

For John

Downtown Austin Community Court Advisory Committee

Austin, Texas

May 28, 2010

Honorable Mayor Lee Leffingwell
City Hall 301 W 2nd Street
Austin, Texas 78701

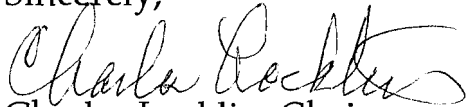
Dear Mayor Leffingwell,

The Advisory Committee is continuing its review and evaluation of the Downtown Community Court for efficiency and effectiveness as requested by Council Member Chris Riley. Following several weeks of careful study the Advisory Committee on May 17th unanimously passed the attached resolution. We are recommending increased services and resources in order for the DACC to more effectively meet its original purpose in accordance with that described in the original Implementation Plan.

We have become increasingly aware that there could be a significant positive impact on our community if a group of about 225 repeat offenders received adequate assessment and treatment services. We do recognize that these recommendations in the Resolution require increased funding for the Court to be more effective and we are prepared to discuss this with you, Council members or City management.

A copy of this letter and resolution is being hand delivered by the Advisory member to the Council member that nominated them. Thank you for your careful consideration.

Sincerely,



Charles Locklin, Chair

DACC Advisory Committee

cc: City Council Members

Mayor Pro Tem Mike Martinez

Chris Riley, Place 1

Randi Shade, Place 3

Laura Morrison, Place 4

Bill Spelman, Place 5

Sheryl Cole, Place 6

Marc Ott, City Manager

Michael McDonald, Assistant City Manager

Pete Valdez, Court Administrator

Advisory Committee Member

DOWNTOWN AUSTIN COMMUNITY COURT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

RESOLUTION

May 17, 2010

Attention: Mayor Leffingwell, Council Members, City Manager Ott and Assistant City Manager McDonald

WHEREAS, Council Member Chris Riley has asked the Advisory Committee of the Downtown Austin Community Court to conduct a review and evaluation of the Court's operations, and

WHEREAS, the Advisory Committee has undertaken such a review and evaluation, and

WHEREAS, we acknowledge that the Court is only one part of a larger coordinated network of services that are needed to positively affect the homeless population and that a comprehensive plan of services is under study by city officials, and

WHEREAS, we agree that a primary issue is that of providing rehabilitative services to the 'frequent offenders' of the Court who are characteristically our most vulnerable citizens and currently in a state of homelessness, and

WHEREAS, the Advisory Committee deems it necessary and prudent to provide advice and counsel in the upcoming City budget process and, specifically, the funding related to the Court, and

WHEREAS, the Advisory Committee has reviewed the budget request being sent forward to the City by Court Administrator Pete Valdez and has in its advisory role independently decided to recommend additional funding, and

WHEREAS, we agree the recommendations put forth by Mr. Valdez are in accordance with prior years' budgets and meet the City Manager's request to submit such a budget, and

WHEREAS, our initial findings are such that the Court is substantially under-funded in critical components of the Court's mission, to wit the areas of case management, intensive case management, psychiatric services, clinical treatment, aftercare, long-term transitional housing and supportive housing, and

WHEREAS the findings of a recent Austin/Travis County study has identified that many of the Court's defendants are repeat users of the Court system as well as other systems such as police (arrest costs) and jail (costs), hospital/emergency room (costs) and emergency shelter use. We believe that funds directed to resolving the root causes of repeat offenders by enabling the Court to focus on this group and offer a wide range of service options would reduce these other costs and positively promote greater public safety and order in our community, so then

BE IT RESOLVED that the Advisory Committee requests from Council and the City Managers office the following annual budget increases prioritized in the following three categories:

Case Management – This is of the highest priority for further enabling the Court to meet its original mission. The increased FTE's dedicated as Case Managers in three separate areas will truly help the Court perform better screening and assessment, referral services, assertive case management and create a means for much needed client outreach. In addition, the three additional Case Managers will be able to explore more successfully for other resources available to clients of the Court that very well may lead to cost savings for the City.

- \$63,000 for one FTE to be classified as an additional case manager. It is our finding that the current 1.5 FTE's for case management are insufficient for the caseload administered by the Court and therefore the Court's mission is not being met. (This is included in Mr. Valdez's budget request for the Court).
- \$65,000 for one FTE to be classified as an 'intensive case manager' and to purchase psychiatric services as the case manager deems necessary. Currently the long delays in services directly from ATCIC, and considering there are no qualified staff on hand to handle such cases, the demands of the population the Court is trying to serve is going unmet. Additionally, the Advisory Committee has become aware of the need for proactive community outreach and this FTE would make that a reality. (NOTE: This line item is for the intensive CM only. The purchase of psychiatric care would be another line item).
- \$63,000 for one FTE to be classified as a case manager in charge of screening, assessment, and referrals. Our findings indicate a large gap in properly screening and assessing all of the individuals entering the Court due to a lack of personnel to do so. It is critical that the Court accurately identifies the criminogenic circumstances of offenders in order to be effective in its mission.

