

GANG & YOUTH VIOLENCE COMMISSION MEETING

February 15, 2012

[Minutes prepared by Kerri Thompson]

Attendees

Amanda Bevins
Ivan Chaidez
Eric Dreikosen
Alicia Jaramillo
Alfredo Pedroza
Charles Rose
Vanessa Shannon
Melanie Fae Garrett
Wesley Simpson
Delaney Creswell
Brad Wagenknecht

Gary Lieberstein
John Robertson
Jean Donaldson
Rich Melton
Jackie Rubin
Jonathan Mills
Karen Slusser
Cindy Coffey
Caterina Sanchez
Richard Hall

Absent

Mary Butler Patrick Sweeney Barbara Nemko Peter Mott

I. Pledge of Allegiance/Roll Call

The meeting was called to order by Chair Lieberstein at 4:45 p.m.

II. Welcome Comments from Chair

Gary Lieberstein, Napa D.A./Commission Chair- The meeting is called to order. These Commission meetings provide the community with opportunities to understand what various agencies are doing to combat gang and youth violence, and to invite community feedback as to their concerns and how we can do a better job. We will then report annually to the Board of Supervisors (BOS) as to how we are working together to combat gang/youth violence in Napa County. These meetings are held quarterly with future meetings in American Canyon and St. Helena. Vanessa Shannon, Commission Vice-Chair, asks in Spanish if anyone needs an interpreter. There were no requests at this meeting. An interpreter is available if needed.

III. Welcome – Mayor of Calistoga Jack Gingles

Mayor Gingles welcomed everyone and thanked Gary for having the Commission meeting in Calistoga.

IV. Public Comment

Matthew Hickerson is a Calistoga resident and the father to Stevie Bueno who is currently in custody on a criminal case with possibility of spending the rest of his life in prison. He encouraged the community to get involved with kids at risk.

He inquired if a kid is a gang member and decided to opt out for 4 – 6 years, what does it take for law enforcement to recognize that he or she is not a gang member anymore? He wanted to bring his son Tony, age 26, to the meeting but his son was fearful due to his felony record and prior gang affiliation. Tony believes that his life could be at risk if he speaks out against gangs. Matt stated that he wanted to be part of the solution.

Juan Hernandez is the Assistant Program Coordinator for The Family Center and has worked in this capacity for the past 4 years. He sees disenfranchised youth in Calistoga. He noted that there is a lack of youth presence on this committee. There are leaders in the community who want to be involved but they are also disenfranchised. There are no job opportunities for youth here. In East L. A. there is a saying – “nothing stops a bullet better than a job.” He sees youth yearning to be leaders, be involved and be respected. There are few who are willing to meet the kids at their level to help them out. He stated that we have connection/interaction programs which have been in place in Calistoga, a model community, and agencies work in tandem when problems arise.

V. Approval of 11.28.11 Meeting minutes

One correction made. Mary Butler’s name was added twice to attendance list. The Minutes from the November 2011 meeting were approved by acclamation.

VI. Featured Speaker – Henry Barbosa

Background - Mr. Barbosa stated he is from Napa, born and raised in a single parent family with six brothers and one sister. The only thing he looked up to and “inherited” was the gang culture. Henry also acknowledged being best friends with Ricardo Gonzalez who was shot and killed in the Laurel Street gang incident several years ago. Seeing his future as either life in prison or death, he did not see a future in gang life. When he was young, joining a gang was easy – easier than getting a job or joining the football team. He ended up at one of the alternative schools in Napa which ended up being one of the best things that happened to him. He became a leader in class which garnered positive attention. He remembers meeting Gary Lieberstein in the IMPACT program after being sent there by the Juvenile Courts. Completing the IMPACT program is a part of the probation term of a juvenile sentencing. The program was set in South Napa with the Napa County Sheriff’s League – the last day requires completing a 4-mile run. He was impressed with the fact that the District Attorney had time to spend with the kids in this program. At the same time, his friends were going to prison for life and this compelled him to reflect and think about his future and what direction he should take. A teacher in high school became like a second mother to him. He read a book about a man in East Los Angeles who got out of the gang life and started a program to help others get out or stay out of games. At 22, he started thinking about how he could help others in his situation. And he has started a program called “Hope for

Homies" a non-profit with a focus on providing automotive skills to at risk youth. Additionally, he wants to help them with obtaining employment and mentoring in a way that will steer them away from gang involvement.

