

Report of

COMBAT REVIEW COMMITTEE

commissioned by

Michael D. Sanders

Jackson County Executive

**to review the effectiveness of the expenditure of funds
generated through the
Community Backed Anti-Drug Tax**

October 25, 2007

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* All documents reviewed and considered by the COMBAT Review Committee, as well as addendums and transcripts are available for public review at the Jackson County Executive Office in the Jackson County Courthouse at 415 East 12th Street, Suite 200, Kansas City, Missouri 64106.

To comment on this Report by the COMBAT Review Committee send an email to COMBAT_Review_Comments@JacksonGov.org!

I. Report and Recommendations of COMBAT Review Committee

REPORT OF COMBAT REVIEW COMMITTEE

COMBAT Review Committee: Purpose and Process

In February 2007, Jackson County, Missouri Executive Michael D. Sanders appointed committee to review the effectiveness of the expenditure of funds generated by the Community Backed Anti-Drug Tax (commonly referred to as “COMBAT”). The COMBAT Review Committee was comprised of community leaders from the business, civic, and academic communities. Each member was independent and does not receive COMBAT funds.

2007 COMBAT Review Committee

Alvin Brooks

Daniel E. Champion, Esq.

Dr. Stacey Daniels-Young

Nick Haines

Dr. Denise McDowell

Laura McKnight

Woody Overton

Brad Rentfrow

Specifically, the County Executive outlined the following duties of the Committee:

- **Review original ordinances and other historical materials or documents.** The documents reviewed by the Committee appear in the Historical Materials section attached to this Report.
- **Interview key stakeholders, clients, and Jackson County citizens.** Full transcripts from Committee meetings and public forums are attached to this Report, as well as written comments submitted to the Committee.
- **Review the administrative and decision-making structure.** Relevant existing material describing structure is attached to this Report.
- **Review the data on program effectiveness and the accomplishments of COMBAT goals.** Material reviewed by the Committee is attached to this Report.
- **Make recommendations and submit a final report to the County Executive.** This Report, submitted to the County Executive on September 24, 2007, contains the Committee’s recommendations.

The County Executive also appointed a COMBAT Program Resource Committee to provide the Review Committee with programmatic information. The Resource Committee included two members of the COMBAT Commission, four treatment and prevention providers, the chief of the Eastern Jackson County Drug Task Force, one member of the Kansas City, Missouri Police Department, one member of the Jackson County Prosecutor’s

Office, one legislative representative, two service recipients, and one representative of the corrections system.

Finally, the County Executive suggested that the Committee review a variety of topics as it conducted its work, including appropriateness of current administrative structure and staffing, opportunities to streamline and integrate programs, effectiveness of service delivery, review of research and evaluation tools, changing needs of the population served, opportunities for innovation and cutting edge programs, and ways to improve public awareness. Accordingly, the Committee has addressed these themes throughout its recommendations.

Community Backed Anti-Drug Tax: Achievements and Accomplishments

It is most appropriate to begin the Committee's written findings with observations about COMBAT's achievements and accomplishments. The Jackson County Prosecutor says it best in a statement on the Prosecutor's Office Web site:

“Fighting drugs is a priority However, no single agency can battle illegal drugs by itself. That's the inspiration behind COMBAT.”

What is COMBAT?

The Community Backed Anti-Drug Tax is just that: A tax approved by voters to fight, through a network of governmental and community partners, drugs and the negative effects of drugs on the citizens of Jackson County, Missouri.

Throughout the 1980s, drug trafficking and an active drug culture were a part of daily life in Jackson County's urban core. Cocaine and other illicit drugs such as PCP and marijuana were openly traded on street corners. Drug houses were springing up overnight. One of every two people arrested was a drug user, and as much as 80% of all crime involved illegal drugs.

