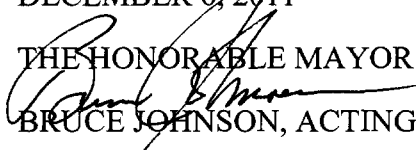


City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: DECEMBER 6, 2011
TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL
FROM:  BRUCE JOHNSON, ACTING CITY MANAGER
SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF AUTHORIZATION TO RECEIVE GRANT FUNDS FROM THE NORTHERN VIRGINIA REGIONAL GANG TASK FORCE TO PROVIDE ADULT RE-ENTRY SERVICES FOR EX-OFFENDERS RETURNING TO ALEXANDRIA.

ISSUE: Consideration of accepting \$31,250 in grant funds from the Northern Virginia Regional Gang Task Force (NVRGTF) to be managed by the Court Service Unit (CSU) for program costs associated with Adult Re-Entry services for ex-offenders returning to Alexandria.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council accept \$31,250 in grant funds from the Northern Virginia Regional Gang Task Force (NVRGTF) for Adult Re-Entry services to be managed by the CSU.

BACKGROUND: The Northern Virginia Regional Gang Task Force established law enforcement, education, and intervention and prevention initiatives throughout the region since 2003. Director of Court Services Lillian Brooks serves as the Alexandria representative of the NVRGTF Steering Board and Police Chief Earl Cook serves as the Alexandria representative on the NVRGTF.

In FY 2010, the NVRGTF exhausted regional earmark funding to continue on-going initiatives related to the elimination of gangs in the Northern Virginia area. At that time Congress discontinued approval of future federal earmarks, and it became necessary for NVRGTF to apply for other sources of funding to continue gang elimination efforts.

In FY 2011, the NVRGTF was awarded a two year grant of \$250,000 from the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) to enhance existing gang elimination initiatives. The grant provides, in part, funding of an Adult re-entry services for the City of Alexandria and Arlington County. The four other Northern Virginia jurisdictions in the NVRGTF already have local initiatives in place for Adult re-entry services. The DCJS grant covers the period of October 1, 2011 through September 30, 2012, but can be extended until the funds are exhausted

DISCUSSION: One of the major concerns in the public safety community is the high recidivism rate of ex-offenders who are released back into the community after long periods of incarceration. These ex-offenders often have problems finding housing, jobs and other support

that could keep them from engaging in continued criminal activity in their home community. Governor McDonnell has made re-entry one of his top priorities and legislation passed by the General Assembly requires communities to develop Re-entry Councils to address recidivism. The City's Adult Probation and Parole Office has taken the lead in creating an Adult Re-entry Council for the City of Alexandria. The Adult Re-entry Council now meets regularly and has more than 50 members from various City and community organizations.

The NVRGTF applied for DCJS funding and a part of the grant is devoted to re-entry services. Alexandria and Arlington representatives on the NVRGTF requested that the grant provide funding to continue efforts in adult re-entry. The CSU will manage the financial requirements of the grant and Adult Probation and Parole and the Adult Re-entry Council would provide the program oversight.

The most efficient way to use the grant funds would be to partner with Offender Aid and Restoration (OAR), a private non-profit organization that has a long history of providing ex-offender services. OAR, located in Arlington, Virginia, works extensively with Alexandria and Arlington Adult Probation and Parole and has already created a re-entry program specifically targeted to clients at-risk of continued gang involvement. The program is called Vita Nova.

The OAR Vita Nova program will be open to referrals from the CSU and Adult Probation and Parole and will serve a minimum of 10 Alexandria ex-offenders, ages 18-35, for one year. The program will provide the means for ex-offenders with a history of gang affiliation and gang-related charges to focus on positive life goals and end their gang involvement. The ultimate goal for the initiative is to reduce the recidivism rate and gang involvement of this population by providing comprehensive support services in the community. All of OAR's existing re-entry services will be accessible to participants, including assistance with housing, employment, referrals to social services, and reconnecting to families and the community. Once enrolled in the program, the Alexandria Re-Entry Council will closely track progress and recidivist rates through established measures required by the grant.

This one year grant does require a 10% match of \$3125 and OAR has agreed to pay the match requirement. The NVRGTF and OAR is committed to seeking grant funding to continue this program in FY13 and beyond.

FISCAL IMPACT: The Northern Virginia Regional Gang Task Force will release grant funds of \$31,250 to the CSU. The funds are required to be obligated by September 30, 2012. There is a 10% match of \$3,125 for this grant, which will be paid by OAR.

STAFF:

Lillian Brooks, Director, Juvenile & Domestic Relations Court Service Unit
Lisa Stapleton, Chief, Adult Probation & Parole
Mike Mackey, Gang Prevention Coordinator
Kendel Taylor, Assistant Director, OMB