



## District 4 Citizens Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

Sept. 26, 2023 | 5:30 p.m.  
Sedgwick County 6<sup>th</sup> Floor Large Conference Room  
100 N. Broadway, Ste. 630, Wichita

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**Board Members in Attendance:** Zac Day, Donald Gering, Jr., Susanne Hayes, Krister Johnson, Jacob LaMunyon, Cader Newton, Helen Rolfe, Chris Stingo, Jordan Walker

**County Representatives:** Commissioner Ryan Baty, Sheriff Jeff Easter, County Counselor Justin Waggoner

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### 1. ORDER OF BUSINESS

- a. Call to Order – Commissioner Ryan Baty
  - i. Commissioner Ryan Baty called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m.

### 2. PUBLIC AGENDA

- a. The public agenda allows members of the public to address the District 4 Citizens Advisory Board.
  - i. None

### 3. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Meeting Business Discussion
  - i. Approve Bylaws – Justin Waggoner, County Counselor
    1. Justin Waggoner asked if everyone had a chance to read the bylaws and if there were any questions. No questions.
    2. Zac Day made a motion to approve, Cader Newton seconded.  
**Motion passed 9-0.**
- b. State of Mental Health, Addiction, Community-Based Services and Crime Trends – Sheriff Jeff Easter
  - i. Sheriff Easter gave an update about the recent investigation into deputies regarding drawing weapons, inappropriate comments, and racism.
  - ii. Sheriff Easter transitioned to Crime & Mental Health. The #1 driver of all crime is drugs. There are mental health issues here, but that is also driven by drugs.
    1. People with mental health issues still have the right to a fair trial
    2. Request for a mental health evaluation stops the trial process until it is complete
      - a. Waitlist for this can be a year or more
      - b. Person stays in jail until this is complete
    3. Commissioner Baty commented that this is why Sedgwick County building a State Mental Health Hospital is important. Baty then asked how many in the jail have mental health issues.
      - a. Sheriff Easter answered that 24/7 medical services are offered in the jail including mental health services, 32% receive mental health services, and 70% report drug or alcohol addiction. 16 people waiting to go to Larned State Mental Health Hospital currently in the Sedgwick County jail. It requires a court order to force medicate an inmate that is dangerous.
    4. Jordan Walker asked how these actions are affecting our court system.

- a. Sheriff Easter responded that it is causing a backlog that was already bad because of COVID-19.
- b. Commissioner Baty commented that Sedgwick County Jail is the largest Mental Health hospital in the state right now and isn't intended for that.
- c. Sheriff Easter shared it costs \$725,000 to operate the Mental Health Pod and Sedgwick County is the only jail in a 4 state region that has one.
- 5. Krister Johnson asked, how many people in the jail are from outside of Sedgwick County?
  - a. Sheriff Easter answered most are from here. There is a transient group because of work release. Everyone with a felon who wants to work comes here for work release.
- 6. Commissioner Baty asked what to do about the influx of people coming into the jail.
  - a. Sheriff Easter believes it's in how we handle substance abuse.
  - b. Commissioner Baty asked why are we doing OR bonds.
    - i. Sheriff Easter answered with any drug case, we only have 72 hours to charge them. Now we also have to know what's in the drug in order to prosecute them. We don't have the resources to prosecute. The current jail population is under 1,200 steadily. A solution would be to allow judges to sentence to treatment because by law they are not going to prison.
  - c. Commissioner Baty asked if there is a need for pre-conviction or pre-trial services.
    - i. Sheriff Easter doesn't know how you can force someone into treatment without convicting them of something. Post-conviction they could, if some laws are changed, suspend the sentence in lieu of treatment.
    - ii. Commissioner Baty clarified the need to ask for legislation that allows judges to force people into treatment.
    - iii. Sheriff Easter talked about Drug Court that is currently in place and it is successful. But those are not the people you see on the street as they don't make it through the first 2 weeks of the program.
- 7. Donald Gering, Jr. asked if there was a MAT program.
  - a. Sheriff Easter shared that we do, if they are on treatment before coming in, we continue treatment. We are starting to begin treatment in the jail.
  - b. Commissioner Baty shared that a person can die from opioid withdrawal.
  - c. Sheriff Easter confirmed this and is exploring options on a medical obligation to treat inmates.
- 8. Zac Day asked if this happens (inmate needs to go for treatment at the hospital), and does it take away staffing in other areas.
  - a. Sheriff Easter responded they don't have the staff to cover this, so those that do are all overtime hours and causing burnout issues. The Sheriff's Office used to be down 127 positions, which was over half the staff. Now they are only down 67 and getting ready to graduate 18 in October with another 25 in the next class. On the Commission side, have a class of 17 with 4 more to be full. 11 of 17 are going to judicial. The County Commission has been very supportive to help. Raises have helped with recruitment.
  - b. Commissioner Baty commented there is still room to improve.
- iii. Commissioner Baty asked regarding Substance Abuse and Mental Health, if the Sheriff felt there were enough services available.
  - 1. Sheriff Easter responded that we don't. The Mental Health Substance Abuse Coalition (MHSAC) has been discussing this for 5 years. MHSACs vision is to