Treatment and aftercare – The Court currently receives enough funding to send approximately 65 persons per year to a 30-day treatment facility and a few persons recently to Project Recovery. It has been determined, however, that 30-day treatment is ineffective in dealing with this population on the whole and that much more needs to be done. Additionally, there is no funding in the budget for aftercare, which is critical to the patients' success.

- \$50,000 for inpatient substance abuse treatment to be provided at Project Recovery. The Advisory Committee sees great value in Project Recovery and Court staff has worked diligently to see that the Court is able to make direct referrals to Project Recovery. As these referrals are now possible, the Court has identified more persons for Project Recovery than there is space available for them. The mission of the Court is to act swiftly and Project Recovery needs to be available immediately to serve this population. This amount would fund 20 persons to attend Project Recovery per year. During the past two quarters the Court has successfully referred 6 patients but space has been unavailable for another 7 willing to receive treatment. (NOTE: \$358,580 of DACC's current budget is spent on Project Recovery for operational expenses.)
- \$450,000 for 90-day in-patient treatment to be served at a local substance abuse facility. Currently, the Court refers approximately 65 persons per year to inpatient 30-day treatment as this is all the Court's rehabilitation budget will support. It is our finding that 30-day treatment is not sufficiently effective with this population and therefore needs to be increased to 90-days. This will fund 40 persons to be referred to a local substance abuse facility's 90-day treatment program. (NOTE: it is important the Court have the flexibility to choose different levels of treatment for different individuals with differing needs. Also important to note is that Project Recovery does not admit females which is a critical need of the Court).
- \$225,000 for treatment aftercare. Once a person has successfully completed a 90-day treatment program, it is very important that follow up with aftercare services be provided. Research unequivocally demonstrates that primary treatment is ineffective without aftercare and, more likely than not, leads to recidivism. These funds are critical to the success of the Court and could be used for a variety of services including ex-

tended treatment, transitional housing and traditional aftercare. This will fund aftercare for all 60 persons referred to and completing treatment in one year.

Housing - In March 2010, City Council passed a resolution prioritizing the development of 350 units of permanent supportive housing in the next 4 years signifying the importance for supportive housing, especially the population with which the Court is most concerned.

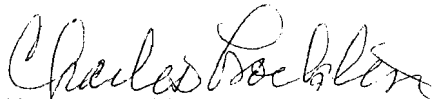
- \$460,000 for permanent supportive housing. The Community Court has identified that they serve a significant population that would benefit from this housing. The cost of the permanent supportive housing (\$460,000) includes \$10,000 per client/per year for operation and \$13,000 per client/per year for services as estimated by the Corporation of Supportive Housing report. We recommend that the City Council consider partnering with other entities to help fund this housing, for instance with local housing authorities for project-based vouchers for the operating costs. It has been clearly demonstrated that housing (especially permanent supportive housing) provides long-term stability for this population and leads to dramatic reductions in costs for emergency systems. This funding could provide housing for 20 individuals per year, or 10% of the current frequent offenders. It is important to note that assuming most of these individuals stay housed, as statistics have shown, it is possible that a large number of the Court's frequent offenders, and therefore those most costly to the 'system' by frequenting our jails, emergency rooms, and so forth, could be taken out of the system in just 10 years if the Court is allowed to house 20 clients per year. And so,

BE IT RESOLVED that the Advisory Committee does not see this as an exhaustive list in funding options for the Court but rather as 'a good start'. And so,

BE IT RESOLVED that the Advisory Committee is committed to conferring with and supporting the Court staff in leveraging the use of the City's funding to the maximum amount available. We have identified a number of partnerships and funding sources that would allow even greater effectiveness in treating this population including, but not limited to, the Veterans Administration, Social Security, ATCIC, Federal GO bonds, housing vouchers, and private enterprise. And so,

BE IT RESOLVED that the Advisory Committee does believe that with the additional funding, an ongoing dialogue and continued review of the Courts operations that the Court will become an even greater portal to impact our most vulnerable and homeless citizens and an even greater part of the City's comprehensive plan to end homelessness in Austin.

Respectively submitted,



Charles Locklin, Chair

Downtown Austin Community Court Advisory Committee