QUESTIONS FOR HENRY

Gary: What is your advice to Mr. Hickerson who has a son who wants to get away from gangs but is afraid of the repercussions by gang affiliates who feel disrespected by his decision?

Henry: When friends of his would suggest that he participate in their gang-related activities, he told them "go ahead and do what you want but I am no part of it." If you are man enough to join a gang, you need to be man enough to get out of it. Be the bigger man and once you are away from you need to be done with it.

Gary: How old were you when you first joined a gang?

Henry: I almost inherited it – I was 11 years old.

Gary: Did you have relatives that were involved in gangs?

Henry: Dad – dealt drugs "A bad person" and 3 older brothers joined the gangs. He idolized his brothers and his father was not around.

Gary: What can we do as a community to influence kids like you who are at-risk and pulled in different directions?

Henry: More programs – pulling in not only kids with gang influence but all kids. Some kids feel they are a disgrace not only to their families but to the community at large. After- school programs are especially in need for the Hispanic children. Lots of Hispanic kids come from large families where the parents or single parents work a lot of hours and are not around at critical time where kids are unsupervised. Law enforcement could also become more involved by reaching out and getting to know kids on a one-to-one basis.

Gary: What did you get from gangs or what did gangs do for you?

Henry: He was young and it was the easy way to get involved and provided him with a sense of belonging to something.

Gary: You were 16 or 17 out on Laurel Street and saw your best friend go down. What was that like?

Henry: There was an altercation. This person was my friend Ricardo before the gang. Losing him was like losing a brother and it was the worst feeling. In addition to his death, 3 people went to prison. The whole thing just seems so senseless. Nobody benefits from this. I want to enjoy the good things in life like spending time with my wife.

Gary: Is this when you started to think that this wasn't for you?

Henry: Yes, That was the last "battle scar."

Gary: What if anything could we in law enforcement do to try to put the pieces together when something like this happens? It seems like there is a creed in gangs to not speak with law enforcement when they are investigating a matter.

Henry: Establishing trust is the key to getting cooperation from kids affiliated with a gang. Officers need to make sincere attempts to gain the trust of those in gangs. Reach out by having conversation with them and get to know them. Establish relationships when you see them not only on the street but if you reach out to them in jail. It's easier to speak with someone that you trust.

Gary: At the time of this incident did you have someone that you could speak to?

Henry: Not in law enforcement but I did have a teacher – Ms. Wilson and my mom.

Gary: How old are you now?

Henry: I'm 22. Another big part in my life is my daughter.

Gary: What kind of support are you getting from your family?

Henry: Lots of encouragement. My younger brother is leaning toward gangs but Henry feels that he can steer him in a positive direction. He needs something to do during the hours that his mother is at work.

Gary: What can we do as a community and a Commission to help support what you are trying to help kids do to get out?

Henry: Donations, guidance, advice, recommendations on a space to rent.

Karen Slusser: When you made your decision to get out of the gang, was there any retaliation?

Henry: No, they are still my friends but we don't affiliate in the same way. If they were to retaliate, it's all up to God- it's the way it was meant to be. Ultimately, it wouldn't be their idea but someone else's. There are a lot of followers but not a lot of leaders.

Victor Pedroza: What role can parents play?

Henry: Know who your kids hang out with and what they are doing, keep them busy, get them involved in positive activities.

Chief Mills: Is there such a thing as a kid dressing a certain way but not affiliating with a gang?

Henry: There are a lot of wannabe's. Like for me, five or six years ago I wouldn't catch myself wearing a button up shirt because it's not cool. The big thing is long socks and shorts. Regardless if someone perceives me to be affiliated, he will know as soon as he asks me. I would say no.

