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Safety Committee

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Agency: [Cleveland City Council](#)

Date: Sept. 11, 2024

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Summary

- The city wants to implement an EMS quick response team -- with no law enforcement -- for opioid-related incidents.
- City Council wants favorable outcomes from investments in violence prevention.

Follow-Up Questions

- What is the most important criteria for funding these programs?
- What oversight measures are in place after funding has been given?

Notes

Safety Committee meeting, Cleveland City Hall, Room 217. Start time 10:08 a.m. on Sept. 11, 2024.

Council Member Mike Polensek chaired the meeting. Council Member Joe Jones, vice chair, also attended, as did these other members of the committee:

- Deborah Gray
- Charles Slife
- Danny Kelly
- Richard Starr

Stephanie Howse-Jones was absent.

[Ordinance No. 806-2024](#) was the first order of business. It would allow the city to receive reimbursement from the state to cover overtime pay for safety staff that worked during the April 8 solar eclipse. The overtime work was mostly for traffic situations, according to Nicole Carlton, assistant director of Public Safety. The amount of money expected from the state is about \$89,000, Carlton said, adding that the city's overall cost was \$118,000.

It was approved by all council members present.

Next was [Ordinance No. 807-2024](#), which relates to Cleveland's opioid crisis. It would let the city apply for and get a grant from the state for an EMS quick response team (QRT) for drug overdose and opium-related situations. Director of Public Safety Dornat "Wayne" Drummond said the city has a law enforcement QRT, but this new team would respond to community needs and requests by having only EMS, paramedics, and EMTs reach out to overdose survivors and their loved ones.

EMS Commissioner Orlando Wheeler said EMS has responded to about 200 opioid-related calls per month this year. Polensek said that was incredible. The ordinance, which would OK a \$50,000 grant, was approved by the committee.

Next was Ordinance [820-2024](#), which relates to the city's [crisis intervention team co-responder program](#) for individuals with mental health issues. The legislation would let the city contract with Case Western Reserve University for a data collection and analysis of the program for one year.

Chief of Police Dorothy Todd told City Council members that they have six co-response teams and are looking to increase to 10 teams. The city is seeking to pay Case \$100,000 to spend for this project. Approved by the committee.

Last was Ordinance No. [835-2024](#), which would let the city contract with the United Black Fund of Greater Cleveland for \$110,000 to act as a [grants manager for the Community Police Commission](#) (CPC) for one year.

Council members had more questions about this than about other agenda items. Accountability and the use of funds were some themes. Council members, citing persistent violent crime despite the millions of dollars the city already puts into violence prevention efforts, sought assurances that programs funded through CPC grants would have an impact. They wanted to know how grant recipients would communicate with the various council members in their respective wards.

This appeared to be the consensus of council members present: The council members wanted better communication and accountability from CPC, the United Black Fund and programs funded by the grants.. It appears council members don't feel the city is getting its bang for the buck in terms of violence prevention efforts. This was evident in comments and questions from Polensek, Gray, Jones, and Slife about being accountable and showing results.

Resident and activist Brenda Bickerstaff was allowed three minutes to speak about the United Black Fund. Bickerstaff applauded the organization's long-standing efforts in the community, both past and present. She mentioned that staff members, from her experience, were prudent stewards of funding.

The legislation was approved by the committee.

Best regards!

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