



**NPN Hosts Town Hall Forums  
on  
New Orleans Jail Size**

January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2011  
St. Maria Goretti Church

January 26<sup>th</sup>, 2011  
First Unitarian Universalist Church

## **Executive Summary**

Neighborhoods Partnership Network hosted a town hall forum on the New Orleans jail size moderated by executive director, Timolynn Sams, on January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2011. After very successful public turnout and rich discussion, participants requested Neighborhoods Partnership Network to host a second town hall forum on this issue before the February 3<sup>rd</sup> council vote on the Jail Ordinance. NPN organized these forums in large part as a member of the New Orleans Coalition on Open Governance (NOCOG), which is working on ensuring the conversation around the expansion of Orleans Parish Prison is transparent and accountable to the public. Mayor Mitch Landrieu appointed a Criminal Justice Working Group to recommend a data-driven ideal bed-size for the new prison. All panelists at the town hall forums were members of this working group. The purpose of the forums was for these members to speak to the general public about what the working group has accomplished so far, the issues that they are examining that affect jail size, and answer questions about the process. A total of 61 people signed-in including representatives from non-profits, neighborhood associations, academics, media, and 2 elected officials and 3 representatives from elected officials' offices.

The discussion covered a range of topics including process, budget, education, political will, inmate classifications, and public safety as it relates to jail size. Panelists offered opening remarks, then attendees were asked to offer comments, concerns, and questions. Panelists then offered closing remarks. Attendees were encouraged to attend the mayor's working group meetings and all other public forums to voice their opinions and ask their questions. It is the intent of this document to capture the dialogue of the meetings, mobilize the NPN Advocacy Task Force to pursue this issue further if there is support, and provide public feedback to decision-makers. It will also serve as an open record that reflects NPN and NOCOG's commitment to open governance and transparency in all civic processes.

## **In Attendance**

**Moderator:** Timolynn Sams, NPN

**Panelists:** Dr. Michael Cowan, Common Good  
Flozell Daniels, Louisiana Disaster Recovery Foundation  
Lucas Diaz, Puentes

### **Neighborhood Associations**

Melia  
Lake Bullard  
Central City Partnership

### **Non-Profits/Civic Groups**

Puentes  
Vera Institute  
Orleans Parish Prison Reform Coalition  
Voices of the Ex-Offender  
Casa  
Voices of the Ex-Offender  
Early Childhood Family Learning Foundation  
Silence is Violence  
Center for Ethical Living  
Atlantis Now, LLC  
Relieve

### **Media**

The Lens  
Fox 8  
GNO Communications  
WGNO

### **Elected Officials**

State Senator Cynthia Willard-Lewis  
State Representative Austin Badon  
Representative from Councilmember Susan Guidry  
Representative from Mayor Mitch Landrieu  
Chaplain from Sheriff's Office

**Notes from Town Hall Forum #1  
January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2011  
St. Maria Goretti Church**

**Opening Remarks**

**Dr. Michael Cowan**

In the past, elected criminal sheriff of Orleans Parish has always determined the prison size and the city and state are responsible for paying. We have ended up with the 8<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> largest prisons in the United States. Many of these are state prisoners who should be in state facilities. Range for new jail is between 1500-2000 beds, much further down from 8,500, which was the original discussion. The working group is intended to make sure the sheriff does not unilaterally make this decision. Members of the working group include:

Sheriff  
Police superintendent  
Judges from criminal, civil, and juvenile courts  
Public Defender  
District Attorney

Working group to determine what will happen with the existing buildings in the prison complex and any new buildings to be built. Dr. James Austin recommended 1438 bed jail. Also, the working group determined that nothing new should be built.

**Flozell Daniels**

“Remember those in prison as though you are also a prisoner.” Quote from scripture. What should the moral conversation look like?

