



## CUYAHOGA COUNTY CITIZENS' ADVISORY COUNCIL ON EQUITY

Tuesday, December 10, 2024

3:00 PM – 5:00 PM

### **I. Call to Order**

Chair Habeebah Grimes called the meeting to order at 3:13 PM.

### **II. Roll Call**

A quorum was present.

In Attendance (In Person) CACE Chair Habeebah Grimes, Mayor Annette Blackwell, Ronnie Cannon, LaRaun Clayton, Colleen Cotter, Dr. Heidi Gullett, Dr. Charles Modlin, Melaak Rashid, and Eddie Taylor.

Excused Absence- Members, Stephen Caviness, Rev. Kenneth Chalker, Jenice Contreras, Levine Ross, Glen Shumate, Yanela Sims, and Sheila Wright.

### **III. Public Comment**

There were no public comments submitted via email to [equity@cuyahogacounty.us](mailto:equity@cuyahogacounty.us) since the June 2024 meeting.

There was one request for in-person public comment. Reverend E. Regis Bunch addressed the council about his concerns of the impact of the war in Gaza on Palestinian Americans in our community.

Chair Grimes recognized Reverend E. Regis Bunch's comments on the war in Gaza, condemning the violence and offered her guidance to County Council and County Administration on how to be present with the pain that emerges from this conflict.



#### **IV. Message from County Executive**

Cuyahoga County Executive Ronayne introduced Senior Advisor Sabrina Roberts, who joined him at the meeting.

Executive Ronayne emphasized his desire to build a better justice system in Cuyahoga County. He expressed his gratitude to the Department of Public Works for presenting the new jail plan during the last CACE meeting and recognized the concerns of CACE members that arose from that discussion.

Executive Ronayne shared the conversation he had with CACE Subcommittee Chairs regarding the importance of supporting women leaders, particularly women of color. He would like to continue brainstorming ways to compile a network of support for women of color in new leadership roles within the County.

Executive Ronayne highlighted another commission doing work in the county, the Women's Health Commission. He shared details of a report presented by Enlighted Solutions, that focused primarily on minority women's health and maternal care. He suggested the CACE view the report "Project Noir" as he believes it is a valuable health equity resource.

Finally, Executive Ronayne shared the County's Child Fatality Report, presented to the media earlier in the day. He noted the largest number of youth deaths reported were black males. Executive Ronayne called for further investment in child advocacy agencies across the county and urged the interception of products trafficked to children, primarily firearms.

#### **V. Update/Message from Chair**

Chair Grimes reflected on recent national events and potential impact on the work of the Council. She recognized there's been a systematic pullback on diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives across the country. She also shared she expects more reservations to emerge next year, once the new Presidential Administration takes office. She



expressed her gratitude to live in a County committed to pursuing equity work, and to work alongside committed colleagues.

Chair Grimes also updated the council on the meeting of the CACE Subcommittee Chairs with the County Executive. She shared that the CACE Subcommittee Chairs will meet mid-December to reengage systems mapping, as well as proposed recommendations to bring forth to County Administration.

## **VI. New Business**

### **a. Approval of Minutes**

A motion was made by Member Blackwell and seconded by Member Cotter to approve the previously distributed minutes. There was no discussion. The motion carried without opposition and the minutes were approved.

### **b. Presentation from unBail Labs, Executive Director and Co-Founder Cait Kennedy**

Cait Kennedy, the Executive Director and Co-Founder of unBail Labs, provided an overview of a new project she is working on called CourtChat. unBail Labs is a nonprofit technology studio helping governments and courts better serve their communities. She described CourtChat as a messaging service offered to defendants if they would like to receive information about their case. Ms. Kennedy noted defendant's family members may also sign up to receive information to stay updated on their loved one's case.

Ms. Kennedy indicated all information provided by CourtChat is derived from the docket. The messages received are converted into user-friendly language.

Ms. Kennedy reported on the results of a small pilot her team facilitated. She exclaimed the engagement rate was higher than anticipated and was hopeful for even more engagement with the launch of a larger pilot.

