board Member, 1 yr. term

## **County Master Plan Review**

A Handout was given along with instructions to become familiar with it by the next meeting.

## **Reports on Gang/Youth Violence around Napa County**

Chief Melton. Chief Melton stated there was a shooting in Napa a few weeks ago in which gang members were involved, was comprised of mostly younger people and was disorganized. He said that from the positive side, he sees a lot of efforts from the community in helping to deal with these issues. The biggest challenge is to talk about what is happening to diminish this issue in a pro-active way rather than in a negative way and to find a way to effectively support the organizations who deal with these issues on a daily basis and use “soft money.” Melton believes “we have it pretty good here.” He also said that this committee is best suited to come up with a strategic approach to dealing with these problems earlier. His agency works with probation every day, conducts lots of probation searches and stay after the young people. The suppression side of what goes on in Napa is strong, active and in “pretty good shape” and needs to be tied together with intervention and prevention. He said that the County is doing a great job on the corrections side and that he does not see the magnitude of problems that he has seen in the past.

Jonathan Mills. Chief Mills brought up the nuisance crimes of vandalism and said that a local sect (gang) called “Cali Boyz” tag property all over town. He said that a couple of years ago, the one and only homicide was a shooting committed by a known gang member from Napa and that the recent shooting in Napa involved a Calistoga kid. He said these are examples of the “fluidity of movement of gangs within the county”. He said there was a need for a comprehensive approach, including community meetings where the schools are invited to get involved as well as the parents and that this is not just a police solution; it will take efforts from all members of the community to work on these issues.

Dr. Nemko. She stated that there are too many gang kids in a small area. It’s generally quiet but there are flare-ups. Anything we can do to reduce the problem is very helpful .

Ivan Chaidez. He stated district wide expulsions are going down. There is a rise in 9<sup>th</sup> graders wanting to identify with gangs, mostly Nortenos (red). The expulsions are largely related to drugs, and nothing related to gangs so far. He said that missing is the Alternatives to Risk program which has been eliminated (see page 18 of the Master Plan). This group dealt with kids that were identified at schools as being at risk for gang influence. The district is trying to locate a substitute program that will replace this and is looking a various models and searching for funding/grants. Some existing programs only serve students who qualify for Medi-Cal at the exclusion of those students who are not Medi-Cal qualified. Currently the district is filling this gap through the schools at the site level via counseling. Conditions are “pretty good” from Chaidez’ perspective.

Mary Butler. Ms. Butler said things were fairly calm. Juvenile hall numbers are lower, although there are tensions from time to time. The evening reporting center – alternate programming for youth—has been effective in changing youth’s behavior. After Jan 1<sup>st</sup> there will be some funding to increase parent project classes which help empower parents, provide support, and has shown past proven success for families with youth on probation. The program is also effective for other families with youth having behavioral issues. There is a new program called Functional Family Therapy which involves intense

intervention with an emphasis on helping the parents and siblings. Training for this program will happen in the spring. Probation staff members are busy in the field monitoring the kids.

Erik Dreikosen. Mr. Dreikosen, with the Boys & Girls Club, said that even with all our current efforts combined, there are still youth in Napa County that are not being served. The Boys & Girls Club is a prevention-based agency and are willing to take all youth 6 -18 as long as they are willing to live up to the standards of conduct at the organization. Every day the club is taking more kids in and at the elementary sites, they are at full capacity. There is always room at the main clubhouse on Pueblo Ave and the club in American Canyon. He said that the agency rarely does anything by itself and that so much of what B&GC does is in partnership with the county organizations, including On the Move, and the school district. He said that the combined efforts are making a difference.

Wesley Simpson. Mr. Simpson, a Police Cadet, said that parent intervention is important. In his experience, his parents were actively involved. He said that we need to ask the basic question, “why does an adolescent want to join a gang?” Maybe it’s boredom or looking to belong to something. He said that environment and family life are key to reasons why a kid might join a gang and he believes we need to focus energies on impoverished areas of the county and try to improve the overall conditions of these areas. He grew up in Napa and Vallejo and says both areas were heavily influenced by gangs. He was young enough to avoid or overlook this, but his brother was at the age that he was very susceptible.

Scarlett Delaney Creswell. Delaney is a St. Helena high school student. She knows one boy who belongs to a gang. As far as youth violence, she does not see much bullying but she has witnessed disagreements turn into fights. She believes that the social environment and level of parent involvement in a child’s life are the most important factors in determining how the child behaves. She has witnessed incoming freshmen act “tough” and initiate fights. They learn quickly that this behavior has consequences and upper classmen do not tolerate this.

Melanie Fae Garrett – Parent of Delaney. She said the media has become a strong influence on parenting and the behavior of children. Parents no longer seem to be able to set boundaries and enforce them or set moral standards and parents need to be re-empowered. She said they need to feel confident that it’s okay to set boundaries and that children expect family moral standards. Rules are set for protection not restriction of fun and there are consequences to improper actions.

Karen Slusser – Calistoga City Council. She believes that peer counseling was important when her children were growing up. The younger kids looked up to the older ones. Boys & Girls Club is a great organization that engages kids when they are young. She believes that peer counseling might be explored as another alternative to getting our youth interested and involved whereby they are influencing their peers and children who are younger in positive way.

Gary Lieberstein. Mr. Lieberstein mentioned that LAYLA at McPherson School and Voices (16-25) are two organizations that use this model effectively.

### **Set Future Meeting Dates**

Wednesday, February 15<sup>th</sup> 2012, Calistoga 4:30-6:30 City Council Chambers

Wednesday, May 16<sup>th</sup> 2012, American Canyon 4:30-6:30 City Council Chambers

**Adjournment:** Gary Lieberstein adjourned the meeting without opposition.