In 1989, county leaders and voters took action. The COMBAT tax, first passed that year with 69% voter approval, is a one-quarter of one-percent, county-wide sales tax, the disbursement of which is overseen by the Jackson County Legislature. The tax is up for renewal every seven years. In 1995, voters again passed the tax by an even wider margin, with 71% approval, and in the 2003 election, voter approval reached 73%. The actual language on the August 5, 2003 ballot read as follows:

“Shall the County of Jackson continue its county-wide anti-drug sales tax (COMBAT) at the rate of one-quarter of one percent for a period of seven years solely for the purpose of the arrest and prosecution of those accused of drug-related offenses, the prevention of such offenses, including D.A.R.E.. programs, and the incarceration, rehabilitation, treatment, and judicial processing of adult and juvenile violators of drug-related offenses? The proceeds of this tax shall continue to be deposited in a special Jackson County Anti-Drug Sales Tax Trust Fund, separate from the general fund and any other special funds.”

How does COMBAT work?

COMBAT is an innovative and comprehensive anti-drug strategy that invests sales tax dollars in a combination of over 80 community agencies' prevention and treatment services, the services of law enforcement agencies, and the prosecution function of local government. COMBAT is the subject of national acclaim; few communities have been as successful in developing such a system, especially one that incorporates the elements of treatment and prevention that are such key components of COMBAT.

The COMBAT tax generates between \$14 million and \$18 million on an annual basis. Proceeds from the COMBAT tax are allocated by the County Legislature among four areas: prevention, treatment, law enforcement, and prosecution. Consider the following examples:

- Currently COMBAT provides funding for 4,300 adolescent and adult treatment slots in 23 Jackson County treatment programs. These programs provide comprehensive drug treatment services, job training, and residential and outpatient treatment services.
- COMBAT provides funds to Drug Court, created as an innovative approach to deferred prosecution via a special court that supervises non-violent first-time drug offenders, providing an alternative option of effective treatment for incarceration and helps offenders become responsible citizens.
- D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) in Jackson County is funded almost entirely by COMBAT. Thousands of school children participate in D.A.R.E. programs every year.
- COMBAT funds the Drug Abatement Response Team (DART), which has closed approximately 7,300 active drug houses in Jackson County. COMBAT also pays the salaries and benefits of more than 50 police detectives who investigate drug-related crimes in Kansas City and Jackson County.
- COMBAT provides funding to support attorneys who are responsible for prosecuting more than 2,400 drug-related cases annually.

What has COMBAT achieved?

According to COMBAT's Web site, the program has an ambitious mission: "Making substance abuse history. At the mandate of the voters of Jackson County, COMBAT is dedicated to reducing drug-related crime, providing substance abuse treatment for nonviolent offenders who have demonstrated they want to get off drugs, and preventing youth from experimenting with drugs."

The overwhelming anecdotal evidence of success that emerged throughout the Committee's review process indicates that the programs and activities funded by COMBAT dollars are in fact making a difference. The 2006 COMBAT Annual Report and a variety of other information attached to this Report paints a detailed picture of the services funded by the COMBAT tax and the people benefiting from those services.

The Committee recommends that overall results be monitored, measured and communicated on a more regular basis. Statistics should show that, without COMBAT, the quality of life of Jackson County citizens would be worse. For example, should citizens

expect to see a decline over time in the number of cases presented to the Prosecutor's Office?

Despite the fact that global success measures have not emerged over the years, the COMBAT infrastructure does provide for the evaluation of each program funded by the tax dollars. This topic is discussed more fully later in this Report. Of course, to enhance accountability, the review committee recommends the creation of clear job descriptions, responsibilities and goals for each staff member within the COMBAT organization based on global success measures.

Summary of Committee Recommendation #1

The review committee strongly recommends that COMBAT create a clearly-defined mission statement to guide the program's work.

In addition, the committee encourages the development of three to six overarching, measurable, time-bound objectives that reinforce the intent of the anti-drug tax. These objectives should be made public and fully integrated into the fund allocation process. These objectives should guide all requests for proposals, all contracts for services and all compliance processes for oversight of agencies receiving funding, as well as individual staff accountabilities.