During Ms. Kennedy's presentation, the CACE asked numerous questions regarding the operation and logistics of CourtChat.



**c. Presentation from the North Coast Waterfront Development Corporation, Executive Director, Scott Skinner and Director of Project Management, Zoe Toscos**

Scott Skinner provided a detailed update on the progress of developing Cleveland's north coast waterfront. He said the project started with 18-24 months of community engagement, including meetings in all wards of Cleveland. Mr. Skinner emphasized the NCWDC's commitment to continually invite community feedback and incorporate those ideas into planning.

Mr. Skinner assured the CACE plans to develop Cleveland's waterfront will continue with or without the presence of the Browns Stadium. The biggest concern is developing free public access to Lake Erie.

Mr. Skinner explained the proposed use of a New Community Authority (NCA), a development tool that supports financing in a specific area by collecting charges from property owners. Local property owners can opt-in to charge fees on parking, food and beverage, etc. that will contribute to development expenses. Revenue raised within the geographic area of the NCA can only be used within that area.

This coming spring/summer, Mr. Skinner plans to introduce a pilot program to open part of the area to the public. The area is confined to a corner of the existing surface lot and includes a picnic area, bleacher seating, basketball courts, blacktop space, food and beverage vendor space, and a walking path.

The North Coast Connector is also included in the development project. Mr. Skinner explained the connector is a multi-modal shore way that will increase access to the center of downtown and connect it to the waterfront.

After Mr. Skinner's explanation of the lakefront development plan, the CACE members asked questions regarding the project.

**d. Update from the Department of Human Resources**

Kim Coleman, from the Department of Human Resources provided an update. She shared in October; County Council approved a new remote work policy. County Departments are currently adjusting the policy to fit the needs of their agency. Ms.



Coleman and the HR department expect this new policy to incentivize new hires and allow greater flexibility for County employees.

Ms. Coleman shared in late 2023, the HR Department engaged a consultant to conduct a county-wide pay equity study for non-bargaining unclassified employees. Results were shared with Cuyahoga County Council and pay adjustments were approved for 2025.

Ms. Coleman updated the CACE on the tuition reimbursement program, which currently serves 85 participants. The Department of Human Resources is working on simplifying the application process.

Ms. Coleman also provided updates on continued education. The Stability Training Program saw 626 managers and 1200 employees complete training this year. Currently, the 2024 Ethics Training is available for all employees to complete.

The Department of Human Resources' internal DEI Committee hosted three panel discussions this past year. The discussions centered around dispelling the myths of DEI and the positive impact DEI programs have on our community.

In June, the Department of Human Resources celebrated Pride Month by publishing LGBTQIA+ resources and in September, the Department of HR engaged in voter education and registration.

Ms. Coleman reminded the CACE of existing mentorship programs (True to You and College Now) and announced a new mentorship program that will be rolled out next year.

**e. Update from Department of Equity and Inclusion**

Lenora Lockett, Director of the Department of Equity and Inclusion, provided an update. Director Lockett shared shortly after the CACE's last meeting, her department hosted make-up sessions for the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion trainings initiated in 2022.

Director Lockett shared in September, the Department of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion hosted multiple employee-requested training sessions on work-life balance and accountability. She also shared details from their October event, a DEI Meet and Greet. New and existing DEI departments within agencies across the County met to share ideas. Also in October, was the Vendor Fair, where vendors interested in becoming certified SBE, NBE, and WBE partners attended. The Purchasing Department and the Department of Development were present to assist vendors interested in selling services next year. The Vendor Fair also featured the newly designated Office of Small Business.



**f. GARE Update**

Insights from the conference Clerk Byrd attended in November will be shared during the next meeting.

**VII. Next meeting**

A date for the next meeting has not been confirmed; however, is expected to be held in early 2025.

If you are unable to attend any meetings, please contact Clerk Byrd or Julia Garber for purposes of ensuring a quorum is present.

**VIII. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 5:03 PM.