This conversation is not just about the jail, but about criminal justice. The working group will look at a number of important issues to create a permanent apparatus to make quality public policy decisions based on data and best practices. Some of the issues include jail capacity, pre-trial services, mental health, racial disparities, bonding issue, re-entry, and work release.

Why can Montgomery County, Maryland with 1,000,000 residents have less than 1,100 people in their criminal justice system and we have so many more people locked up with a much smaller population, around 360,000?

**Lucas Diaz**

This is an opportunity for the community to make a statement. Mayor has created a space to make decisions about public policy. We can set a precedent for always making decisions based on data and research for the good of the community. WE can say we want effective government that is actually targeting dangerous criminals not those who should not be there in the first place.

Are we being financially responsible and efficient by incarcerating rather than educating people?  
Are we being just and accountable by disproportionately locking up Black men?

Are we doing everything we can to make sure that our young Black men are successful? We spend so much more on criminal justice than mental health, safe homes, recreation, education, etc. that help keep people out of jail.



## **Public Discussion**

### **1. Process**

#### **Citizen Comment**

When are the working group meetings?

Usually on Fridays, but there is no set time.

#### **Citizen Comment**

Why are the working group meeting not in the council chambers where they can be televised?

#### **Moderator**

What is the vocabulary?

#### **Panelist**

Re-entry: The return of incarcerated individuals back to their communities after serving their time.

**Moderator**

What is the sheriff saying is the needed number of beds?

**Panelist**

3500

**Moderator**

How many buildings does the sheriff have?

**Panelist**

9-11 buildings along Tulane Ave. and Dupre. His plan is to consolidate all of the operations to the I-10 side. Before the storm we had over 7,000 beds, today we have 3,800 beds. Sheriff wants one-for-one replacement when the jail is redone. The issue for the community is what is the right size for the community? What is the sheriff basing his decision on?

**Panelist**

According to Dr. Austin, nearly 60,000 jail admissions. 31,000 felonies, 11, 000 misdemeanors, 9,000 traffic

No data used to formulate the calculation for the number of beds. We need to start making data-based decisions. Must look at the evidence to see how this decision affects us.

**Citizen Comment**

Why has the word best practices not been used? If they build it, they will fit it. Fodi built an empire and that is what Gusman is doing too. We should not be housing state prisoners. Will I get any information with a public information request?

**Panelist**

From a policy perspective, the size of the jail is connected to other issues. There will be a city council meeting on Feb. 3<sup>rd</sup> that will look at this decision based on the working group along with policy issues that will help achieve the determined goal. There is opportunity for public to influence the goal.

There is a one to one correlation between our schools and the incarceration problem. If we do not get the education system straight, then we can forget it.

**Panelist**

There have been some successes and progress. How many people are coming in the front end and for what reasons? This determines the jail size. Incidents of criminalizing people who should not be going to jail such as unpaid traffic tickets are coming to the working group to help determine the jail size.

**Citizen Comment**

First time hearing the distinction Why do we not want state or federal prisoners in our jail? Even though mental health may cost more than the jail, there are secondary savings by having productive and working citizens.

### **Citizen Comment**

Can challenge a conviction after 2 years. Local jails do not allow access to courts for state prisoners. Most people plead guilty to expedite the process. But, if the 2 years elapse, there is no recourse and full sentence must be served even if something is found out. By the time this person gets to the right institutions, he has served too much time. Rehabilitation statute says that you must be rehabilitated as practical as possible. State prisoners not eligible for work release after 3 years because it increases liability for the city if something happens.

Describe Montgomery County work release program best practices

### **Panelist**

Comprehensive pre-trial services provides opportunity for people to only go into the system if they have to, preventing people from going to jail because of indigencies. Help create pathways for employment, social services, relationships with families, creating solutions based on assessed risks and needs. Subscribing to evidence-based research, incorporating an evaluative framework.