Administering COMBAT: Structure and Efficiencies

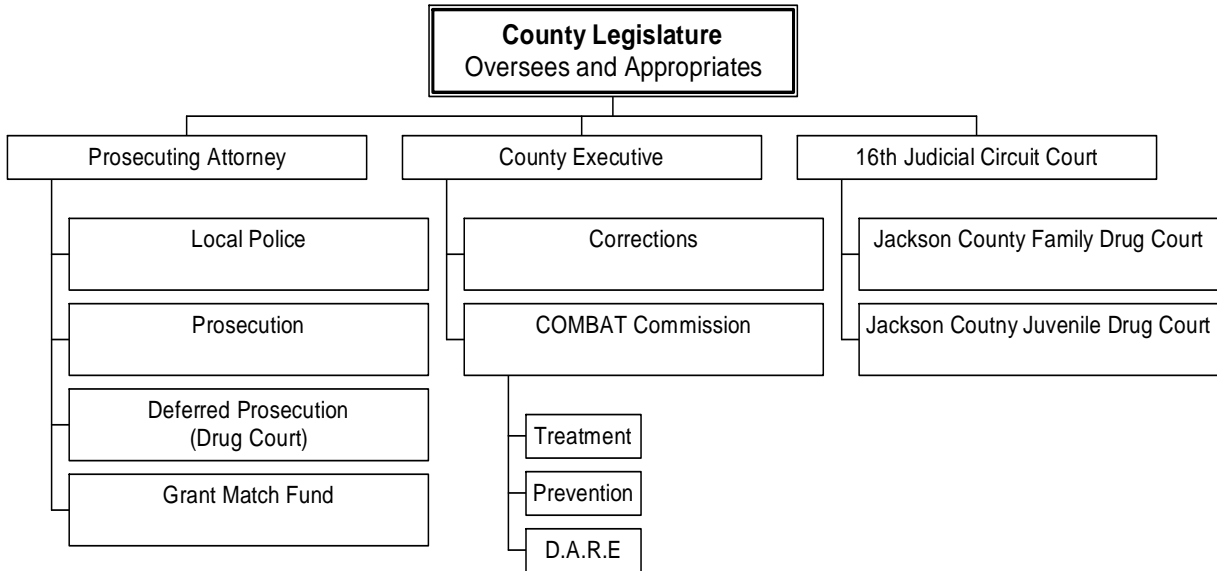
The provisions of the COMBAT tax provide specifically for a separate trust fund to hold and disburse the tax dollars at the direction of the Jackson County Legislature (specifically its Anti-Drug Committee). Tax dollars are divided into three components for expenditure and monitoring. The following information appears in the COMBAT 2006 Annual Report and the COMBAT Website:

- Jackson County Prosecutor's Office. The allocation to the Prosecutor's Office provides for the local police, prosecution, deferred prosecution (Drug Court), and a special "grant match fund" designed to leverage other funding sources for local organizations providing COMBAT-related programs.
- The County Executive. This component includes the corrections system (county jail) and the courts.
- The COMBAT Commission. The COMBAT Commission is a seven-member oversight body appointed by the Jackson County Executive to oversee the disbursement and management of funds to support treatment, prevention, and D.A.R.E. programs. The Prosecuting Attorney serves as an ex-officio member of the COMBAT Commission. The Commission recommends to the Legislature which organizations should receive funds and then monitors those organizations for compliance, performance and quality.

Historically, the administrative oversight for the COMBAT program has been shared by the Prosecutor's Office and the COMBAT Commission staff.

The following organizational chart also appears on the Web site:

COMBAT ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



The slight differences in the written explanation of the structure compared with the chart confirms what the Committee heard repeatedly throughout the review process: the COMBAT oversight structure is confusing. Few understood it, and it was difficult for the Committee to determine who was “in charge.” Staff at the Prosecutor’s Office has taken a lead administrative role; it was unclear, however, how that role integrated with the County Executive’s role, the role of the COMBAT Commission, and the role of the courts. The Committee observed that the current complex structure might very well contribute to the perception among service providers that the disbursement of COMBAT funds is not as transparent as it should be. In turn, this contributes to a feeling that COMBAT disbursements are “political.” In addition, the structural confusion undoubtedly leads to the administrative and communications frustrations, described later in this Report, experienced by service providers as they apply for and receive COMBAT funds.

The Committee suggests a streamlined COMBAT oversight structure. One idea that emerged throughout the process was for a body similar to the existing COMBAT Commission (currently charged with recommending disbursements for prevention and treatment only) to assume a more global oversight role, staffed by an executive who would report to such commission all aspects of the COMBAT program to ensure independent transparency and oversight. Of course, DARE needs to be incorporated in whatever new structure is adopted.

