



## Community Activation Network: CAN April 22, 2021 Meeting Notes

Members of the Community Activation Network (CAN) met via Zoom on April 22, 2021.

The agenda for the meeting was as follows:

- Welcome and Introductions
- Interview, discussion, and Q&A with Louisville Metro Council President David James and Councilwoman Nicole George
- *CAN-DID* Breakout Discussions and Report Out
- Closing

### Welcome

Ann Coffey, CNPE CEO and CAN host, opened the meeting – extending a welcome to new members of the group as well as previous participants. She then reviewed the purpose of CAN, its seven Guiding Principles, and the agenda for the meeting. She then introduced Metro Council President David James and Councilwoman Nicole George

### The Community Response to Public Safety

CAN Co-host Anthony Smith facilitated a discussion and Q&A with President James and Councilwoman George. (Please note: questions and responses have been paraphrased and edited for clarity and conciseness.) Main topics of discussion included:

*What is your personal vision for public safety and how does your role as a councilperson help you work toward that vision?*

- CW George: We need to reshape how we understand public safety in a way that takes the whole community into account. We need to stop reacting to events and start dealing directly with root causes. We need to increase connections and support among neighbors. We also need robust support of all services that contribute to public safety, including LMPD.
- President James: I agree with CW George. Also, we need to emphasize that core causes need to be addressed: poverty, homelessness, mental health, etc. We cannot keep doing the things we have always done and expect different results. We need to reimagine how to deal with root causes.

*How would you like your vision to be reflected in the budget? What do you see as the impact of American Rescue Plan (ARP) funding on public safety priorities?*

- President James: I would like to see the budget reflect more effort at deflection. Currently, police are asked to perform services better handled by other professionals and community services. I would like to see funding shifted to developing these services (and create them where they do not exist) and develop their capacity.
- CW George: Regarding ARP funding, we don't have all the facts yet regarding how those funds can be spent. However, those funds do seem to present the opportunity to shift the city budget dollars to other services. Regarding the city budget, all Metro agencies across the board are being asked to do more with less. We need to reinvest in all agencies, including LMPD.

*Many members of the community are calling for a different kind of policing. How does that square with investing more into the current kind of policing?*

- CW George: The community deserves change, deserves something better. We need to invest in all of our Metro agencies – not to reinforce the status quo, but to make this change happen.
- President James: It is not so much about cutting LMPD’s budget. We need more police to adequately do actual police work. It is about balancing that funding with funding to community agencies that can take over the work from LMPD that really isn’t police work. It is also about fixing the funding of some Metro agencies that have not been funded well.

*Regarding the LMPD contract, on what do council members base their votes? What goes into the deliberations?*

- President James: Metro Council is not involved until after the mayor has negotiated the contract. And even then, the contract only goes to an up or down vote. Each individual council member has to make a personal choice about whether or not they agree with the language and the terms of the contract. I voted against the contract last time because of the provisions around discipline.
- CW George: We vote on the contract in its entirety. Many on the council do not agree with all of it, so each has to vote based on whether or not they agree on balance with the contract as a whole. I voted for it because of the provisions that addressed the need for increased recruitment and retention of police officers.

*The community has been asking for a civilian review board for some time. Why has it been formed now in this moment and what are your expectations of the board?*

- CW George: Now *is* the moment, given all that is happening now and has happened. The board will bring transparency and accountability.

*Why fill current LMPD vacancies and/or wait for the budget to shift resources to community agencies? Why not shift those resources now and begin the work?*

- CW George: We do not have enough officers currently to adequately provide police services. We need to fill those positions. Plus, we do not have the policies in place and enough agency capacity to handle the shift in the work.

*Last week we saw a protestor injured by LMPD officers as they were trying to make an arrest. How does Metro Council respond to that? How do we hold police officers accountable when we see them out of line or out of order and not doing the work in a way that it is designed to be done to protect and serve?*

- President James: What happened last week was unacceptable and does not fit what officers are trained to do. We have to be better at holding officers accountable for their actions. Metro Council, however, has no role in the discipline and firing of officers. In my opinion, Chief Shields appears to be taking this matter seriously and addressing it quickly and directly – more so than her predecessor would have.

### **CAN-DID Breakout Discussions and Report Out**

CAN co-host Ashley Parrott introduced the CAN-DID breakout discussions, asking participants to consider what resonated from the previous discussion:

- What reflections do you have?
- What questions do you have? What more would you like to know?
- How can nonprofits engage with Metro Council to increase public safety?

Ashley reminded the group that the CAN-DID breakouts have a dual purpose: (1) to intentionally make new connections and strengthen relationships and (2) to learn and generate ideas with a bias toward action.

Participants broke into small groups, shared what resonated, and reconvened in the large group to share their discussions. Anthony Smith facilitated the report-out; comments and points of discussion included:

- Regarding public safety generally (and negotiations of the contract with the FOP specifically), a lot is not clear to the general public. Who holds the ball? What is the state law? What pieces are at whose discretion?
- Nonprofits can have a significant impact on public safety in holding responsible parties accountable and insisting on transparency by:
  - Convening voices throughout the sector,
  - Helping to disseminate information throughout their own networks, and
  - Coordinating ways to shape community goals and opportunities for funding.
- While the mayor has responsibility for the negotiations that determine what is in the LMPD contract, Metro Council has the opportunity to reject the contract based on the provisions it contains. Council members need to engage the community regarding the contract's provisions to inform their vote. Note: CW George committed to meeting with the 490 group.
- A community advisory board should be created to advise council members on the LMPD contract and other issues. CNPE could facilitate board proceedings, providing opportunities for nonprofits to speak on behalf of those they serve.
- Federal funding should be directed toward ongoing needs in order to free up funds to address critical community needs – for example, purchasing a hotel complex to provide permanent shelter for the unhoused.
- Louisville should create a “maker space,” a hub for young people on the margins to discover and employ their skills and to access social services.
- Louisville should provide free transportation to people on the margins to access services and opportunities.
- Mayor Fischer’s Build Back Better Together group (the entire group, not just the steering committee) will take the lead in determining how federal funds will be spent.

## Closing

Host Ann Coffey thanked participants for their thoughtful and candid engagement and encouraged participants to invite others to be in this space.

She also reminded participants that CAN will next meet on May 27. The topic will be *The Federal Response to Public Safety* and will feature discussion and Q&A with U.S. Representative [John Yarmuth](#), who has represented Kentucky’s 3rd congressional district since 2007, and his District Director [Dana Mayton](#).