### **Panelist**

Re-entry is needed. The question is who houses it and what does it look like? Here, the sheriff says he will do it. In Montgomery County, the city jail does it, but they have a 20-year history of doing it successfully. Can our sheriff do that? Re-entry works best in community-based spaces? i.e. Bridge House that is prepared with the resources. The city will determine who they will except into the re-entry program. Who should operate this in NOLA and who will be involved?

What is the sense of the how the Feb. 3<sup>rd</sup> council meeting will go?

### **Panelist**

Feb. 3 meeting. Ordinance put forward by Guidry and Head will pass because they have been in the working group since the beginning. City council members listened to their constituents who said do not build anything until the optimal size is determined. Ordinance calls for 1438 beds and many in the working group feels that should be the upper limit.

### **Citizen Comment**

The original working group was supposed to include the community. Why is SAFE streets not in the group? People cannot address your grievances if they do not feel your grief. There is a lack of accurate information. The sheriff says he is going by experience, but need accurate information to have a point of reference. But, we do not have that. Community presence tonight is good because that is what we need in meetings. The mayor is not the most important person in the city, the sheriff is because he does not even have to answer to the mayor. If we are not aware and vigilant of what is going on, then things are going to stay the same.

### **Cynthia Willard-Lewis**

Sheriff is a progressive, reform-oriented individual, but he is not here to speak for himself tonight. There should be comments about all of the connected issues: recreation, employment, etc.

### **Moderator**

All political officials were invited. We do nothing behind closed doors.

### **Citizen Comment**

Want to bring together some peer-reviewed research to compete with sheriff's findings. Fox 8 was here but it will be slanted media. Does NPN have media? Can NPN bring together another forum like this, with state legislators and media?



## **2. Budget**

### **Citizen Comment**

School was built to capacity. Reagan administration began the prison industrial complex. As times goes on prison maintenance costs do not go down. There are always questions about funding for all public institutions-schools, healthcare, etc. except for jails.

### **Citizen Comment**

What are we looking at financially between the sheriff's jail size proposal and the working group?

### **Panelist**

In the past, sheriffs have been paid based on the number of people that are in the jail. Per diem system will go away, which changes the whole system.

### **Panelist**

One for one replacement will be covered by FEMA so construction will be covered, but operation cost still up to us. Sheriff calculates city prisoners and give the budget request based on this number for one year. City prisoners x per diem x 365 days. This determines the city cost to

the jail. Federal and state prisoners have separate per diems, state is \$3 more. We do not know the total operational cost of the jail. This has never been made public in previous budgets.

There may not be actual financial savings. It also has to be about public safety. Many best practices from around the country cost more, but are better value.

Public safety, justice, and value for the money being spent are the three criteria.

### **Citizen Comment**

City council meetings here are not in the evenings and not accessible to the majority of the public. Building jails is often an economic question so the issue of closing a jail incites questions about those who will lose jobs. But, no one asks those questions about schools closing. Social programs are always the first to get cut. There is an economic argument for having these programs because they employ people. Legislators need to lobby for these programs because they will create jobs. Can we divert any FEMA money to build local facilities that employ local people for social programs, schools, etc.?

There are some people that must go to jail, but there must be strategy for rehabilitation that works. People do not have direct relationships to jobs. Economics is a large part of the jail conversation.

### **Citizen Comment**

Can we accept federal funds and redirect them?

### **Panelist**

Can be redirected, but will not get full value. After Feb. 3<sup>rd</sup>, the city still has to decide what to do with its adjacent properties near the prison complex. City has the option to use those funds for a community facility, but 100% of funds may not be eligible for this.

## **3. Public Safety**

### **Panelist**

Evidence says that more arrest are not making us safe even though we have been locking up thousands and thousands of people. Need to question the notion of creating more beds when the evidence says it will not work.

### **Panelist**

People have to push for getting more information. Working group is asking for input because CJ advocates said do not let the sheriff build this huge jail because they felt empowered by the community. Need to build a movement around this conversation on both jails and education.