Chief Mills: Does that mean that you have to take the extra step to not wear that attire and take responsibility for you present yourself?

Henry: Well, yes. You may see people wearing certain things but that does not mean they are in a gang. Don't judge a book by its cover. You want to get to know a person before judging his or her status. It's easy to do. If someone wears a red or blue shirt, people will assume that person is in a gang.

Ivan Chaidez: What is the vision and location for your program Hope for Homies? What are the ages of the participants?

Henry: It's in a premature stage. 13-16 generally but if you are younger or older and you are part of a gang you can participate. You can learn automotive skills but you can also come for a safe place to hang out. I would like to see the program expand beyond Napa.

Leslie Severe: What guidelines will you have the kids that attend the program?

Henry: At the door there will be a sign "Leave all that gang stuff outside." Kids who want to hang out may be required to do some community service like helping someone with groceries or cleaning up garbage. There will be zero tolerance for gang activity.

Leslie: You might need some extra help – right?

Henry: Yes, I have a couple of buddies who are ex-gang members and share an automotive background.

Leslie Severe: Are your brothers interested in helping you?

Henry: Yeah a couple of them are interested. My brothers are the main people I want to influence.

Gary: Is this program going to run from your home?

Henry: No. I am looking for a location in Napa.

VII. Leslie Severe – Napa District Attorney Gang Investigator

I have been at the District Attorney's office a little over 3 years now. I came from the Contra Costa County Sheriff's Office. I did every job you could do there

except Sergeant. I started assigned to gangs while working at the jails. I worked in Classification which entailed tracking every gang member who was in custody. I would interview them and get to know them. On patrol, I worked with gangs in Richmond and other parts of CC County which is very different from Napa County (Thank goodness). I came to Napa and took an interest in the gang assignment. Gary James was the previous Gang Investigator and when he retired, I expressed interest in the position. I took over his spot at the end of December 2011. One of my goals is to initiate an outreach/education approach to the youth in Napa County. I have done some presentations. One of the presentations was held at Napa County Community Housing on Lincoln Ave. Every resident at this location attended the presentation. The kids who attended were interested in what I had to say. I plan on getting involved with the children that I met at this event. If you have questions or need help or would like to request my presentation please contact me at the District Attorney's Office.

Gary: What is the role of a DA Investigator? Some people may not know.

Leslie: One of the things I do – every Thursday we have a gang meeting. Representatives from all branches of law enforcement attend as well as corrections. We discuss events that have occurred in that week and the previous weekend. I provide the gang expert testimony in Napa County. I conduct the follow-up in many of the gang cases. I am somehow involved in all gang related cases.

Gary: Questions for Leslie?

Juan Hernandez: I have a comment. Instead of creating new programs, we need to coordinate all existing prevention programs. They need to reach young kids all the way to the career minded young person. Focusing on 13-21 – misses the youth when they are most susceptible to gangs. We need to seek strategies and continuum-coordinating resources for maximum benefit rather than creating additional programs.

Gary: That's one of the Commission's objectives Mr. Hernandez. We could at a future time establish a sub-committee once this Commission has progressed to that point. Members of the community at large would be encouraged to participate in this endeavor.

Mr. Hickerson: My friend Juan and I coached football. Some of the players were gang affiliated. We were successful in reaching a few of them. It's difficult to say what the answer is but Calistoga is very watchful. Officers here approach kids.

VIII. Roundtable – Current Issues

Chief Mills: Things have been relatively quiet here. 2011 stats – 37 graffiti reports; 4 gang affiliated people were arrested but not for gang related activity; 1 arrested for failure to register as a gang-member. Currently we have 9 registered as gang affiliated. Friday Night Live high school group – 2nd community meeting Feb 24th. Kids with law enforcement are putting on these events.

Karen Slusser: The Boys & Girls Club after school homework club The school is probably the best place to have these programs because the kids can remain there after school. Our teen club has a lot of active members.

