



Wednesday April 18th Meeting Notes
11:30 AM – 1:00 PM
Willie Hinton Neighborhood Resource Center

At 11:30 AM the first meeting of the LRCent Committee was called to order by presiding Co-Chair Dr. Sybil Jordan-Hampton.

The following Committee Members was present: Co-Chair Gary Smith, Chrystal Gray, Steve Strickland, Kyle Demilt, Peter McKinney O’Conor, Marsheerah Tharpe, Donald Shellabarger, Charles Blake and Troy Laha. Dr. Anika Whitfield and Khayyam Eddings (arrived after the start of the meeting). All were present

Also present: City Manger Bruce Moore and other City Staff

Dr. Hampton opened the floor to Mr. Moore who explained that over the course of the next two meetings there would be presentations from each department director on how the recently passed sales tax would impact each of their departments after which he turned the floor over to the first presenting department on the agenda.

Departmental Presentations:

Little Rock Police Department – Chief Stuart Thomas

Chief Thomas highlighted several key areas as to how the sales tax would help the police department and public safety. The first is the replacing of the antiquated communications system which will take over a year to complete. Over \$8 million in short-term financing was committed by the City Board to get this underway.

Secondly he mentioned that the construction of a police station on 12th Street should begin within the next year. After that project is completed staff will look at tearing down the main station at 700 W. Markham which will require moving operations. There are also plans to put in a station in West Little Rock, but a site has not been selected.

Finally Chief Thomas talked about filling vacancies within the department. He said that it was a slow process to being officer recruit school they started with 1,000 initial applicants but were currently down to only 70 who were qualified after background checks and other tests. They are also in the process of hiring additional 911/311 call takers to handle the approximately 460,000 calls that are received every year.

Community Programs – Director Dorothy Nayles

Community Programs Director Dorothy Nayles explained that the department was established in 1996 with the mission to address crime prevention issues and to provide a greater array of social and human services needed and desired by citizens. The department is completely administrative and has no capital projects. Most or all of the resources are contracted out to community organizations.

Over the next ten years the money from the sales tax will help expand Prevention Intervention Treatment (PIT), start re-entry outreach and transition to adulthood all of which would be monitored by staff. Ms. Nayles also highlighted a pilot sidewalk program along with Public Works that would hire at-risk youth and adults to help give them skills needed for future development.

Finance Department – Director Sara Lenehan

Finance Director Sara Lenehan briefly described that she would be filling some vacancies within her department and also upgrading computer equipment. A large part of the technological upgrades are included in the information technology budget.

Fleet Services – Director Wendell Jones

Fleet Services Director Wendell Jones explained that his department provides support to eight other City Departments which is over 12,000 vehicles. Due to the amount of mileage that many vehicles receive annually it is recommended that they be replaced every five to ten years however until recently none had been bought since 2008. There is a plan to replace most of the fleet within the next ten years.

Housing and Neighborhood Programs – Director Andre Bernard

Housing Director Andre Bernard gave an overview of the various areas that are under the umbrella of his department which include the Land Bank Commission, Animal Services, CDBG and Housing Programs and the Neighborhood Programs Division. Mr. Bernard explained that the sales tax revenue would help fill a number of vacancies and help purchase vehicles for code enforcement purposes.

Additionally funding will be used for needed improvements to the Little Rock Animal Village and also property acquisitions through the Little Rock Land Bank.

Little Rock Zoo – Director Mike Blakely

Zoo Director Mike Blakely gave an overview of how the sales tax would impact the Zoo which included hiring of staff, increasing educational programming for attendees, making improvements to exhibits.

Question & Answer Session:

Dr. Hampton asked the City Manager what type of customer service training there was for City Staff at each of the City's facilities on how to deal with the public. Bruce indicated that he would follow-up on how that is done in the future.

Mr. Strickland wanted more detail on the City's BID Process and when exceptions were made. Mr. Moore provided a general overview, but said that there would be a presentation at the beginning of their next meeting.

Dr. Anika Whitefield wanted to know what the hold up was regarding PIT funds and why there seemed to be a hold on spending the money. Mr. Moore explained that the City Board choose to review policies and procedures going forward as to how the services provided are monitored and whether or not best practices were being used. He indicated that all of that information was being provided to the board and that he anticipated that they would be moving forward with a plan very soon.

There were no further questions or discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 1:05pm.