### **Citizen Comment**

LA has been leading the nation on incarceration. Does anyone feel safer because of this? This is about money. Crime has been trending downward for the last ten years. The jail is not where are our problems are solved. More than 50% are in jail for misdemeanors and non-violent offenses.

The question about why we need a bigger jail has never been posed although we question everything else. We need to be part of the conversation. What are the best practices? NPN is helping the community get a better understanding.

#### **4. Education**

##### **Cynthia Willard-Lewis**

There are many points where we can find commonality. We have to stop the pipeline. We are dealing with a lack of neighborhood schools even though there are billions of dollars coming down from feds for education. If kids are expelled, they are going to end up in jail, there are no positive alternatives. Must build schools that support our children. Because we have failed to educate, we incarcerate. Must do everything we can within our structures to take advantage of opportunities, for behavioral attitude and skills changes. Forcing people back into crime rather than redemptive employment possibilities. Schools should serve all children and should even be in jails. Even if the budgets are the same, it is the design of the programs that makes the difference. Need a technical team: budget people, school people, workforce development, sheriff, politicians, etc so all questions can be answered. Also need the re-engineering of NORD because it has failed and kids are getting into trouble. Dollars are flowing all over the city, but not to where there is the greatest need and hurt. Mental health and support begins with conversation at the state. Services do not exist! Mental health and DHH need to be a part of this conversation. The conditions at OPP are inhumane so it is good that the sheriff is at least knocking it down. Need a holistic approach.



##### **Citizen Comment**

Prisoners and taxpayers are the stakeholders. Where is this endless account? How can we bring this money to the education system? Feels more in touch with people on the “street.” The sheriff’s department is big business, they are everywhere. Employing people is not where the

money should be going. Had a cousin and uncle to die in OPP. Brother locked up for 4 days for a traffic ticket. It was not the money, but the amount of paperwork that was overwhelming. The process needs to be streamlined. What do we have to do to get state prisoners out? Need to build a smaller jail to incentivize new policies that keep people out of prison.

### **Panelist**

The school to prison pipeline is designed almost to ensure that certain young people end up in prison. So many things can be connected to that. What can we do? Must take responsibility to bring ourselves and our organizations into the policy conversation.

### **Panelist**

No support left for keeping state prisoners in the local jail.

### **Citizen Comment**

Works with young people. Many of them are broken and going to commit crime. Programs for mental health and recreation for kids are being cut and these kids are going to commit crimes. Children need mental health services to continue.

## **5. Other**

### **Citizen Comment**

Comments tonight are excellent. Not a New Orleanian, has traveled everywhere. But seeing the way people here talk about the jail and criminal justice blows him away, especially because this conversation has been going on and on and on. When Katrina happened, things changed. There has to be a holistic approach. People want change in this city, but they feel hopeless. We have to make our voices heard and it cannot be a whisper, must be loud. We are talking about generations of children.

### **Representative Austin Badon – District 100 (chairman of education committee)**

Is a former corrections officer from Houston. Jails are about the people who are in there even though the conversation is about economics. We have to build something that is fiscally right for New Orleans. We all have to do a lot to work with our families to ensure that our loved ones do not even get to the criminal justice system. If we talk about education, we would not be talking about super-max jail. Wants to be part of this ongoing dialogue.

### **Citizen Comment**

This is “our” jail not the “sheriff’s” jail. It is our money not his. If there are inhuman conditions, it is our fault. We have to take ownership, we do not have to beg, we have to demand what we want our jails to be.

## **Closing Remarks**

### **Lucas**

Thank you and hope we can do this again in other districts. Will come back here as well. Feb. 3 is not the end, the conversation will continue far beyond then.

**Flozell**

Important that New Orleans East is engaged. Holistic approach is imperative because of racial disparities. Same Black men who are incarcerated twice as long are also twice as unemployed.

**Dr. Cowan**

Very productive evening. Thank you NPN.