Delaney Creswell: I just want to speak to parent involvement. Personally, my mother has always tracked my whereabouts, she knows who I am with. She requires meeting my friends' parents before letting me spend the night. From the teenager's perspective it is sometimes seen as un-cool to participate in after school clubs. Within my community St. Helena , this un-cool perception has changed because the activities have become more attractive to kids, like video games and technology centered activities. Parents should encourage their kids to join clubs and participate in sports. Parents need to take time to talk with their children and get to know their interests. Absence of communication between parents and kids creates distance and may push kids to rely on peers for guidance and support.

Alicia Jaramillo: I'm involved with some non-profits based out of Napa. We work with outreach and education with parents about gang culture and what does a gang member look like and gang activities. A culture they are totally unfamiliar with. We work with the school district and other organizations. I am bilingual and have worked with Gary James and Leslie Severe to present in Spanish. Parents are becoming more aware of the gang problem and are open to learning how to deal with it. I work closely with the Napa County Hispanic Network & Puertas Abiertas.

American Canyon Chief Donaldson: We have observed some middle school wannabe gang activities, doing outreach for those kids. After school activities for kids – Boys & Girls Club/Sheriff's Activities league; Park and Recreation

American Canyon Vice-Mayor Cindy Coffey: I am involved and very interested in after-school activities. Money needs to be raised to revamp the computer lab at our Boys & Girls Club. American Canyon needs a Youth Center. Intervention needs to begin at a very young age. Parental access to non-profit or law enforcement is needed to obtain assistance for children so that they are not labeled gang members early on.

NPD Chief Melton: Demographically, the Hispanic/Latino population is growing. We are getting more diverse. Our community is changing and we need to embrace all of our community. Current initiatives – McPherson Elementary School – has worked to integrate school, park, programs (Leslie Medine/Tamara - principals); Leadership groups at the high schools; Napa City Council “Comes to You” program – and Kids for Leadership program. We need to do a better job of identifying the existing programs in the community that are working and in turn helping those programs work better. One of the hardest things to sustain is success especially where non-profit programs are concerned. We need to identify the criteria for determining what programs are a success. We need to support financially and otherwise those programs that meet our criteria for success. Many times programs arise out of crisis but lose momentum and funding after a crisis subsides. Justice Policy Institute statistic = 68% of prison population do not have a HS diploma or GED. Keeping kids in school, reducing truancy, the more effective we will be in helping kids get jobs, and helping them be successful which makes for a safer community.

Ivan Chaidez: NVUSD Director of English language learner Services; 4000 are English language learners out of 18,000. Alternative Education Services are identifying students’ needs (Social, behavioral, medical) and locating resources so that they are successful in school. PEIS – K-12 in all schools focuses on restorative practices. Every grade has a grade expectation posted outside of the classroom. When a student does something bad, the first alternative will not be suspension or expulsion but rather non-traditional consequences such as community service. As a result, there have been fewer suspensions and fewer expulsions (only 12 out of 18,000). Formal reprimands like a contract are replacing expulsion. Our truancy program has been recognized by the state as very effective. School resource officers are building relationships with students, DA, probation, and county PD – no agenda, no minutes, just problem solving. Issues – middle school kids are having some behavior issues. Most expulsions are because of drugs and students with knives.

St Helena Council Member Caterina Sanchez: The role of parents is fundamental. Building communication between child and parent is key. We need to find ways to get involved with our kids. Parenting awareness is important because many parents in our communities come from countries where these problems are not present. She believes that our faith-leaders should be part of the outreach efforts as well.

Public Comment: Javier Hernandez, parent, member of nonprofit wants to involve Latino parents with their childrens’ education. He is trying to start a Fathers’ Group in St Helena and Calistoga. He wants members of the community to

come in and provide mentoring and assistance in helping them understand what the expectations are of them as parents, and other types of information. St Helena Family Center statistic – 43% of new 1st graders did not go through kindergarten and, coupled with the socio-economic position of this group, they are enormously stressed. This Commission could benefit from the participation of more educators. I would like to address how kids are. I understand that when kids are approached they are stereotyped immediately. Efforts need to be made to eliminate assumptions, stereotypes and profiling of kids at risk.

