City violence is back on the front burner

Howard Manly

Rev. Bruce Wall has stirred the pot.

Not that long ago, Wall was alone, a squeaky voice screaming about the growing murder rate in Boston and calling it a “state of emergency.”

He is not alone anymore.

“I cannot keep up with the requests from the media outlets who want to speak to me,” Wall said in one of his recent mass e-mailings. “I do not know why my words are resonating with so many people.”

The reasons are pretty clear.

Last week, Curtis Silwa of the famed Guardian Angels came to Boston at Wall’s invitation, and while the shootings and murders have not stopped, the visibility of the inner-city crime problem is now on the front burner.

More attention means more police, more community involvement and more resources.

And more politics.

In another e-mailing, Wall described Mayor Thomas M. Menino as trying to isolate him from other clergy and city officials. Despite repeated invitations, neither Menino nor Boston Police Commissioner Edward Davis have met with Wall.

“No matter what the city officials say about me,” Wall said in an e-mail, “I will keep the door open and continue to hope that the Mayor of Boston and the Police Commissioner will soften to hope that the Mayor of Boston and city officials. Despite repeated invitations, neither Menino nor Boston Police Commissioner Edward Davis have met with Wall.

So far, unity remains an elusive goal.

On Tuesday, the Black Ministerial Alliance (BMA) met with the Boston TenPoint Coalition and Davis and later announced that about 50 members of the BMA would participate in several efforts in Boston’s worst neighborhoods. Notably absent was Wall.

Starting on April 14, the BMA said, Boston police officers and members of clergy are scheduled to walk through crime-ridden neighborhoods. Trainings for these walks are scheduled on April 12, from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. at the Charles Street AME Church in Roxbury.

The BMA has also pledged to work with Rev. Jeffrey Brown of Boston’s Black Ministerial Association (BMA) on the TenPoint Coalition to intervene in beefs between rival gangs. On top of that, Tuesday’s meeting also produced what is being called “Operation Home Front,” a program that involves working with Boston public schools, MBTA police and BMA clergy to visit the homes of youths considered to be at-risk.

Late Tuesday evening, yet another meeting occurred between Menino and police Commissioner Edward Davis.

As it is now, state police are already patrolling streets in Roxbury and Dorchester. And while some crime prevention programs have been eliminated from Patrick’s proposed budget in order to cut an estimated $1.3 billion deficit, a Patrick spokesman, Wall, continued to page 11.