



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and City Councilors

FROM: Rich Olson, City Manager
Eddie M. Buffalo, Jr., Chief of Police

DATE: July 3, 2013

REF:: Requested Report - Collaboration with Community Relations Commission
(to address Gangs in Elizabeth City)

BACKGROUND:

Discussion was held during the April 8, 2013 session of City Council regarding the issue of gangs and what the Elizabeth City Police Department is doing to tap into the resources available in the City to work collectively in the fight against gangs, primarily gang prevention. Discussion was held regarding the Community Relations Commission and their role in this process. A request was made by City Council for the Elizabeth City Police Department to formulate a plan of collaboration with the Community Relations Commission and serve as a liaison in discussing this important community issue. A meeting was held on May 29, 2013 and input was gathered from various community members. Present at the May 29th meeting were representatives from local churches and other non-profit organizations, the school system, colleges and universities, the District Attorney's Office, the Department of Corrections, the Pasquotank County Juvenile Crime Prevention Council, Elizabeth City Police Department's Chaplaincy Program, and other local law enforcement/criminal justice partners. Input was gathered from community members present and a brainstorming session was held to develop strategies in the fight against gangs. Members of the Police Department gave a presentation regarding the current status of gangs in Elizabeth City so that this information could be received and evaluated by the Community Relations Commission. The meeting was successful in creating a dialogue between the Community Relations Commission and the Elizabeth City Police Department. The Community Relations Commission agreed to spearhead the project and both entities committed to a collaboration of efforts that will hopefully work in deterring the youth of this community from joining gangs and becoming involved in criminal activity.

ANALYSIS:

The May 29th meeting held with community members included a gang presentation from the Police Department to inform those present of the current gang situation in Elizabeth City. The following information was provided regarding gangs in Elizabeth City:

- Gangs first emerged in Elizabeth City in late 2006, early 2007.
- In 2007, 13 – 15 different gang sets were identified in Elizabeth City.
- Today, only 5 of the original gang sets are still in existence. Several of the “key” players from the original gangs are incarcerated and/or have left the area.
- Although there are a lower number of gang sets identified, there are additional “hybrid” gang members that, unlike traditional gangs, do not identify themselves with colors.
- Although not associated with colors, hybrid gangs are still organized groups that have established rules/regulations and support the idea of helping one other.
- These hybrid gangs have been identified as participating in illegal activity and are known to be anti-police, thereby posing a threat to the community.
- Some of the newer generation gang members use Facebook and other social media outlets to express their views and ideas, many of which are criminal in nature.

Goals, objectives, and strategies were discussed and members present felt that education and job training were the two most important factors identified in accomplishing gang prevention in our city. It was reported that the newer generation of gang members are young (ages 13 – 17); and therefore, the group focused most strategies on this particular age group. Additional discussion was held regarding grant funding opportunities, the possibility of hosting a public forum in the future, and establishing partnerships with local churches/faith-based community, River City’s Youthbuild, and other mentoring programs in the community.

RECOMMENDATION:

City staff recommends that the Elizabeth City Police Department continue to partner with the Community Relations Commission in an effort to collaboratively address the issue of gangs in the city; and that the Police Department update the Council as to the goals, objectives, and strategies implemented by this joint partnership.