- have a campus-style setting with COMCARE on-site and non-profits that help people with the ability to share services. Communication between the groups is improving. One drawback of this plan is that if you build it they will come.
2. Jacob LaMunyon shared some personal experience comments on homelessness/substance abuse/mental health.
    - a. Sheriff Easter responded that the number of detox beds has been significantly reduced in the community. The only beds are now at Ascension Via Christi. Local Community Behavioral Centers have never been funded as needed. Some groups won't help because it "doesn't affect them." Sheriff Easter also commented that we're a very drug-addicted society. We started the war on drugs in the 1980s and have tried to arrest our way out of, and it doesn't work.
  3. Jordan Walker commented that this would be a very different conversation if we were only talking about criminal activity for those in the jail.
- iv. Commissioner Baty opened the floor to questions.
1. Helen Rolfe asked will the campus be a hub and if it would it be beneficial to do different areas around the city.
    - a. Sheriff Easter answered it's not possible to centralize everyone, but centralizing some and putting representatives from others there will help the current situation.
    - b. Helen Rolfe asked when this is happening.
    - c. Commissioner Baty spoke on the MAC, Multi-Agency Center with an estimation of 2.5-3 years to complete. The City of Wichita dedicated \$4.5 million to this. Where we are going is a gold strategy, however, we need an interim strategy now.
  2. Jordan Walker asked if ICT1 was still in service.
    - a. Commissioner Baty confirmed they are still serving the community, but now have 5 units.
    - b. Sheriff Easter added that the ICT (Integrated Care Team) group is wonderful. HOT (Wichita Homeless Outreach Team) does great too, but resources are the main issue. We're unable to answer the question of where we put these people.
  3. Commissioner Baty commented that Sedgwick County District 4 is ground zero for the Mental Health/Homeless population.
    - a. Current Challenges include:
      - i. No campus
      - ii. No sustained funding
      - iii. No emergency winter shelter
  4. Zac Day asked what can people do to get help, knowing D4 is central to this issue.
    - a. Sheriff Easter commented that when ICT1 was formed, most of their calls were in Wichita and now have expanded. Municipalities are utilizing relationships and contacts COMCARE directly.
  5. Zac Day asked if there was anything citizens could do.
    - a. Commissioner Baty answered that the main thing is to be aware of mental health resources. There will need to be a community conversation about what we want to do.
  6. Donald Gering, Jr. asked if we've looked at other programs in states that are seeing a decline in overdose fatalities.
    - a. Sheriff Easter shared about the fentanyl awareness campaign.
  7. Helen Rolfe asked what activities are being pointed towards education/early intervention and "stopping the bleeding" now.
    - a. Sheriff Easter shared that the campaign was three tactics focused on education.

- i. News media all ran information for a week, and billboards
    - ii. Received \$100k from opioid settlement money to create videos and advertising towards youth, adults and teachers. Ran a few months and running again. Spent money to geofence the schools to target ads to kids.
    - iii. Many presentations, most to grandparent groups.
    - iv. Unfortunately, there is still an increase in deaths in both youth and adults.
  - b. Donald Gering, Jr. asked if the campaign tried to identify at-risk youths in particular.
    - i. Commissioner Baty shared about the Mental Health Intervention Teams in the schools. These are part of COMCARE to help get kids services. He also commented that these things cost money and the government has to find balance.
    - ii. Sheriff Easter added that elected officials want to see statistics. Measuring crime prevention is extremely difficult. There is no way to know if something you did prevented someone from committing a crime.
    - iii. Cader Newton commented regarding students that a common theme is they don't have validation and have no purpose.
- 8. Chris Stingo asked what the role of the Sheriff's Office is compared to City Police and State Police.
  - a. Sheriff Easter answered that Sedgwick County Sheriff's Office helps cities if they need something. The Sheriff is responsible for the jail as well as law enforcement services in the unincorporated areas. Regional policing for all outside of Wichita. They also supply resources to smaller towns for large cases. Everybody in the county is booked into the SC Jail.
  - b. Chris Stingo asked if one has to wait in jail until they can see a judge.
    - i. Sheriff Easter answered that it depends on the case. Many get bonded out.
    - ii. Chris Stingo asked if the intent is not for people to be in jail long-term.
    - iii. Sheriff Easter replied, correct. Unfortunately, it is sad to see what is expected of the jail.
- 9. Susanne Hayes commented, we need to pay more attention to what God has to say about how people should behave and what standards we should hold them to.
  - a. Commissioner Baty gave comments for consideration:
    - i. SB 367 took the teeth out of the juvenile justice system preventing juveniles from being arrested and instead placed in foster care.
    - ii. Opioid Addiction is much different than 20 years ago. There are not enough medical detox options to help, so even if people want to get better, there are no options to help. As a compassionate society, we should have the resources available to those who want it.
    - iii. The government cannot solve this problem. The community will have to come together.

#### **4. BOARD AGENDA**

- a. Commissioner Baty updated the board
  - i. Visited the Neighborhood Association. Overview of Mental Health issues and updates.
  - ii. No Emergency Winter Shelter this year. HumanKind Ministries will operate, but they're in need of a structure.

1. Commissioner Baty stated there is no low-barrier shelter. The government will have to help with infrastructure but outsource the operations.
2. Board had additional discussion regarding homelessness

## **5. ADJOURNMENT**

- a. Donald Gering, Jr. motioned to adjourn the meeting. Jordan Walker seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 7:16 p.m.

*The next Citizens Advisory Board Meeting will be **Tuesday, Nov. 28, 2023, 5:30 p.m.**, at Sedgwick County 6th Floor Large Conference Room - 100 N. Broadway, Ste. 630, Wichita.*

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