

Cuyahoga County Equity Commission Meeting
 November 16, 2023, 10:00 AM – 11:00 AM
 Cuyahoga County Administrative Building – Room 5-006
 2079 East Ninth Street, 5th Floor
 Cleveland, OH 44115

Cuyahoga County Equity Commission		
Last Name	First Name	Agency
Lockett	Lenora	Equity & Inclusion
Merriman	David	Health and Human Services
Nemastil	Sarah	Human Resources
Smialek	Jill	Public Safety and Justice Services
Herdeg	Paul	Economic Development
Calovini	Daune	Communications
Guests		
Denton	Cheryl	Clerk of Courts
Murdock	Jamillah	Equity & Inclusion
Slayton	Shaunna	Equity & Inclusion
Cantlay	Doug	Workforce Innovation

- I. Welcome

- II. Call to Order (10:07 am) – David Merriman, Chairman
 - i. Roll call completed; previous minutes reviewed and approved.
 - ii. Call for Review & Approval of Minutes made by David Merriman.
 - Minutes approved: Motion to approve made by Lenora Lockett, seconded by Sarah Nemastil.

- III. Public Comment
 - There was no public comment.

- IV. Opening Remarks from Equity Commission Members
 - i. Jill Smialek- Public Safety is working on diversifying the workforce within our department, that falls under Public Safety. We are taking advantage of some resources provided to us by the County Executive Office, who is very interested in the project. We are using an extern to help us develop this program, as well as a couple of other people who are helpful on this project. We are compiling data and information from different municipalities who hire and are looking for First Responders. We hope to launch the program in 2024. We will be working to compile the different requirements that are set forth by different municipalities, the testing opportunities in different places, and some training programs with community colleges and technical colleges. Also, we are working on a design to include equity zones in our decisions for funding with a pilot program that

we were going to assist communities in coming up with their local match for a federal grant program called Assistance to Firefighter's Grant. However, it may be pushed to 2025 to fit within our recommended budget. Our internal departmental DEI group took a pause, but this morning I set up a schedule for us to meet throughout the first half of 2024. The forecast has been completed and submitted to Lenora, and the equity scorecard is in progress.

- ii. Paul Herdeg- I am co-chairing a work stream within a national science foundation's, Engines of Innovations Grant. It is the talent and workforce workstream. The connection with equity is, the federal funding that is supporting this grant has very explicit indications that equity is an important part of the work. It is led by people at Case Western Reserve University. We are trying to identify ways Northeast Ohio can be more of a center of innovation in manufacturing. The workstream I have been asked to help with is specifically identifying ways we can increase the availability of skilled and trained workers as well as innovators. We are doing this with an equity lens, so I'm happy to either directly or through Vaughn, give updates on this at future meetings. Recently, I was tapped by the County Executive to attend a meeting tomorrow. They will be doing work with the Center for Economic Inclusion. There is a strong focus on equity and economic development at play here. The final thing I want to mention is that I had the opportunity to work with our workforce funders group which does many things. Among these things, it has been providing some oversight to efforts to increase representation in the IT sector and in the STEM occupations. We are addressing the fact that many non-white persons are not well represented in these occupations and while that work has encountered some challenges, we have made some progress in developing ways for persons from disadvantaged backgrounds to be more involved in these high-tech occupations.
- iii. Sarah Nemastil- In the Executive proposed bi-annual budget for HR, are funds to procure a text analyzer software. It is software that will analyze our job postings, position descriptions, and other county documents to ensure the language used is inclusive. HR and PRC will use the software. In addition, funds for HR consulting were included in the budget, we plan to use a portion of these funds to conduct a pay equity study for non-bargaining employees and develop a compensation philosophy that the County will apply moving forward. Also, we plan to introduce legislation in short order that will expand the County's current paid-parental leave policy. County Executive is really excited about this initiative, not only will it expand the eligibility criteria, but it will also expand the duration of the paid leave benefit. In 2024 we will be conducting Civil Treatment mandatory training for all county employees. Seven people will be trained by Civil Treatment to train the trainer. We hope this initiative will help promote inclusivity and equity throughout the organization. Our internal DE&I committee in HR attended a DE&I conference presented by Engage Cleveland in October. It addressed the importance of DE&I, provided insight for supporting initiatives in an organization, and fostering inclusivity. One of the presentations at that conference was focused on maximizing the impact of employee resource groups. So, our DE&I committee has committed to using the education and material they obtained at this conference to establish ERG's throughout the county in 2024. Our committee conducted its third panel discussion on November 3rd, in our Can We Talk Conversation. We discussed food insecurity specific to Cuyahoga County. In preparation for that conversation several members of our team volunteered at the Greater Cleveland Food Bank.

