

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: NOVEMBER 19, 2004
TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL
FROM: PHILIP SUNDERLAND, CITY MANAGER
SUBJECT: ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ALEXANDRIA COMMUNITY TASK FORCE ON GANGS

ISSUE: Establishment of an Alexandria Community Task Force on Gangs.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council receive this report, provide its input on the composition of a six to ten member Alexandria Community Task Force on Gangs and request staff to docket a resolution establishing the task force at its Tuesday, December 14 legislative meeting.

DISCUSSION: For some time Council has expressed its concern about gang activity in the Washington Metropolitan Area and in Alexandria. Most of our discussion about gangs in Alexandria has centered on the crime data provided by the Police Department, which has had Gang Unit officers assigned in Alexandria and to the regional gang task force. (The Commonwealth's Attorney also has a staff member assigned to the regional gang task force.) As a result of the gang suppression efforts by the police, the actual number of gang incidents in Alexandria (those involving gang related crimes) has been relatively low. This can be attributed to the proactive work by police officers assigned to the Police Department's Community Support Section, the officers assigned to the Gang Unit and the Regional Task Force.

However, over the last several months, the entire region has seen an increase in gang activity, and at time gang members from other jurisdictions come to Alexandria where they are involved in gang related criminal activities. In September the Council of Governments sponsored a gang summit, which was attended by several members of Council and staff members from the City and other area jurisdictions. At the summit a resource guide was distributed in an effort to share information on gangs, federal and state resources and anti-gang initiatives in the National Capital Region.

From these resources we will be able to develop a model for a community task force which could receive information on regional and local gang activity, the City's efforts in gang intervention, prevention and suppression, and potential programs and activities that are being developed to

address gangs. The task force could also make recommendations to Council on needed changes in legislation and policy and the funding that might be required to address gang concerns.

I recommend that two members of Council co-chair a six to ten member community task force and that we identify potential groups such as PTAs and community groups whose representatives could serve as task force members. If Council concurs with the establishment of a community task force, we will docket a resolution for Council consideration at its Tuesday, December 14 legislative meeting.

On November 10, I convened a Senior City Staff Policy Group on Gangs which will meet monthly. A number of City agencies are involved in gang prevention, intervention and suppression, and they are included in this staff group (Police Department, Commonwealth's Attorney, Office of Sheriff, Juvenile Court Services, Northern Virginia Detention Home, Alexandria Public Schools, Department of Human Services, Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities, Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse, Office on Women, Adult Probation and Parole, and the City Manager's Office.

The group is charged with:

1. Sharing information about gangs in Alexandria, such as:
 - activities of gangs;
 - membership of gangs
 - recruitment of gang members;
 - trends in gang activities;
 - City activities/programs /efforts directed at gangs; and
 - regional activities/programs
2. Ensuring maximum coordination among City departments in the area of gangs:
 - information/data gathering and analysis;
 - identification of particular issues, problems and trends;
 - development of a concrete City response to such issues; and
 - performance of activities/programs/efforts directed at gangs.
3. Proposing to City/State policy makers new or revisions to City/State laws, policies or programs to address gangs.
4. Ensuring that the word gets out about City efforts to prevent, intervene and suppress in gang activity or to address ongoing gang activities.

I expect the Senior Staff Police Group on Gangs to be a support mechanism for the Community Task Force as well as a resource for the City Manager's Quality of Life Committee, which meets quarterly and receives updates on gang activity at its meetings.

STAFF: Michele Evans, Assistant City Manager