- Recommended new structure.

It is recommended that (1) a new position of COMBAT Director be created and (2) the current COMBAT Commission be dissolved and replaced by a newly constituted nine-member Drug Commission.

The new COMBAT Director shall be appointed by the County Executive, subject to the Legislature’s power of disapproval, and shall become a county employee and subject to the rules and regulations applicable to all Jackson County employees.

The COMBAT Director shall have the education and/or experience equal to eight years in the areas of public health, substance abuse, prosecution or similar disciplines with pertinence to the mission of the tax. Included in the above shall be a minimum of five years experience of administration and supervisory experience.

Members of the Drug Commission shall be appointed by the County Executive. The Commission's nine-member composition shall mirror the geographical representation of the County Legislature. One Commissioner shall be appointed from each of the county's six legislative districts. Three commissioners will serve at-large and shall meet the configuration of one public/health care professional, one professional from the field of substance abuse, and one legal professional. In order to stagger the terms at the initiation of the new Drug Commissions the terms of five members shall be two years with eligibility to serve an additional four years. The term of four members of the body shall be four years with eligibility to serve an additional four years. Thereafter, new members of the Drug Commission shall serve a maximum of two four-year terms. The County Prosecutor shall serve as an ex-officio non-voting member of the Drug Commission.

The COMBAT Director will set the priorities and direction of COMBAT in all three of its interest areas: law enforcement, treatment and prevention. The COMBAT Director shall be accountable to the Drug Commission.

The Drug Commission will approve goals and all funding requests by majority vote.

The COMBAT Director may be suspended with or without pay or removed from office by the County Executive subject to ratification by a vote of at least five members of the Drug Commission. However, by unanimous vote of the nine Commissioners, the COMBAT Director may be removed.

No person who is a recipient or closely related to a recipient of COMBAT funds shall be permitted to serve on the Drug Commission. "Closely-related" shall include, but not be limited to, a spouse/life partner, child or parent. Drug Commissioners annually shall fill out an appropriate disclosure of relationships to individuals and/or entities receiving COMBAT funds.

Summary of Committee Recommendation #2

The review committee strongly recommends a streamlined and more accountable organizational structure, described above. At this time, there is no one person overseeing the totality of the program's objectives or budget. The cornerstones of the recommended structure are a new "Drug Commission" and a new staff position of "COMBAT Director."

Key Question: Resource Allocation

As the COMBAT tax approaches its twentieth anniversary, the Review Committee recommends an evaluation of the current percentage apportionments afforded the areas of law enforcement, corrections, courts, treatment and prevention. *The key question is whether the current allocation continues to meet the needs of Jackson County residents, based on the success measures derived pursuant to Committee Recommendation #1 above.* This is a critical question that must be addressed for COMBAT. Ideally, the County Legislature would accept or reject the recommendation of a newly-formed Drug Commission (described later in this Report) by majority vote of the full body.

Summary of Committee Recommendation #3

Prior to the next renewal of the COMBAT tax, the Review Committee recommends that the newly-formed Drug Commission study and recommend to the County Legislature either a continuance or modification of the current percentage allocations of the COMBAT tax dollars among law enforcement/corrections/courts, treatment, and prevention, based on the overall objectives of the COMBAT program.

COMBAT Efficiencies: Process and Evaluation

It is critical that the COMBAT program as a whole undergo regular evaluation, ideally in the form of measuring meaningful progress toward measurable goals, a topic addressed at the beginning of this Report, and communicating that progress to COMBAT service providers, the Legislature, and the public.

One of the most revealing pieces of testimony presented to the review committee was the acknowledgement by a COMBAT administrator that most paperwork submitted by funded agencies is never read. Program providers testified before the Review Committee about the requirements of attending frequent mandatory meetings that appeared to have no clear purpose.

Indeed, one of the most prevalent sources of confusion about the COMBAT program is the application and disbursement process for treatment, prevention, and grant match funds. Over and over, the Committee heard from service providers that they experienced frustration in navigating the system:

- Communication is a challenge; service providers are unclear whom to call to ask questions. Delay in receiving funds is common.
- The request for proposal process is difficult to ascertain, especially because COMBAT funds are available through treatment and prevention grants from the COMBAT Commission *and* the grant match funds are available directly through the Prosecutor's Office.
- Staff support is critical; several service providers commented about the negative impact of the decrease in staff.

