



Charlotte City Council
Housing, Safety & Community Committee
Summary
October 2, 2023

COMMITTEE AGENDA TOPICS

1. CARES Team Update (Informational)
2. Policy Topic Referral: Review of City Ordinances (Action)

COMMITTEE INFORMATION

Committee Members Present:	Victoria Watlington (virtual/CMGC), LaWana Mayfield (CMGC), Tariq Bokhari (CMGC), Renee' Johnson (CMGC), Marjorie Molina (CMGC/ <i>arrived approx. 4:30 p.m.</i>)
Council Members Absent:	n/a
Other Council Members Present:	Danté Anderson, Malcolm Graham, Braxton Winston
Staff Resources:	Reenie Askew, City Manager's Office Shawn Heath, Housing & Neighborhood Services Julia Martin, City Manager's Office Jacquelyn Hulsey, Charlotte Mecklenburg Police Department David Robinson, Charlotte Mecklenburg Police Department Allison Winston, Charlotte Mecklenburg Police Department
Meeting Duration:	4:00 – 5:30 PM
Video available online:	https://youtu.be/tGfTsVv_buc?t=21738

MEETING MATERIALS

All meeting materials are available online at <https://charlottenc.legistar.com>

1. Presentation: CARES Team Update
2. Presentation: Policy Topic Referral: Review of Code Ordinances

DISCUSSION HIGHLIGHTS

City Council member Watlington called the meeting to order and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

CARES Team Update

Julia Martin provided an update on the Community Assistance: Respond, Engage, Support (CARES) Team, including the background, program goals and parameters, program geography, preliminary data, success stories, opportunities, challenges and next steps. The program, launched in December 2022, was developed as a result of a recommendation that emerged as part of the reimagining policing work that occurred in 2020. Ms. Martin explained that both United Way and Center City Partners are aware of the program. The city has also collaborated with Mecklenburg County to gain access to the county's homeless management system to help better serve clients that the team works with by connecting to a broader suite of social services. The initiative is still very new, and if the city looks at permanently supporting the program in the future a more formal partnership with the County – for example through the provision of more intensive case management services - will be an important component.

CARES Team members are licensed clinical social workers. Before they go into the field, they spend time in training and orientation, including participating in ride-alongs with community coordinators and patrol officers, spending time with dispatchers, learning radio processes, and more. They also participate in ongoing continuing education.

Jacquelyn Hulsey provided background on available program data. She shared that for the most part the calls for service are directly managed by the CARES Team, though there are times when the team has to additionally engage a police officer. By being present in the community, the CARES Team works proactively to identify clients. Calls that could have been handled by the

CARES Team during times/geographies when/where the team is not available are also tracked. The team has reported that they feel safe on 99% of their calls. Officer Hulsey shared that, like crime and criminal behavior, there often is a small number of individuals that are creating multiple issues and calls. She also shared that there is a direct connection to the policy referral related to the review of city ordinances in terms of outcomes, and particularly when working with people that have multiple and complex issues.

There is an opportunity to continue to improve dispatch of the team – through coordination with 911 dispatch and officers in the field. Challenges include lack of mental health supports in the community, the need for more street outreach and long-term case management for high-barrier individuals. The program is still very new and staff will continue to evaluate the program and identify next steps when more data is available.

City Council members shared that the program presents an opportunity to leverage community healthcare workers, include questions about brain injuries in the assessment of clients, and that there is a need for greater coordination with Mecklenburg County as the entity that has the resources to respond/provide needed resources in case management, mental health, etc.

Policy Referral: Review of Code of Ordinances

Shawn Heath provided an overview of the policy referral and a summary of the key themes that arose at the recent public listening session. He explained that there is a significant body of work occurring around three key public safety and quality of life issues in the uptown community (quality of life, public realm/built environment, real estate/ economic development); these issues are being approached in an integrated fashion and the policy referral is one piece in this larger puzzle.

David Robinson shared a number of recent examples of behavior that could have been addressed if CMPD had the tools to do so. He summarized enforcement that occurred prior to 2021 and after the ordinances were de-criminalized, the benefits of city ordinance criminal enforcement, and enforcement data.

There are eight ordinances of potential relevance to the policy referral, three of which have a clearly established public concern (public consumption of beer and wine/open container possession/container disposal, public masturbation, urination and defecation). In addition to enforcement, prevention/deterrence and human services/housing options are also important, and the need for such a holistic approach was also noted by residents that participated in the listening session. Staff will connect with community partners and bring back a broader suite of recommendations including non-enforcement efforts that can be done to focus on the root causes of the issues.

Highlights of what City Council members shared included:

- Continuing to approach the issues with a sense of urgency.
- Considering partnerships with organizations that are already serving the unhoused.
- Creating a list of the ordinances that are deemed necessary to address the issues.
- Exploring how to fill the gaps in services is important before re-criminalization of the ordinances, and particularly around the needs of the unhoused.
- Need to be deliberate and mindful about the need for a holistic approach to addressing the issues and challenges.
- The issues are being faced in every district of the city, not just in center city.
- Desire for background of why ordinances were de-criminalized in the first place.
- The ordinances were originally de-criminalized by the state general assembly, not the local city council.
- Lack of resident-initiated reporting has occurred because residents feel like there will be no action taken - this was expressed multiple times at the public listening session.
- Data showing why some of the reporting numbers have decreased is needed.
- Being clear in the language used about what it means to be aggressively panhandling.
- A lot of work has already been done around housing and homelessness.
- Desire that the Committee advance the three ordinances that have established public concern.

MOTION AND VOTE. Council member Bokhari made a motion to direct staff to bring back to the Committee several things: 1) a list of all ordinances CMPD recommends for restoring criminal enforcement as an option to enhance the ability to maintain public safety, 2) historical data and analysis of what happened after the decriminalization of ordinances by the state and the 2022 City Council restoration of criminal enforcement of certain ordinances and 3) the potential underlying factors for why resident-initiated responses have decreased since 2018. Council member Johnson seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in support of the motion.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will occur in January 2024.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 5:30 pm.