**Notes from Town Hall #2  
January 26<sup>th</sup>, 2011  
First Unitarian Universalist Church**

**Opening Remarks**

**Dr. Michael Cowan**

Will speak about the jail Size for background and context. Under Sheriff Fodi there were over 8,500 beds in Orleans Parish Prison making this the 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> largest jail in the United States. The sheriff forced the city to pay per jail inmate including state prisoners. Those days are over. The city hired Dr. James Austin, an expert on helping communities predict jail size based on crime rates and local policies. After studying New Orleans, he came up with 2 estimates. Orleans Parish Prison should have capacity to hold 3,120 prisons based on continuing to do what we do now. When factoring in changes in arrest policies (traffic tickets) and establishment of pre-trial services, we would need around 1700 beds. Working group discussion, is where in the range of these 2 numbers should we settle on?

There is consensus that we should not be keeping people who are not dangerous. We should focus on keeping all prisoners in a safe environment and returning people to the community who are finishing their sentences. We should not spend local dollars housing state prisoners. It will take several years to build and tear down the complex and it should be done based on things that happen in the future. How will pre-trial services turn out? What will violent crime rates be? All of these scenarios can play out differently. We should only approve a plan for building and demolishing based on needing either more or less than we plan for. Should plan and build the prison that makes best use of FEMA money from storm damage. Prison should not operate on per-diem system, but become a permanent line item in the city budget with same scrutiny and accountability as other city projects.

**Flozell Daniels**

The city should reflect all of the values that we individually and collectively have. What are these public values? This is not just an opportunity to reshape the conversation but make a public statement about our values. The mayor's working group started 4 months ago to learn from experts and from each other as a shared learning opportunity. Recommendation is 1,438 beds, using the information we have to influence all aspects of the criminal justice system. The mayor has created an ordinance to be voted on by city council on Feb. 3<sup>rd</sup>. The ordinance is actually a zoning and permits conversation for the sheriff to build the jail based on the resources we have. And, we hope to influence that. Beyond this vote, the working group decided that based on its learning and the opportunity to continue to work through the process. The work will not stop with a jail size recommendation. The working group chair has assigned the group to work on several related issues:

Number of beds and growth of the prison (Gusman + Dr. Cowan)  
Work Release (Guidry + DA)

Mental Health (Judges Johnson + Sens)  
Racial Disparities (Serpas + Pastor Barriere)  
Funding  
Bonding (Judge Johnson + Public Defender)  
Re-Entry (Metropolitan Crime Commission + Flozell)

### **Lucas Diaz**

Will speak about what the decision on jail size means to the city. I am an immigrant who grew up in the Westbank and then moved to the city at 19. There was a time when it was acceptable not to think about jails and the criminal justice system. But, there are many now who recognize that they have the responsibility to get involved because we have seen things that have been detrimental to our communities. But now, where do we need to get involved to hold our elected officials accountable? We are paying for all of the related services to criminal justice. Thinking about that and the issues we are facing in public safety, we are hearing from our officials that we need to change our way out of crime. Cannot arrest our way out of it and now we know that. This issue is so important to our communities and the country: are we interested in the education or incarceration of our young people? This is a process that has been determined by people with a cultural bias and we have to put pressure on changing that process. We need to re-envision the values of our communities. Even if there is no change in budget, it could mean a different allocation of resources. Need to work as hard as possible to keep people out of jail. Can we show by our investments and policies that we are giving opportunities to our young Black men (overwhelming jail population) outside of incarceration? Let's create a new emphasis on what we stand for as a community using this jail issue as the opportunity.



## **Public Discussion**

### **1. Process**

#### **Citizen Comment**

I have been hearing 1,438 beds as the number, but now you are saying between 1700-3500 beds.

#### **Panelist**

Dr. Austin provided a range of the number of beds based on the research. Doing nothing will require 3,500 beds but putting in place a suite of robust reforms, there is an opportunity to down-size the jail to 1,438. We want to be very aggressive and intentional to keep the number low and push the reform agenda to ensure that. If all these reforms do not work, then we may have a shortage of beds. That is why policy reform across the breadth of the system is critical.