- Notification of grant termination has been haphazard, especially this year; for example, one service provider who believed it had a contract in place for two years was cut off after one year with no explanation.
- The grant match fund was generally applauded as a great idea, but many expressed frustration in determining how to access grant match funds versus prevention and treatment grants, and what the difference between the two really was.

The Review Committee strongly recommends the development of a more consistent process for eligibility, compliance, monitoring, and evaluation of individual programs receiving COMBAT funds, including the implementation of a uniform integrated data collection and management system to be used to evaluate and analyze programs to aid in the decision-making process.

On a case-by-case basis, the need for consistency in the evaluation process for individual treatment and prevention programs was clear. The review committee received anecdotal evidence that the process for grantee approval was not followed in all cases.

The request for proposal forms themselves are fairly straightforward; an audit process appears to be in place; and an evaluation of each separate program appears to take place on a somewhat regular basis. The Committee received comments regarding the eligibility requirements for COMBAT funds and the specific methods used to determine eligibility and compliance, and heard repeatedly that the prescribed process was not being followed in every case.

Certainly the concerns noted earlier in this report about oversight structure, administration, and communications have impacted the grant evaluation process. The evaluation process will benefit from more centralized administration of grant requests, communication regarding site visits, the process around evaluations, and training needs.

An ongoing evaluation of programs is essential. The review committee recommends that within the first twelve months after the Drug Commission is established, and thereafter every three years, the Drug Commission conduct a comprehensive evaluation of all COMBAT-funded programs. This should be a results-oriented evaluation with a focus on the defined set of uniform outcomes, determined pursuant to Recommendation #1, above.

In addition, funded agencies should submit an annual performance report to record progress on stated outcome measures and provide an accounting of expenditures funded by COMBAT funds.

Summary of Committee Recommendation #4

The COMBAT program could benefit from a more streamlined and consistent process for eligibility, compliance, monitoring, and evaluation of all programs receiving COMBAT funds, specifically regular (every three years) evaluation of the entire program, simplifying and streamlining paperwork, and reducing mandatory meeting requirements.

COMBAT Programs: Innovation at the Forefront

In addition to ensuring consistency of the evaluation process, for individual programs, the Committee suggests that the County Executive focus on determining what *new* types of programs ought to be funded. The Committee heard hundreds of comments urging COMBAT to be responsive to the changing needs of the community, maintaining the spirit of innovation and creativity out of which COMBAT was born. Consider the following themes that emerged from the comments:

- Treatment and prevention are critical. In fact, COMBAT should go beyond “treatment” and look at recovery, which embraces a more long-term view; many service recipients urged the Committee to consider that “thirty days is not enough.”
- COMBAT should consider “nontraditional” programs based in grass-roots efforts to address drugs and drug-related crime on the streets themselves. COMBAT should assist these organizations in establishing a governance structure and fiscal procedures required to obtain COMBAT funds. The consensus of the commentary was that neighborhood groups are effective.
- The focus on the family and children of drug addicts has been well-received. The comments indicated that those services are necessary and contribute significantly to the effectiveness of COMBAT in breaking the cycle of addiction within families.
- Several comments noted the relative lack of focus on alcohol versus illegal drugs.
- The link between mental illness and drug abuse surfaced several times, with the suggestion that COMBAT programs be sensitive to the fact that drug abuse and mental illness are often “co-occurring disorders.”
- Drug Court received rave reviews because of its comprehensive and integrated approach to assisting nonviolent and first-time offenders in getting back on their feet.

The review committee recommends that COMBAT place greater emphasis on identifying, supporting and funding innovative and comprehensive programs that address the cutting edge of drug addiction and drug-related crime in our community (*e.g.*, municipal drug courts, etc.). The panel recommends that one full-time staff member be dedicated to program development and grant writing.

Securing federal and state funding should be a priority that will better position program providers to meet changing community needs and tackle existing gaps in service.

