

## Memo for the Discussion on Procedures Related to Action Items by Council

The following is a summary of the concerns raised by some of the Members of the Urbana City Council regarding the process for decision making arising from the public hearing on October 4, 2021, with citations for the related meetings and communications that informed these concerns. This memo is to be included in the informational packet for the Committee of the Whole meeting scheduled for Monday, October 18, 2021, in preparation for the discussion scheduled on this topic.

Council Members who have participated in the creation of this document acknowledge the seriousness and urgency of addressing community violence, and that it needs to be done in a manner that is planned, transparent, safe, and equitable. On June 21, 2021, the Urbana City Council discussed a proposal from Council Members Bishop and Kolisetty on allocating funds in the budget for a review of public safety with a focus on racial equity and social justice.<sup>1</sup> There was general agreement among Council and the Mayor about the importance of a review to assess the unique community needs and potential solutions for Urbana. This approach was based on research that emphasizes the importance of transparency and community trust-building in efforts to address public safety.<sup>2</sup> Council Members Bishop and Kolisetty worked with staff to add a section to this fiscal year's budget allocating money to the review, with clear stipulations regarding the process. The Council unanimously approved a budget amendment on June 28, 2021, with the following language<sup>3</sup>:

WHEREAS, the City Council directed staff to allocate \$186,758 to support an evaluation of the City's public safety needs through the lenses of racial equity and social justice, to include, but not be limited to, community-based focus groups and data analysis, and to initiate the implementation or resulting recommendations upon Council approval. These funds shall be derived from the unspent \$92,500 allocated in the Fiscal Year 2020-21 budget for the "One Door" program and the related \$94,258 allocated in the Fiscal Year 2021-22 budget for an alternate response model. **No resources, monetary or otherwise, related to this or any part of the Fiscal Year 2021-22 budget shall be applied to alternate response methods (including co-responder models) without a public hearing and consultation with the Council.**<sup>4</sup>

Contrary to expectations, based on the above, during the October 4, 2021 hearing, a commitment to a new program was announced that will pair a police officer with a mental health professional to provide follow-up services to individuals with mental health concerns who are subject to 911 calls. This was the first and only opportunity for residents to discuss this model with the Council

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<sup>1</sup> UPTV6. "Zoom Recording - Urbana City Council's Committee of the Whole 6-21-21." YouTube, UPTV6, 22 June 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZkwWjI3Zw20>. Accessed October 12, 2021.

<sup>2</sup> Peeples, Lynne. "What the Data Say about Police Brutality and Racial Bias - and Which Reforms Might Work." Nature News, Nature Publishing Group, 19 June 2020, [https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-01846-z?fbclid=IwAR0xuUQqjk\\_tj4aC5T289z7nVkt6dfevbDKRZvMPEOKRo\\_qucn4VWi0ttoE](https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-01846-z?fbclid=IwAR0xuUQqjk_tj4aC5T289z7nVkt6dfevbDKRZvMPEOKRo_qucn4VWi0ttoE).

<sup>3</sup> UPTV6. "Zoom Recording – Cunningham Township Board/ Urbana City Council 6/28/21." YouTube, UPTV6, 29 June 2021, [https://youtu.be/gcR\\_hsnx0lc?t=9204](https://youtu.be/gcR_hsnx0lc?t=9204). Accessed October 12, 2021.

<sup>4</sup> Hannan, Elizabeth. "Revised Ordinances Approving the FY2022 Annual Budget and Amending the FY2021 Annual Budget." City of Urbana, 2021.

and to provide their input publicly. As the hearing came to a conclusion, it was clear the Council would not be provided with the opportunity to vote or provide further recommendations for the implementation of this program.

When concerns about this process were raised, it was suggested that the requirements found in the budget ordinance had been met and, additionally, that this section was “non-binding.”<sup>5</sup> This approach to Urbana’s democratic governance is concerning and both assertions are worthy of review.

### 1) The Requirements as Specified in the Budget Ordinance:

Public Hearing: The meeting on October 4, 2021 was a public hearing. However, the intent of this section of the ordinance, as written by Council Members Bishop and Kolisetty, had been to ensure that members of the public were able to inform the process. The decision to invest in this program had clearly been made prior to the hearing, as evident in the announcement posted on the City’s website before October 4, 2021, which states, “The public hearing will present and receive feedback on the City’s Crisis Co-Responder Team (CCRT) Pilot Program, **being** implemented in partnership with Rosecrance.”<sup>6</sup>

Consultation with the Council: City Council Members were invited in July of 2021 to participate in sessions described in email and through calendar invites as a “Council Briefing.” In an email from City Administrator Carol Mitten on July 14, 2021, Council Members were told, “The items on which you will be briefed are: 1) proposed changes to City Code regarding the appointment process and 2) an interim crisis response proposal.” The use of the terms “briefing” and “proposal” suggest the provision of information pertaining to a future vote, as was the case with the first item. On October 4, 2021, multiple Council Members shared that they did not view these meetings as consultation, as specified in the budget ordinance.