#### **Panelist**

Whatever ends up being the parish prison will be things that exist and do not exist now. Based on given projections, what should we plan for as a combination of what is there and what will be built? What is the building schedule? What is the contingency plan if we end up with more than what we need or not enough? The answer is to make the best judgment. How far toward 1,438 can we go? Need to have a back-up plan if that number is too low or too high.

#### **Citizen Comment**

Realistically, how long will the total reform of all these systems take?

#### **Panelist**

I have learned a lot being on the working group for these last 4 months. The city of New Orleans before this working group, did not have the kind of activity where decision-makers in the different criminal justice agencies sat down together under the authority of city council. So, we have decided to use this opportunity to weigh in on very difficult policy decisions on criminal justice that have never occurred in New Orleans before. These folks getting together to make the system work is new. This is going to take a long time to get right. What we are hoping is the creation of a truly coordinated body that has the authority to weigh in on criminal justice policies that everyone can buy into. Not only is the jail size important, but that everyone can look at the interest of the system as a whole rather than each individual agency as done before. There is an opportunity to address some substantive issues, such as the bed-size. This codifies the ability for future decisions on the jail to get us to the smaller size of the jail before it becomes operational, which is about 24 months. We have an opportunity to create a substantive process for criminal justices policies and answer the tough choices.

#### **Citizen Comment**

- 1) Although I have attended the working group meetings, this is the first time I am hearing about a back-up/contingency plan? What is your sense of which way the contingency goes?
- 2) Is the working group going to make a recommendation to the consent decree that set up the per-diem structure?

**Panelist**

Council process led by Susan Guidry will find a new financing structure to replace the per-diem structure. The 2012 budget should reflect that. The criminal justice subcommittee is working on that.

**Panelist**

There has not been discussion on the contingency plan; my comments are based on common sense. There are people who are concerned that 1,438 is too few. We don't know how pre-trial services, summons, etc. are going to work. Doesn't it just make sense to have a back-up plan whether the number is too low or high? I will say this in the working group.

**Panelist**

The work of the working group is to examine the size of the jail, but we are looking at the related issues as well where there are gray areas. All kinds of complex issues need to be addressed, but this makes people uneasy because it seems we are negotiating away the win although that is not the case.

**Citizen Comment**

Why hasn't the back-up plan of 400 beds been discussed publicly because that could ease some of the concerns about reduced bed size?

**Panelist**

This issue should be addressed further in the working group. The temporary beds are a way to reduce the bed size with some flexibility that allows for humane conditions and security for the prisoners.

**Citizen Comment**

Controversy over the parcel of land and who owns it: city or sheriff? Does this change anything for the working group? What can and cannot the city control? Can the working group enforce a cap if the sheriff owns this land?

**Panelist**

It is still recorded in the assessor's office that the parcel of land is owned by the city although the conveyance records show that sheriff owns it. But, whatever new use is proposed for that land, it must still be approved by the city council. So there is still opportunity for the community to influence elected officials on what happens there. The kitchen and warehouse were approved with no question, but the second approval on the jail construction got held up by city council and that is why the working group was put together.

**Citizen Comment**

City council member is 80% certain that the sheriff has to get a conditional use permit for use of that parcel. There is a possibility that he may revise his plans.

## 2. Budget

**Moderator**

Paint the landscape that currently exists. Are we looking at the landscape based on our current inmates?

**Panelist**

The per-diem structure was designed and prescribed in the 1980's.

**Citizen Comment**

The per-diem amount has increased over the years. Sheriff has increased this based on showing what he needs. Although the system is the same, the dollar amount has changed.

**Panelist**

There is not enough money even right now to effectively take care of the prisoners we have now. People that ought to be directed to a treatment facility are going to jail.

