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FEATURED

Verbal agreement reached with city for Rapid Response funding, coalition says

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LOGAN WROGE, STATE JOURNAL

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Caliph Muab-el, on the right, speaks about a verbal agreement he said was reached Monday between the Focused Interruption Coalition and the city on funding a peer support program aimed at reducing violence.

A coalition of Madison community and faith organizations on Monday said it had reached a verbal agreement with city officials to fund a peer support program aimed at reducing violence and supporting victims.

Leaders of the Focused Interruption Coalition gathered in the City-County Building to talk about the importance of a proposed \$75,000 in city funding for a peer support program to tackle violence. Focused Interruption spokesman Caliph Muab-el said the verbal understanding would have the coalition coordinate and run the program in conjunction with Nehemiah Development Corp. and the Boys and Girls Club of Dane County.

City officials have been working on a draft resolution that calls for a “Rapid Response” program that would create a coordinated community effort to “de-escalate crises, stabilize individuals and families, and utilize the resources of neighborhoods and communities to increase safety.”

The draft agreement names Nehemiah as the operator of the program.

“We do not agree with the original draft of that resolution, because it omitted (Focused Interruption),” Muab-el said. “We’re not doing any more negotiation. What we negotiated today, it’s either that or it’s going to get loud.”

Representatives of the mayor’s office did not respond to requests for comment after the news conference.

Last year, the coalition offered a 15-point plan to address violence, recidivism and racial disparities. City officials budgeted \$400,000 this year to fund parts of the \$3 million plan.

The \$75,000 would come from the allocation and would be split into \$50,000 for peer support and mentoring and \$25,000 for an “emergency fund” to provide temporary housing, car rental or funeral expenses after a crisis, Muab-el said.

Time to get ‘serious’

Michael Johnson, president of the Boys and Girls Club and a coalition member, had previously criticized Mayor Paul Soglin for providing scant details on the Rapid Response initiative and the city's progress on implementing parts of the 15-point plan.

Johnson said he was among the coalition leaders who met with Deputy Mayors Gloria Reyes and Enis Ragland as well as police Capt. James Wheeler on Monday.

"It was the most uncomfortable meeting I've seen in the city of Madison," Johnson said. "Given the violence that's taking place in this city, that meeting had to be uncomfortable if we're serious about this issue."

Muab-el said that Focused Interruption is already running a peer support program, but called it "underfunded."

Johnson said the verbal agreement would need to be worked into a memorandum of understanding.

The coalition members spoke at a news conference following the meeting outside an empty mayor's office on the fourth floor of the City-County Building.

Madison's Finance Committee is scheduled to take up the peer support topic on Wednesday.

More information



Paul Soglin, City Council members seek funds for community 'Rapid Response' to gun violence

Mayor Paul Soglin, new City Council zero in on challenges including gun violence