



CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS AGENDA ACTION REQUEST

DATE: May 22, 2018

TO: Eric R. DeLong, Interim City Manager

COMMITTEE: Committee of the Whole
LIAISON: Eric R. DeLong, Interim City Manager

FROM: Asante Cain, Assistant to the City Manager
Executive Office

SUBJECT: **Resolution authorizing the investment of \$10,000 in the Restorative Justice Conferencing Program of the Dispute Resolution Center of West Michigan.**

The Kent County Prosecutors Office, the Grand Rapids City Attorney's Enforcement Division, and the Dispute Resolution Center of West Michigan have collaborated on a pilot program which offers a restorative justice approach to juvenile offenders and those they have harmed.

This pilot, titled Restorative Justice Conferencing (RJC), is a face-to-face meeting between the person who committed a crime and the person who was affected by the crime. It holds the person who committed the crime accountable for behavior and provides those harmed a chance to explain the harm and receive answers to questions. During the RJC, participants discuss what happened and how they were affected. Next, the participants work together to develop a written plan to repair the harm. This restorative process helps facilitate healing. Often times, restitution or service work are discussed, but the participants decide what will best repair the harm. The Dispute Resolution Center of West Michigan (DRCWM) monitors the agreement for compliance.

How Conferencing Works

1. Referrals are made to the DRCWM by the Kent County Probation Office.
2. Cases are carefully screened by the DRCWM. Pre-conference meetings are held separately with the person who caused harm and the person who was harmed. The meetings are held to explain the process, to answer questions, and to prepare for the conference.
3. When the parties are juveniles, a parent or guardian participates. Other support persons may participate for both parties.

4. During the meeting, all participants and the supporters will have an opportunity to contribute to the discussion. Open discussion and honest feelings are encouraged.
5. The participants work to develop a written agreement of how to repair the harm. The parties sign and receive a copy of the agreement.
6. Status updates and compliance with the agreement are shared with the Prosecutor and Probation Office to determine closing or continuation of the case.

The Juvenile who committed the crime will have an opportunity to:

- Take responsibility by apologizing and taking other steps to repair the harm that was caused.
- Develop empathy, learn effective communication, and gain positive conflict resolution skills.
- Make productive contributions, build life skills, and develop a sense of belonging to the community.
- Resolve the harm without formal court proceedings.

The Individual harmed by crime, will have an opportunity to:

- Hear and understand what the juvenile was thinking.
- Share and explain feelings and how they were affected by the crime.
- Be heard and understood.
- Plan how the harm can be repaired.

The Community will have an opportunity to:

- Develop ways to address the underlying community problems that contribute to misbehavior.
- Have an increased sense of positive community by addressing and resolving harm to restore harmony.

The SAFE Taskforce have been researching restorative justice practices and programs. They have concluded that the RJC pilot is worthy of the City's support. However, to encourage other organizations to support this program, the SAFE Taskforce recommends that investment of \$10,000 be expended only when matching funds of \$10,000 are secured by the Dispute Resolution Center. City funds would only go towards RJC participants that live in Grand Rapids.

The attached resolution would authorize the Assistant to the City Manager to approve disbursement of \$10,000 to the Dispute Resolution Center of West Michigan when matching funds are secured. The disbursement would be appropriated from funds

budgeted for the SAFE Taskforce in support of the SAFE Taskforce recommendations.
The code for the SAFE funds are: 1010-261-1020-8010.

YOUR COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE recommends supporting a Restorative Justice Conferencing pilot program through adoption of the following resolution authorizing the Assistant to the City Manager to facilitate and execute disbursement of \$10,000 to the Dispute Resolution Center of West Michigan through funding allocated to completing SAFE Recommendations.

WHEREAS:

1. The SAFE Taskforce has been directed to reduce violence in our community through support of its recommendations
2. Restorative justice practices are worthy for exploration to help reduce violence in our community

RESOLVED:

1. That the Assistant to the City Manager is hereby authorized to facilitate and execute disbursement of \$10,000 to the Dispute Resolution Center of West Michigan when matching funds are secured by the Dispute Resolution Center in support of the Restorative Justice Conferencing pilot. The disbursement would be appropriated from funds budgeted for the SAFE Taskforce in support of the SAFE Taskforce recommendations. The code for the SAFE funds are: 1010-261-1020-8010; and
2. The Comptroller is hereby authorized and directed to issue payments upon request of the Assistant to the City Manager consistent with this resolution.

Prepared by Asante Cain

Patrick Beatty