**Moderator**

Only 3% of those incarcerated are violent criminals. How much are we spending on this v. mental health care v. substance abuse care? Is anyone in the working group examining the percentage of what we're spending on incarceration v. services like mental health and substance abuse?

**Panelist**

City officials are working on building capacity through staff on both the financial management and policy sides to inform this conversation. The working group found that we do not have good data systems to get this information. And, the number of violent criminals is higher than 3%, it is closer to the arrest rate.

**Panelist**

What was the sheriff's budget request to the city this year?

**Citizen Comment**

Sheriff asked for \$32 million and granted \$22-\$23 million. Divide this number by 2,000, that's \$10,000, divided by 365 days, which is about \$28/per day, which has increased the current per-diem.



### 3. Inmate Classification

#### **Citizen Comment**

Typically we understand a jail to detain people who are pending trials. We need to investigate why people are in prison. We have pre-trial detainees, people convicted of misdemeanors, and we also have other people in jail because of the revenue accrued by housing them. City needs to decide if it wants to be in the business of housing state and federal prisoners. We cannot be frightened that convicted felons and violent criminals will be running the streets because of a reduced bed size.

#### **Citizen Comment**

What pre-trial services are being considered?

#### **Panelist**

An instrument to determine how dangerous someone is.

#### **Citizen Comment**

Does this happen before an arrested person goes to magistrate court?

#### **Panelist**

Working to reduce it to a window of 72 hours, but only after someone is in. There is a separate working group working with the VERA institute to create a pilot on this. Talk to John Woole from VERA who comes to all working group meetings.

#### **Citizen Comment**

Tool also assesses the probability that the person will return to court.

**Citizen Comment**

Since one third of Orleans Parish Prisoners are state prisoners, what are the pros and cons of holding local prisoners locally? What have been the debates in the working group? Although the sheriff is a public official, why is he is not accessible like city council? How can I reach him to offer my input?

**Panelist**

There is little to no support in the working group for housing state prisoners. Only exceptions may be those who are going into a re-entry process in addition to certain prisoners who the sheriff thinks will do better off in an improved OPP rather than ending up in a state prison or some other local prison. But, it does not make sense if OPP does not have the services like a state facility would, like a law library.

**Panelist**

Someone with a longer sentence might be sitting in a local jail somewhere else. We may end up sending 700+ people to local jails somewhere else and not getting the services they need because they will not necessarily end up in a state facility. States are saying it is cheaper for them to pay local sheriffs to hold them in their facilities.

**Citizen Comment**

Why is it cheaper for the city?

**Panelist**

That's because the local jail does not offer the services a state facility does.

**Citizen Comment**

Who pays for people going to other local jails?

**Panelist**

That jurisdiction and the state.

**Citizen Comment**

What is the proposed new relationship between ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) and OPP?

**Panelist**

We are not dealing with the state or federal reimbursement system.

**Citizen Comment**

Even if we are not dealing with the funding, what is going on policy wise with ICE?

**Panelist**

That is a decision that the sheriff can enter into with the federal agencies, but it is related to bed-size because reducing bed size, reduces beds for federal prisoners.

**Citizen Comment**

Will issues of racial disparities that are affected by ICE be discussed?

**Panelist**

Yes, but the actual decision is between the sheriff and ICE. Only the community can hold the sheriff accountable to this issue.

**Citizen Comment**

There is major money to be made by holding ICE detainees, many who are legal, but detained because of racial profiling.

#### 4. Political Will

**Citizen Comment**

Is there an interest from the sheriff, OPP, NOPD to make these changes or does this result in less revenue for them?

**Panelist**

Strong support from all agency heads, but also strong skepticism and these people will not believe it until they see it.

**Panelist**

Hearing commentary from people who have been working in this system for a long time. There is a strong interest to change things, but it is hard to change bad habits. It will not be easy.

