



City of Jacksonville – The Jacksonville Journey

Public Relations

MINUTES

OF

PUBLIC RELATIONS

RE-ENTRY WORKGROUP

March 5, 2008

The Jacksonville Journey – Public Relations

Re-Entry Workgroup

March 5, 2008

2:30 p.m.

PROCEEDINGS before the Jacksonville Journey - Public Relations Re-Entry Workgroup taken on Wednesday, March 5, 2008, Edward Ball Building, 8th Floor - 214 N. Hogan Street, Jacksonville, Duval County, Florida commencing at approximately 2:30 p.m.

Public Relations Re-Entry Workgroup

**Ben Frazier, Member
Melissa Ross, Member**

APPEARANCES

WORKGROUP MEMBERS:

BEN FRAZIER, Member
MELISSA ROSS, Member

ABSENTEE MEMBERS:

None

PROFESSIONAL STAFF:

None

STAFF:

LYNN RIX

OTHERS PRESENT:

None

PROCEEDINGS
March 5, 2008

Public Relations Re-Entry Workgroup

2:30 p.m.

Call to Order and Comments. The meeting began at approximately 2:35 p.m.

Purpose of Meeting. Discuss the Mayor's crime initiative - The Jacksonville Journey - Take a Step - Public Relations Re-Entry Workgroup. Mr. Frazier and Ms. Ross have taken on the task of providing a public relations strategy for the Intervention/Rehab Sub-Committee for their Re-Entry program for ex-offenders.

Mr. Frazier provided the following information.

The objectives are:

1. To encourage businesses to hire ex-offenders
2. To encourage the private sector to remove barriers to employment by making recommendations for change.
3. To foster partnerships with businesses.
4. To increase the number of regional businesses who are willing to give ex-offenders a second chance by providing gainful employment.

Facts:

1. Employers are much more averse to hiring ex-offenders than they are toward any other disadvantaged group.
2. Employers vary in their stated willingness to hire ex-offenders according to the characteristics of their establishments and the jobs they are seeking to fill.

3. Employers also vary according to the offense committed by the offender and whether any meaningful work experience has been obtained since release.
4. Willingness to hire ex-offenders is greater in construction or manufacturing than in the retail trade or service sector.
5. Some studies indicate that race and ex-offender status significantly reduces the job market opportunities of black men with criminal records.
6. Employers are concerned with screening, training and whether applicants have had some transitional employment.
7. Employers are concerned about the availability of incentives.

Barriers to successful employment among ex-offenders:

1. Limited education and cognitive skills.
2. Limited work experience.
3. Substance abuse and other physical/mental health problems.
4. Poor attitudes and poor choices.
5. Criminal records.
6. Societal stigmas.
7. Employer fears (for customers and employees).
8. Employer legal concerns. (Under the theory of negligent hiring employers may be liable for the risk created by exposing the public and their employees to potentially dangerous individuals. Employers have lost 72 percent of these cases).

Actions:

1. A summit to show the benefits to business and the community of hiring ex-offenders, address legal and safety concerns, and provide a method for successfully finding and hiring ex-offenders. This would be attended by the mayor's office, current employers of ex-offenders, currently employed ex-offenders and business owners, re-entry program representatives, business owners and HR personnel who do not currently employ ex-offenders,
2. A multi-media campaign aimed at businesses encouraging them to hire ex-offenders. Possibly using testimonials and sound bites from business owners and ex-offenders.
3. Create a database of ex-offenders to include several criteria such as: screening, amount of time since release, type of training/skills, job history, any transitional work history. Would need non-violent offenders in a separate pool from violent/sexual offenders.
4. Explore incentives for employers.
 - A. State bonding program.
 - B. City tax incentive.

2. Action Items

Melissa will develop a power point presentation of the above.

Melissa will get costs for a 13-week multimedia campaign.

Ben will work on incentive ideas.

Next meeting will be on Tuesday, March 11, 2008 at 1:30 p.m.

3. Discussion Items

Adjournment Meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.