

METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS



Human Services & Public Safety Policy Committee

DRAFT Meeting Notes

CHAIR: Hon. Ingrid Turner, Prince George's County Council

VICE CHAIR: Hon. Tommy Wells, District of Columbia

VICE CHAIR: Hon. Justin Wilson, City of Alexandria

STAFF CONTACT: Nancy Rea, Chief, Health & Substance Abuse, COG
Sue Wheeler-Wilderotter, Chief, Public Safety Programs, COG

February 20, 2009

Item # 1 Call to Order, Introductions and Announcements

The Chair of the committee, Ingrid Tuner, called the meeting to order. The committee discussed the importance of input and exchange of ideas from all of the committee members during the meetings, in forming the agendas and developing the committee's work plan

Item # 2 Welcome and Committee History

Dave Robertson, COG Executive Director gave a background on COG and examples of regional education and coordination that have been accomplished by the organization. He considers COG a full service Council of Governments. It is both a regional council as well as a metropolitan planning organization that does more than what most regional councils do. This is because COG supports what the member jurisdictions believe is important to do regionally. For many years, COG retained two separate policy committees on health/human services and on public safety. For a period of time in the 1990s, COG merged the committees. Following the expansion of COG's emergency preparedness and response activities in 2002, the policy committees were separated. The proposed merged Committee will be able to retain the ability to work on a fairly wide range of policy issues, and many of the topics potentially before the Committee would benefit from greater integration of human services and public safety perspectives.

Mr. Robertson gave the history of COG accomplishments and best practices in the areas of Human Services and Public Safety such as:

- Regional collaboration and coordination of data, record keeping as well as public education for HIV-AIDS.
- Pioneered Foster Care and Adoption programs that shelter and support children coming from dysfunctional homes due to drug abuse and its impact on the family.
- COG sponsors a homeless enumeration report
- Established a special taskforce when auto theft increased in the region.
- Recognized a need for and assisted in the development of a regional pawn data base.
- Developed drunk and aggressive driving programs
- Sponsored gang summits and workshops, engaging local leadership.
- Yearly Regional Crime Report

At COG's last Board meeting, which is chaired by HSPSPC member Penny Gross, they adopted a broad area of focus for COG. The two areas of focus he believes relate to the HSPSPC are:

- Economic sustainability and recovery.
- Workforce education and training.

Item # 3 Regional Impact of the Current Jurisdictional Economic Conditions

Chair Turner led a round table discussion with the members about what they are experiencing in their jurisdictions during the current economic situation. Chair Turner stated that she believes this would help the committee to frame the areas the Committee may want to concentrate on. They will form the top priorities from this discussion. This will set the stage for the discussion of the Committee's work plan. The representatives summarized the impact from budget deficits to the increased demand for services. The use of faith based initiatives was discussed. Both Fairfax County and Montgomery County have a liaison to the faith communities. Other points that were emphasized were that the reduction in the ability to provide social service programs increases the amount of public safety calls. There may be a need to bundle services.

Item # 4 HSPSPC Work Plan for 2009

The committee discussed how they were going to address some of the issues shared by the jurisdictions. Chair Turner's discussed the benefit of exchanging ideas and best practices from their jurisdictions and address regional issues. In the coming year, the committee agreed to look at the following issues that will be addressed within the current economic footprint.

- Reduction of obesity: developing support across the community for exercise, nutrition, land use and tracking strategies.
- Maintain the safety net of human services during the economic downturn. Meet with representatives of faith-based organizations, volunteers and non-profits and define steps that the region's governments can take with partners to ensure the most efficient and effect provision of safety net services.
- Prevention of gang activities and youth violence using a continuum of responses from early childhood through the justice system and follow-up programs, by involving partners from agencies and organizations serving youth, including recreation, libraries and schools

In addition, if time and resources permit, the following issues will also be addressed.

- Mutual aid, cooperation and bundling of services to provide serves in more efficient and less expensive ways.
- Demographics and Place Matters: addressing disparities of health and quality of life among neighborhoods and demographic groups.

The next meeting will be held on Friday, April 24, 2009. Please note this is a deviation from the normal schedule.