The Review Committee also recommends grant writing assistance and technical support be provided to smaller agencies and neighborhood organizations that are now largely absent from COMBAT funding. The panel suggests a small grant fund be created to jumpstart innovative pilot projects that target constituencies overlooked or ignored by current agencies.

Summary of Committee Recommendation #5

The COMBAT program could benefit from deepening its commitment to identifying, supporting, and funding innovative and comprehensive programs that address the cutting edge of drug addiction and drug-related crime in our community, facilitated by a staff member dedicated to this work and catalyzed by a “jump start” grant fund for innovative programs. Federal funds should be sought, and small nonprofits should be offered assistance in securing COMBAT funds.

COMBAT: Getting the Word Out

Time and again the Committee heard about the need for greater public awareness of COMBAT. Public awareness is important not only to gain voter approval of the tax every seven years, but also to communicate to citizens who need help battling a drug addiction that there are services available.

Consider the following statement on the COMBAT Web page:

COMBAT In the Community

COMBAT is ubiquitous....we are literally everywhere. It has always been a priority to assure that our services and information are accessible to all citizens of Jackson County. Besides the eighty funded projects in various law enforcement, healthcare, and community-based agencies, COMBAT sponsors at least fifty additional public visibility programs, throughout the year. Starting with "critical information centers", COMBAT partners with over fifty businesses to assure that the most accurate information about drugs and drug usage is supplied to the average citizens. In addition, each of the eighty funded projects is required to inform their constituencies about the progress of their programs. More important, each year, COMBAT sponsors an in-depth informational program about the drug problem in the County. These informational seminars are usually presented in cooperation with other key entities. For example; the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, the University of Missouri-Kansas City, the Prime Health Foundation, the Metropolitan Missionary Baptist Church, and the Carter Broadcast Group. In addition, many community service programs are initiated and developed in the COMBAT unit. Specifically, COMBAT has initiated programs for the local families affected by the War in Iraq, the transplanted hurricane victims, those seeking college scholarships and many other worthwhile causes.

The Review Committee recommends an increased focus on public awareness to better reach potential service recipients and to inform the citizens of Jackson County. To that end, it is the Committee's further recommendation that this report be placed on the Jackson County website for a period of 60 days in order to provide the public ample opportunity to read its content and to provide their feedback.

A user-friendly Web site should be a priority. The internet page should feature a list of agencies receiving funding, a clear description of how to apply for monies and the deadlines for submitting proposals.

The site should explain how past funds have been spent. It should link to official minutes of all Drug Commission meetings and might also link to compelling video vignettes of recipients who have benefited from COMBAT services. The site should have its own domain so it can be easily searched via Google, Yahoo and other search engines.

There is great need for a continuous feedback loop. The Drug Commission should be responsive to the community it serves. The review committee recommends that the Drug Commission host a minimum of one public hearing per calendar year to listen to citizen concerns and to respond to questions from Jackson County residents. The hearing location should rotate throughout the six county legislative districts.

The Drug Commission should also be responsible for the creation and dissemination of an annual program report to key stakeholders. The document should list all agencies receiving COMBAT funding and a breakdown of monies spent.

The review committee is in full agreement with the comments of a number of service providers who suggest that it is time to revise COMBAT's current logo and color scheme. Repeatedly, the panel has heard that its time to "*open the fist*" and present a friendlier image to the public that is more representative of COMBAT's mission. Several comments suggested that the current logo's combative appearance does not do justice to the partnership between law enforcement, corrections, the courts, and compassionate, community-based service providers that is the essence of COMBAT.

From testimony at two public hearings and from the results of a recent citizen survey, it is clear that the general public is largely unaware of the full scope of COMBAT's programs. Too often even those needing help have no idea what services are available. The Review Committee recommends further study on a COMBAT drug helpline that would act as an independent, one-stop shop for Jackson County residents in need of care and support. The COMBAT-run helpline would direct clients to services and be a very visible symbol of COMBAT's helping hand in the community

Summary of Committee Recommendation #6

The COMBAT program would benefit from an increased focus on public awareness that reaches potential service recipients as well as the voting population, including logo revision, a comprehensive Web site, a help-line, an annual report, and regular public hearings.

II. * Historical Materials

III. * Materials Outlining Administrative Decision-Making Structure

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