

**JUVENILE CRIME, GRAFFITI**  
And  
**GANG VIOLENCE TASK FORCE MINUTES**  
July 17, 2008, Loaves and Fishes Board Room

**Members Present:**

George McShan, Chairman  
Jim Solis, Co-Chairman  
Mayor Chris Boswell  
Chief of Police Danny Castillo  
Ernesto Carballo  
City Commissioner Tom Hushen  
Dean Hall  
Gerald Gathright

**Staff Present:**

Gabriel Gonzalez, Assistant City Manager

George M<sup>c</sup>Shan welcomed everyone.

Mayor Chris Boswell made welcoming remarks and thanked everyone for participating. He indicated that everyone asked to serve on the Committee said yes. He said he was at City Hall and ran into Commissioner Hushen and they both went to visit Officer Diaz in the hospital. He said it was a miracle that Officer Diaz survived.

Mr. M<sup>c</sup>Shan agreed. He said he ran into the Mayor at the airport and said this was a good opportunity to get involved in the community. That gang violence was not just a policy issue. It is a bigger problem, a community wide problem.

We need to be practical. Encourage you to get more people involved in the process. Not in the committee but on advisory committees and get other business leaders including the clergy involved.

This is not for show every community has their issues this could be a model for other communities as we may find answers to these issues.

The Members then introduced themselves.

The Task Force would include Justice of the Peace David Garza from San Benito and from La Feria would include Commissioner Lori Weaver but their

Commission meets on the first and third Tuesday every month so she would not be available on those dates.

Dr. Susan Ritter professor at UTB has experience with gangs and juvenile crime and lives in Brownsville and has 15 years of experience. She should be included as well.

Mr. McShan mentioned that he leads through collaborative efforts, everyone is an equal member he wants the board to be transparent and inclusive. He would like to get the DA's office, criminal justice and the clergy involved in the process.

Ernesto Carballo agreed with recommendation that they were solid. He lived in Miami and Atlanta and agreed this problem is not exclusive to the valley.

Gerald Gathright suggested we get a past gang member involved.

Danny Castillo said he has a former gang member in mind that has done work with youth previously and he would ask him.

Dean Hall said the gang member could be anonymous.

George McShan suggested that we have an Assessment and Data Advisory Committee and they could have their meetings at Town Hall and various public schools. A second committee would be the Public Relations Advisory Committee and a Recommendations Advisory Committee.

Chief Castillo would act as the liaison for the Assessment and Data Advisory Committee.

Gerald Gathright and Ernesto Carballo would act as liaison for the Public Relations Advisory Committee.

Commissioner Tom Hushen would act as liaison for the Recommendations Advisory Committee.

It was suggested that we have town hall meetings and public forums to have the citizens tell us their concerns.

We need to create a form that we can use to have people give us their concerns.

Gabriel Gonzalez and Danny Castillo were asked to create the form and they indicated they would submit a draft copy to Gerald and Ernesto to review before the next meeting.

Jim Solis mentioned that he served 15 years in the legislature and had a lot of complaints and concerns from his constituents but he said he wanted to find

solutions to the gang problems since they were some of the concerns from the community.

Several local businesses were suggested for assistance and for participation in the process.

Tom Hushen said we needed a “buy in” from the people otherwise it would not be successful. He mentioned the need to develop a questionnaire that would try to get information from the community about unreported crimes.

It was suggested we have precincts and precinct captains.

Mr. McShan suggested Jose Luis Cavazos, Parents Involvement Coordinator for the school district as a good resource. Mr. Gathright suggested we use PTA’s to get as many people possible involved.

Chief Castillo described the gang unit. Mr. McShan suggested using Channel 17 at the school district. Commissioner Hushen suggested implementing the DARE and SAVE programs again. He mentioned gang violence wasn’t just a juvenile issue that adults are involved too—they run the operations.

Danny Castillo gave a brief report about goals and what we are doing to address this issue.

- ❖ Gang unit created—July 4<sup>th</sup>
- ❖ Graffiti—2007—82 arrests
- ❖ Curfew (created in January)—reduction in number of kids that hang out in street corners (170 violations: January—June)
- ❖ Juvenile Court—3<sup>rd</sup> offense—children in need of supervision
- ❖ Targeted them in last 2 years—Operation Clean Sweep (May 1 – June 8) 450 man hours in F street were—55 arrests

Some additional suggestions made were:

- ❖ To create an ordinance on lighting.
- ❖ An ordinance to have buildings have a 3 foot clearance of signage on windows so you can see inside the store especially stores like Circle K’s
- ❖ Need funds for demolition of abandoned buildings.