
From: Kelly Girtz
Sent: Saturday, February 24, 2024 1:08 PM EST
To: John Q. Williams; Judd Drake; Austin Jackson; Blaine Williams; Ovita Thornton; Carol Myers; Allison Wright; John Culpepper; Patrick Davenport; Dexter Fisher; Tiffany Taylor; Jesse Houle; Mike Hamby; Melissa Link
Subject: RE: Sanctuary City Concerns
Attachments: Town Hall Response.pdf

Sheriff Williams –

The term “sanctuary city” does not have a sole legal or procedural definition; instead it is a somewhat generic term that means different things to different people depending on the context of a discussion. Many of the elements ascribed to “sanctuary cities” are explicitly prohibited by state code. For example, in Georgia a government issued identification card cannot be provided by the state to undocumented persons. ***See the attached memo about this question that was prepared some weeks ago as follow-up to a public meeting.***

One protocol that arises in discussion sometimes is the willingness (or lack thereof) of a jail to honor ICE detainees and hold in jail undocumented persons who have not committed an offense for which no legal resident would be held, simply because a person is undocumented. As you note in the email below, your predecessor modified the Sheriff’s Office’s prior stance to eliminate detainer holds. While the community is experiencing deep trauma right now, and emotions are understandably raw, I support the detainer policy as one that is both humane and following the well-documented propensity of immigrants in the U.S. to be less criminally inclined than the native-born population (see [recent research](#) from Stanford University about that matter).

In the near-term, I lean on some recommendations found in a couple of professional development resources that I’ve gathered in the last few years. Here is a [presentation](#) and associated [briefing book](#) about leading through crisis. This version of the presentation involved those who had been through public health emergencies, mass casualty events and others. My take-away for the moment is that in the immediate wake of a tragedy, to “focus on the victim...avoid political messaging...focus on comfort and unity” (from the slideshow pp. 13-14). I know how difficult this time is for everyone given the tragedy Athens has experienced, as well as the variety of things that land on our phones and computers.

I’m glad to sit down next week to talk further if that would help. Late morning Wednesday and Friday afternoon after 3pm are both open on my calendar.

Sincerely,
Kelly

Kelly Girtz
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706-613-3010

From: John Q. Williams <John.Williams2@accgov.com>
Sent: Saturday, February 24, 2024 11:29 AM
To: Kelly Girtz <Kelly.Girtz@accgov.com>; Judd Drake <Judd.Drake@accgov.com>; Austin Jackson

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Subject: Sanctuary City Concerns

I am respectfully requesting that someone from the Unified Government stand up and address the ongoing banter about Athens being a sanctuary city. It is my understanding this may have resulted from Sheriff Edward's statements or declaration years ago. I am being bombarded with emails, phone calls and social media posts blaming me for the alleged status. It is my belief that such a declaration does not and has never been an authorized or legitimate power of any Sheriff in the state of Georgia.

If the ACCUG embraces being considered a sanctuary, then come out and say so. If not please clear this up.

If the ACCGOV will not address this, I will do everything in my power to protect the integrity and professionalism of the Clarke County Sheriff's Office and myself. I look forward to any response and welcome any meeting or discussion to explain why this can or cannot be addressed.

Sent from my Verizon, Samsung Galaxy smartphone

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Sheriff John Q. Williams
Clarke County, Georgia