Yountville Council Member Richard Hall: There are 3,000 residents in Yountville. Half of our residents are seniors. Yountville has a vested interest in this issue because our children will eventually attend schools in Napa Valley. We provide services for our residents including Parks and Recreation programs directed at teens – Yountville Teen Extreme. Within the Yountville Community Center, there is a Teen Room where there are video games. Our parent involvement here is evident. My young daughter attends an after school program including a Kinder Hour and then a homework club where she interacts with other children. Our town has recently been able to add 6th grade which allows our children to stay within their community for a longer period of time. This also allows parents to have a greater degree of participation in their children’s lives. There is a nationwide issue of bullying which this Commission may also be able to address.

Erik Dreikosen: Boys & Girls Club, Napa . He wanted to extend his assistance to Henry Barbosa and the program he is trying to establish but he also acknowledged that we need to support already established successful programs like *On The Move*, headed by Leslie Medine. He addressed the concept of “inheriting the lifestyle” and he wants to be able to provide services to kids at risk. One of the primary issues is transportation to the programs. Many kids do not have the ability to get to the programs offered. The Boys & Girls Club is a community-based organization that works with law enforcement, the schools and agencies in the county. School sports, the P-16 program headed by Dr. Nemko, Wrestling Program headed by the Sheriff’s Activity League are all examples of positive youth activities. Additionally, the recent teen night – with dance, open mike, a Sonoma State trip with a van of teens, and the Teen Volunteer Program – successfully provides opportunities for work experience, resume assistance, and a mentor /role model to younger kids. Another recent event -- Youth of the Year – involved applicants who have spent time crafting speeches and presentations. The winners will go onto to participating in a statewide competition. For middle school kids, the sports programs are doing well but have space for additional participants. There are scholarships available for those families who cannot afford fees for these programs.

Alfredo Pedroza: Community Representative. He acknowledged the successful programs in the community.

Amanda Bevins: She has observed parents who enable and facilitate their childrens' gang participation and behavior. She witnesses this from the perspective of a criminal defense attorney representing clients who have parents who were either unaware or ignored the gang influence in their children's lives.

Charlie Rose: Community Representative/Executive Committee. He suggested that the Commission select a different venue for a future meeting such as a school. Advertise the event with flyers and obtain more parent and overall community participation. He expressed interest in hearing Leslie Severe's presentation at the County Juvenile Justice Commission. He observed that reviewing the incident reports for the past several weeks, it appears that gang activities have decreased. He referenced the January 5th news report about 5 gang-affiliated youth arrested at Lucky's on Trancas. The kids were challenging random people to fight. There was a loaded semi-automatic weapon in their vehicle. And 4 of the 5 involved were from Stockton which suggests that Napa may be susceptible to out-of-county gangs. Leslie Severe confirmed this. This incident occurred in part because the people from Stockton were here to film a rap video. They recruited some Napa residents to participate in this endeavor. Some of this video did get uploaded to YouTube. He wanted to extend support to *Hope for Homies*. Mr. Rose sits on another local committee that is federally funded by HUD. The commission recently recommended to the City Council to initiate repairs on sidewalks and street lights by McPhearson School. Non-profit fund raising is a real challenge which he faces at Wolfe Center.

Melanie Fae Garrett: At Large Parent Member. She is an educated, hard-working single parent who feels that it is a challenge to stay involved in her child's life, but being a parent demands that she is present and involved. She has made a concerted effort to connect with her daughter, Delaney. She feels that sharing her issues and challenges has allowed her to connect in special way with her daughter. She also believes that faith-based organizations should be encouraged to participate in this Commission. She suggested that churches may have transportation resources that could be made available to kids who need rides to programs. Additionally, she supports the idea of having these meetings in alternate settings such as schools or churches and senior centers.