- iv. Lenora Lockett- We have been busy with advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion for Cuyahoga County. Over the last couple of months, we have been focused on training and capacity building within the workforce. We have teamed with Tri-C, HR, and Clerk Byrd's team. There were makeup sessions provided these past two months for the Town Halls. There were more than 292 employees who attended the makeup sessions. For the management sessions, there were makeup sessions for management session one and management session two, each had more than 80 participants. Our second component of our What's Next, our focus was Microaggressions and Mental Health. We provided five sessions, and more than 900 employees took part. Next year we will have Train the Trainer, we are collaborating with HR on DEI Town Hall sessions and for the DEI Leadership and Management Training.
- v. David Merriman- In the Department of Health and Human Services, we have had enormous transitions. We have had several people become Directors, we have also had a lot of turnovers this year. We are thinking right now is a time for reflection. We are all open to the idea that maybe we should be thinking of things differently and we should be looking at our services. There is a commitment to wanting to follow through with projects that were begun, but also this is a point for us to think are we doing the right thing, should we be doing things differently? We will all be developing action plans that will have some clear intent of what we want to see accomplished in 2024. I am open to how those action plans in these transitions will have an impact on what DHS does with equity and inclusion, for myself as well, the work that I do and my approach. I have been doing this job now since December of '19, I am still learning and figuring it out. We have continued with our work group, DHHS DEI Steering Committee. I think their most recent experience was a crucial conversation series, these continue to be popular with our staff. There is an impact on individuals when they start to think differently and feel comfortable expressing their positions. I think it is going to be something we see more of next year and hopefully that will continue to inform the policies of our agencies and our departments as well as our youth. In October Chris Ronayne, the team from DHHS, and I had the opportunity to visit Hennepin County which is in Minneapolis, MN. We went to Hennepin largely to look at the work they are doing as it relates to child welfare. We are really focusing on child welfare and what Hennepin is doing as it relates to the issues generally referred to as the placement crisis and sometimes considered the kids in the building issues. Like us, they have a relationship with the state and the federal government, where much of the work gets done by county employees. I feel they are our best peer, in some ways Hennepin structure is more like ours, and they are also probably our best role model. They are extremely mature as an organization, despite having only 30,000 more residents than us there were approximately double the size of our staff and have very intentional practices. They have a very clear commitment to disparity reduction. I saw a different approach to equity and inclusion, and they may be ten years ahead of us on their journey to look at this area. I would like to give it some thought, maybe bring to a 2024 Equity Commission our feedback from the work they are doing, what we took from their experience, their presentation. Their DEI director presented to Chris and me, it was very profound and impactful. I would like to get on the schedule for next year to be able to share more about that experience.

V. "How to do business" Event (October 2023)- Development

- i. Paul Herdeg- Greetings from Vaughn, he is in Columbus taking an advanced economic development course but will continue to be the normal representative. One of the things Vaughn had been working on as part of his broad mission of supporting small business, but especially minority owned small businesses, was working to better connect small businesses with the major purchase of goods and services. Not just the County itself, but other major organizations. Vaugh was able to arrange for a significant presence at an event the Cleveland Clinic held a few months ago for suppliers. Doug was one of the key people working with Vaughn to make that happen. Doug has prepared a presentation. I want you to know too, Doug is one of our key people in the Skill Up program which, even though will be transitioning to funding from a different source next year, the spirit of Skill Up and supporting incumbent worker training will very much continue. I want to recognize the great work Doug has done over the years in Skill Up.
 - ii. Doug Cantlay- Presented a power point (attached) on the event.
- VI. Closing Remarks
- i. Lenora Lockett- Thank you Development for offering a good topic on another area that shows what is occurring in the environment outside the County and showing that there are other entities that are focusing on diversity, equity, and inclusion. At present, our key focus is complying with the annual equity report. To maximize the impact, we need not only a bottom up, but also, a top-down approach. In response to the comments from the last meeting, we are assigning Contract Compliance Officers by departments (to assist with equity report). So, once we have the first draft, those departments will hear from their Contract Compliance Officer on any data or clarity that is needed. We are looking to have final reports by December 22nd. We are looking to have that submitted to the Executive for their final review, and Communications who will bring life to the report. Our next meeting for the Equity Commission is in February. In January, we have the commitment to do the disparity study, so we will be issuing that major RFP.
 - ii. Sarah Nemastil- Thank you Paul and Doug for your presentation, it is always neat to learn what the different departments are doing in the County to advance these initiatives. Thank you, Lenora, for assigning Contract Compliance Officers to help the departments, I think that would be great. Last, but not least, since we last met, Lenora was the recipient of the WTS Northeast Ohio Rosa Parks Diversity Leadership Award. Congratulations!
 - iii. Paul Herdeg- Looking around the table at what departments are here and can represent the integrated development cluster. I will be thinking about and talking with Vaughn about ways in future meetings, we can try to rent some content from the whole integrated development world.
 - iv. Jill Smialek - It is the time for reflection and there's been so many changes throughout 2023 and we're heading into '24 with new team members, some new leaders, and new budgets, I think it's a really good time to be intentional about DEI approaches.
 - v. David Merriman - As I walked Hennepin with Chris Ronayne, we literally walked parts of the county and we met with several city offices as well as multiple county offices, some of what struck me is our County Executive's sort of, on the ground approach and really asking us to really push and I think we all must take that to heart. I think this year has been a transition year for many of us and I expect next year to be extremely active. I will be pushing

my staff and my teams, and I hope to be pushed. As we all do this work together, the key is communication, to be able to talk to people and hear feedback and some ideas. Not just from your normal sources. I'm really looking forward to the next year. Thank you!

VII. Adjourn (10:57 am)

Next Scheduled Meeting: February 15, 2024 at 10:00am