**Panelist**

Some of the players actually do believe that these reforms will not work even with best practices evidence.

Example: re-entry program in Montgomery County, Maryland has less than 1,100 beds with 1 million population. Why do we have 3,500 beds for 350,000 population in New Orleans? Trying to get as much evidence as possible but everyone has to get involved in the conversation.

**Citizen Comment**

So much has to be done to accomplish this. This is certainly a moral issue. After this issue has been resolved, what happens to the working group?

**Panelist**

If we are allowed to work for another 2 months and come to some consensus and then deliver a second recommendation and leave city council and mayor to implement these recommendations without continued engagement, there is no confidence that anything will substantively change. This process is revolutionary for the city government. My personal opinion is that the work of the working group needs to be instituted. Mayor's budget implements this system by funding the agencies. Mayor and city council weigh in on the budget for them, which is where the leverage is. We have to push, encourage, and request them to make this happen. Cannot count on one mayor to get all these agencies to cooperate. Community has to push the city to keep this going.

**Panelist**

This community has to decide who it is, particularly for those who do not have the means to represent their own self-interest. It will fail without an informed and engaged community. What does accountability look like? Most of us have to say I am looking for a safe, just, and prosperous community. We have not paid as much attention or been as informed as we should have been.

**Panelist**

Community weighing in is a complex issue.

**Citizen Comment**

I came to the meeting thinking it was a different kind of meeting. Is this an independent group?

**Moderator**

NPN is a non-profit and our goal is to create a safe space for community to question civic process because to be engaged is to be informed.

**Citizen Comment**

What will we do with all the people in prison right now if the bed size is reduced?

**Panelist**

It is conceivable that we can make 1,438 beds work, but there has to be policy change. And, it may not work, but we have to be open to that.

**Citizen Comment**

The sheriff only gives those arrested with a place to stay, so it really starts with NOPD and judges, DA, and that set of people to figure out a way to stop people from going to jail.

**Panelist**

Dr. Austin looked at cities with similar size and rate of crime, and none of those have a similar size jail. These cities are making determinations of who is going to jail based on who is really violent and not detaining others, and they are not in crisis. It's New Orleans that is in crisis.

**Citizen Comment**

What does it take for all these issues to occur? It's not just the mayor, we need buy-in from each of the agencies in the criminal justice system. It is not skepticism, but unwillingness to make these changes happen. Public needs to understand that we have a recalcitrant criminal justice system with their own self-interests. Is this true? There is no authority to drive it forward, the working group is only making the initial recommendations.

**Moderator & Panelist**

Community will be the one who pushes this. Pick up the phone and call the sheriff. They have an office, keep a call log, and pay attention to what people are saying. This area does not get much attention outside of committed advocates.

This is the first time that these agencies have come together, and out of this will come a criminal justice commission dealing with these current issues and future issues, chaired by the mayor. There will be a monthly public forum with all these agencies, public, and media to address these issues and answer questions. This is a huge accomplishment. This all happened because a group of citizens went to the city council and said do not make a decision without a working group.

### **Citizen Comment**

City Council should take full responsibility on campaign promises. In Stacy Head's district, she has not responded requests for fixing street lights and other infrastructure problems, particularly sewerage in the jail. Tent City was said to be a temporary thing, but it dates all the way to 1984. City Council made \$42,500 but today they make \$83,500 dollars and they have voted on \$74.4 million dollars of property taxes on everyone without coming to definitive action.

### **Panelist**

One of the concerns of the working group was the inhumane condition of the jail. Want to make sure those who are detained have a new facility that meet 21<sup>st</sup> century and decent standards.

### **Closing Remarks**

#### **Dr. Cowan**

None

#### **Lucas Diaz**

Thank you everyone for coming

#### **Flozell Daniels**

We have a set of practices that do not make us safer and we also have an unjust and unprosperous community. Not just elected officials and appointees, but each of us has responsibilities in all of our places including those who cannot represent themselves.

