
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



FOR INFORMATION CALL

June 18, 2021

Ald. Chantia Lewis
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Unarmed First Responders Task Force now underway

A new task force aimed at improving unarmed response to calls for service that do not involve threats to public safety is officially underway. The task force, championed by **Alderman Chantia Lewis**, was created to divert police from volatile situations that could result in a police-involved shooting or other unnecessary violence.

“We’ve seen here in Milwaukee and across the country incidents where law enforcement misunderstand the needs of a situation and make them worse. We need trained social workers responding to those situations, not law enforcement, unless it’s warranted,” said Alderman Lewis. The task force seeks to create an alternative to those major crises, but also to the situations where sworn strength isn’t needed - from abandoned vehicles, or dog barking complaints, or simple disputes where there isn’t a public safety threat.

“The goal here is to reimagine the way of dispatching help, and how we create a safer community for everyone. I believe this task force can have a key role in creating trust within the community, reducing threats in volatile situations, and reducing the lag in response times where law enforcement is actually needed,” Ald. Lewis continued. “To do this it was important to have the proper experience and a vast array of knowledge at the table to handle such an undertaking, and I’m proud to announce that OVP Director Arnitta Holliman has been unanimously elected chair. The community is welcomed and asked to participate along the way as we need all voices to help make this possible. With the co-sponsorship of my colleagues, Alderman Nik Kovac and Alderman Milele A. Coggs, and support of the Council, I’m hopeful we will see change.”

The task force is comprised of 16 members from various positions within the community including:

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Diversion Task Force/ADD ONE

Common Council members Alderwoman Chantia Lewis, Alderwoman Milele A. Coggs and Alderman Nik Kovac; Arnitta Holliman and Jamaal Smith with the City's Office of Violence Prevention; Nick Desiato and Nicole Waldner with the Milwaukee Police Department; Milwaukee County representatives David Muhammad and Cassandra Libal; community appointees Mary Neubauer and Brenda Wesley; Amy Catherine Watson and Stephen Hargarten who have a research and academia background; Director of Emergency Management and Communications Kyle Mirehouse; and Milwaukee Fire Department representatives Chief Aaron Lipski and Assistant Chief Josh Parrish.

The task force is slated to present a report to the Common Council of its findings and recommendations later this year.

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