

**CRIMINAL JUSTICE COORDINATING COUNCIL  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING  
Thursday, September 24, 2020 12:00pm**

**MINUTES**

The Board of Directors of the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council held its regularly scheduled meeting on September 24, 2020 at 12:00pm via teleconference.

Board members in attendance were Brandi C. Lawrence, Warden Dennis Grimes, Chief Murphy Paul, . Participating as a Board member designees were Darryl Gissel from the Mayor's Office and Lindsay Blouin from the Public Defender's Office.

Absent Board members were Chief Public Defender Michael A. Mitchell, Chief Murphy J. Paul, Sheriff Sid J. Gautreaux, Mayor-President Sharon Weston Broome, 19<sup>th</sup> JDC Chief Judge Wilson Fields, and John Spain.

Additional attendees were Chris Csonka, Executive Director of the CJCC; Briana Jeansonne, Project Assistant for the CJCC; Jermaine Guillory from the District Attorney's Office, Lauren Crapanzano Jumonville from the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, Lacie Dauzat from the Public Defender's Office.

**CALL TO ORDER**

The Honorable Judge Yvette Alexander called the meeting to order at 12:10 p.m.

**MINUTES**

Mr. Csonka reviewed the minutes of the Board of Directors meeting held January 23, 2020. **On a motion by Hillar Moore and a second by Brandi Lawrence, the Board of Directors unanimously approved the minutes of the Board of Directors meeting held on January 23, 2020.**

Mr. Csonka reviewed the minutes of the Board of Directors meeting held May 28, 2020. **On a motion by Michael Mitchell and a second by Hillar Moore, the Board of Directors unanimously approved the minutes of the Board of Directors meeting held on May 28, 2020.**

**RCAT**

Mr. Csonka called upon Jermaine Guillory, Brandi Lawrence, and Lacie Dauzat to provide updates on the Rapid Case Assessment Team (RCAT) which launched on July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

Mr. Guillory reported that from July 8 through July 20, 15 defendants in the 19<sup>th</sup> JDC callout have been released, representing 40% of the total number of individuals presented at callout for that time

period. Seventy-five percent of all defendants were reported to be Black, 5% Hispanic, and 20% White. Crimes of violence and crimes involving firearms were reported at 60%. The RCAT program has achieved success in releasing individuals from jail through a variety of means including no billing individuals, recommending less stringent bond requirements, negotiating plea deal agreements, and referring individuals to diversion programs and/or community support programs.

Additionally, Ms. Dausat reported that the program has resulted in clearing numerous bench warrants, specifically in City Court, as bench warrants are being resolved simultaneous with the processing of an inmate's current case. She also reported that client advocates will start on August 3, 2020 and are expected to assist with identifying and resolving cases, particularly given the erratic nature of call out during COVID protocols.

Ms. Brandi Lawrence stated that the Metro Council approved the RCAT grant to the City Prosecutor's office on July 22, 2020.

With no further questions or comments, Mr. Guillory, Ms. Lawrence, and Ms. Dausat concluded the RCAT update.

## **FINANCE**

Next, Mr. Csonka provided the board with a finance report.

Mr. Csonka reviewed the budget for the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Safety and Justice Challenge grant. He reported that the MacArthur Foundation has approved a no-cost extension through December 31, 2020 as well as the reallocation of grant funds. He reminded the Board that nearly \$200,000 has been committed for the RCAT program, which will fund a public defender at city court, district attorney, district attorney investigator, city prosecutor, and two client advocates for the designated six months period. Mr. Csonka also reported the budget now includes funds for a community survey and city courthouse kiosk.

Next, Mr. Csonka reported on the David O'Quin Pre-Trial Diversion and Recovery Program budget. He reminded the Board that CJCC receives \$230,000 annually from the City-Parish to fund this program. To date, CJCC is tracking with anticipated expenditures. Mr. Csonka also noted that CJCC submitted a request to the City-Parish to continue this program in 2021.

With no further questions or comments, Mr. Csonka concluded the finance report.

## **ADDITIONAL UPDATES**

Next, Mr. Csonka updated the board on a series of programmatic updates.

Mr. Csonka reported that CJCC has contracted LJR Custom Strategies to complete a public opinion survey in East Baton Rouge Parish. The survey will include a sample size of 450 East Baton Rouge parish residents and will ask community members a series of questions about their perceptions of the justice system and their priorities for reform. Mr. Csonka expects to take the results of this

survey to community focus groups with targeted individuals who have lived experience within the justice system. He also intends to utilize the results to inform the CJCC's strategic plans for the next two years.

Next, Mr. Csonka updated the Board on plans for a CJCC Board Retreat. The retreat will be held on August 21, 2020 on the third floor of Red Stick Social with ample space to socially distance. Mr. Csonka intends for the retreat to be time productively spent as a group and board to discuss workplan and strategy for the next two years. Mr. Csonka stated he will not be facilitating the retreat and it will be facilitated by two professional consultants who came highly recommended. The retreat will include breakfast, lunch, and snacks. Mr. Csonka asked the Board to invite whoever could be useful to the goals of this retreat to attend.

Mr. Csonka then reported that CJCC will provide a grant to City Court to purchase a kiosk to be placed outside of City Court. This kiosk will allow the public to complete some court-related transactions without interacting with the court staff.

Next, Mr. Csonka reported the primary need to fill community representative positions on the CJCC board. Mr. Csonka reminded the Board that a nominating committee has been established to review potential nominees to the Board. He asked Board members to consider serving on this committee so individuals can be vetted prior to an intended approval at the September Board meeting. Mr. Csonka emphasized the desire to include community members within the faith-based community, universities, and community advocacy groups.

Mr. Csonka then reminded the Board that CJCC receives monthly data reports from General Informatics on the East Baton Rouge Parish Prison population. He reported a 44% decrease from November of 2017 to June of this year due to CJCC and partner efforts.

With no further questions or comments, Mr. Csonka concluded his updates.

### **COVID-19 UPDATE**

Mr. Csonka then called upon each agency represented to provide updates on their respective response to COVID-19.

The Honorable Alexander reported that City Court continues to carry on court matters over teleconference. She reported her division is not issuing bench warrants when a defendant fails to appear and is instead issuing defendants a new court date. Ms. Lawrence confirmed they have seen an uptick in the number of defendants not showing up for court. Mr. Csonka suggested creating an outreach program to better inform the public about the court's practices and business hours.

Ms. Blouin, Mr. Moore, and Mr. Guillory reported on ongoing efforts to resume jury trials.

Mr. Grimes reported on the continued safety protocols in place at the parish prison. He noted that there is currently one active COVID-19 case and the inmate likely contracted COVID-19 outside of parish prison.

Mr. Csonka reported on behalf of Chief Murphy Paul regarding current police practices. He noted that COVID-enacted policies have been continued. Mr. Csonka noted that some of these practices may result in a backlog of investigations and subsequent arrests as COVID restrictions are relaxed.

Next, Mr. Csonka reported on ongoing conversations with Mr. Moore, Chief Paul, and Sheriff Gautreaux regarding potential legislative changes that may be needed to continue safely reducing the jail population.

Mr. Gissel from the Mayor's office reported on a new homeless coordinating council with the intention to collaborate with service providers. This group will be facilitating trainings for arresting agencies focused on behavioral health awareness and how to facilitate interactions with individuals with behavioral health challenges.

With no further questions or concerns, Mr. Csonka concluded the COVID-19 updates.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

With no further business to conduct, the meeting was adjourned at 12:53 p.m.

Christopher Csonka  
Executive Director, CJCC  
July 24, 2020