### 2) The Section of the Ordinance is Non-Binding:

This framing has not been suggested for any of the other ordinances presented to the City Council. Even as this stands, denying the Council the opportunity to vote on this program is in direct conflict with precedent and previous communication. A previous co-responder model, the One Door program, was voted on and approved by the last Urbana City Council on December 14, 2021, after an informational session and opportunities for community input. On June 15, 2021, in response to concerns about how the current program was included in the original draft of the budget, Mayor Marlin said, “Obviously, nothing is going to happen until we get more of the details worked out and it will come before Council.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> UPTV6. “Zoom Recording - Urbana City Council's Committee of the Whole 10-4-21.” YouTube, UPTV6, 22 June 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qU1R0so4m5k&t=1890s>. Accessed October 12, 2021.

<sup>6</sup> “Public Hearing of the Urbana City Council Committee of the Whole October 4th, 2021, 6:30 PM.” City of Urbana, <https://www.urbanaininois.us/node/9640>.

<sup>7</sup> “Zoom Recording - Cunningham Township Board / Urbana City Council.” Youtube, UPTV6, 15 June 2021, <https://youtu.be/ROB6HZV3E4?t=16616>. Start at 4:36:55.

While the sections of the ordinance mentioned above have been described as non-binding, the Council has also received no communication regarding progress on the evaluation, despite City staff citing this commitment publicly, which would further suggest that the ordinance was to be implemented as described in the amendment.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to the concerns about the process for implementing this program, it is worth noting that the framing of the program as a crisis co-response team has also already led to confusion and inaccurate media coverage. Following the discussion on October 4, 2021, WCIA posted the following:

“That’s a new system the Urbana Police Department will be using to help during a mental health crisis. Urbana will soon have a new crisis co-responder team. It will pair a behavioral health detective and a mental health professional. They’ll respond to 9-1-1 calls...”<sup>9</sup> In response to questions from Council Members, Carlene Cardosi from Rosecrace confirmed that this model will not be responding to emergent crises but rather, provide a follow-up model that will visit people in the days following a 911 call.<sup>10</sup> Council Members have subsequently received questions from their constituents about the use of the term “crisis” for the follow-up model and about the addition of law enforcement to follow-up services.<sup>11</sup>

Questions from the Council and the public remain unanswered, but these events raise larger concerns. Urbana operates under a mayor-aldermanic system in which the Mayor and the City Council are co-equal branches. As the City’s website states, “The City is governed by the Mayor and City Council with the assistance of various departments, agencies and commissions.”<sup>12</sup> The people of Urbana are at the top of the City’s organizational structure.<sup>13</sup> As elected officials, we all have a responsibility to serve the residents of Urbana in a participatory and transparent manner. The discussion scheduled for October 18, 2021 is an opportunity to ensure a more collaborative process moving forward.

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<sup>8</sup> Schenk, Mary. “Urbana Staff Reappointments Expected to Be Approved Monday.” News-Gazette, 26 June 2021, [https://www.news-gazette.com/news/local/politics/urbana-staff-reappointments-expected-to-be-approved-monday/article\\_99eb9dc4-dbf5-54d3-845c-be619a59df52.html](https://www.news-gazette.com/news/local/politics/urbana-staff-reappointments-expected-to-be-approved-monday/article_99eb9dc4-dbf5-54d3-845c-be619a59df52.html).

<sup>9</sup> Bement, Brice. “New Crisis Response Team Coming to Urbana.” WCIA.com, WCIA.com, 5 Oct. 2021, <https://www.wcia.com/news/new-crisis-response-team-coming-to-urbana/amp/>.

<sup>10</sup> “Committee of the Whole 10-4-21.” *Youtube*, UPTV6, 4 Oct. 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qU1R0so4m5k&t=1908s>. Start at 31:45.

<sup>11</sup> Direct communication with Council Members

<sup>12</sup> “Urbana Office of the Mayor.” City of Urbana, <https://www.urbanaininois.us/departments/office-mayor>.

<sup>13</sup> “Urbana City Government.” Urbana City Government | City of Urbana, <https://www.urbanaininois.us/government>.