Wesley Simpson: He is a volunteer police cadet. His brother is currently incarcerated and is a gang-member. He wanted to emphasize the importance of accessibility of programs to kids. Many kids live far away from programs and have limited options for transportation to the programs currently in place. He suggested that Alternative School Education programs should place a higher expectation on

the students who attend. Expectations should be set higher and homework should provide meaningful challenges to these students. The experiences in these programs should mean something.

SHPD Chief Rubin: There is an increase in tagging on the bridges; the culprits are unknown at this time. Truancy and juvenile problems are mainly within the Caucasian sector. The Hispanic sector makes up 40% of our population. Lack of parent involvement is associated with those students who have truancy issues or are on probation. Parents who have been able to survive without a higher education or high goals seems to encourage their children to be like them rather than inspiring them to achieve and strive for more in life. Despite encouragement from law enforcement or educators, many children will not strive for more without parental support. She invited Leslie Severe to give her presentation in St. Helena at the high school. Providing parents with information about gangs will assist them in looking for signs of gang interest and they can intervene earlier. We are having issues at the middle school level with violence, fights and bullying. We have a program called Girls on The Run where we teach girls to stand up for themselves and to be leaders in their community. We have a significant truancy issue.

Undersheriff Robertson: Gave his time over to Supervisor Brad Wagenknecht.

Supervisor Brad Wagenknecht: 1) Coordination of efforts is one of the objectives of this Commission; 2) He mentioned a "Gang Blueprint" – at these meetings there should be some attention to this; 3) Truancy problem and solutions should also be addressed in future meetings.

Vice Chair Vanessa Shannon: She would like to get Henry's participation with the Commission in the future. She suggested finding additional speakers to give presentations about first-hand experiences with gangs and youth violence. She recognized Johanna Guzman in the audience as a potential future presenter. She is an education coordinator for the Gang Violence Suppression program at Office of Education. She addressed two issues in Henry's presentation: 1) Sibling influence and involvement is significant for youth at risk. Henry mentioned there was no one defining point in time where he became a gang member. He was raised into it and it was all that he knew; 2) Stigmatization of youth acts as a barrier to youth who want to escape gang affiliation. Stigmatization isolates youth and prevents them from obtaining employment. Our community needs to put forth efforts to help destigmatize at-risk youth and assist those who are trying to shed gang identification. Ms. Shannon is a counselor who provides academic, personal and career counseling to students at Napa Valley College. She is involved in the P16 Council – an initiative lead by Dr. Nemko trying to bridge the academic achievement gap. She invited all to the 2nd annual youth conference in April. It is open to all Napa County students.

The key speaker is Dr. Victor Ramos, a former gang member from Oakland who shed the gang lifestyle by way of pursuing higher education. He is a professor at UCSB. He will be providing some workshops at this conference. Last year we had 220 people attend – ½ students; ½ parents.

Gary Lieberstein provided Probation Chief Mary Butler’s report (in absentia): Probation is busy. There is an increase of kids at juvenile hall. Many are struggling with the terms of their probation.

Gary Lieberstein: We are busy. Leslie is our full-time gang investigator. I would like her to do more presentations and outreach but at this time she is working on all of our existing gang cases. In the interests of time, he kept his report short.

IX. Vacant Parent Commission Member

This vacancy is posted on the county website – Vacant Parent Representative. The application deadline is March 8th.

X. Future Agenda Items

Gary suggested, as future agenda items, changing the Commission by-laws to include at large faith-based member and a primary school level teacher at large member. He also recommended a future discussion of the creation of a sub-committee to inventory the collaboration of gang prevention and intervention efforts throughout the county. He further suggested that the next meeting agendaize the determination of the length of terms for the At Large Committee members. Half of the members will serve two year terms and the other half will serve 3 year terms.

XI. Adjournment/Future meetings –date/time

3rd Commission Meeting - May 16th; Time: 5:00 Place: American Canyon Council Chambers

4th Commission Meeting - August 15th; Time: 5:00 St. Helena Location - To be determined

The meeting adjourned was adjourned by the Chair at 7:13 p.m.