



CUYAHOGA COUNTY CITIZENS' ADVISORY COUNCIL ON EQUITY

Monday, August 31, 2020 Minutes

I. Call to Order

Nailah K. Byrd called the meeting to order at 3:06 PM.

II. Roll Call

Councilmembers Taylor, Wright, Stokes, Ruiz, Caviness, Mockabee, McShepard, Pierce Lee, Harris, Chalker, Caruso, Ross, and Sims present as roll called by Nailah K. Byrd.

Councilmembers Sydnor, Gullet, and Grimes also joined the meeting.

Councilmember Contreras was absent from the meeting due to a family emergency.

III. Moment of Silence and Reflection

Councilmembers reflected on the tragic death of Elijah McClain.

IV. Public Comment

Public comment submitted by Phyllis Benjamin. Comment distributed to the members and read into the record. Ms. Benjamin requested to be informed of the meetings and to receive contact information to stay informed as committee members plan their strategies.

V. Message from County Executive

County Executive Budish thanked the members for their involvement. He reminded the Council of the time commitment he requested and was made by the councilmembers. He explained the Council is a working council.

VI. Unfinished Business

a. Governance Discussion

Ms. Byrd reminded members Eddie Taylor volunteered to Chair the Council and thanked him for his work. She also reminded the group of Chair Taylor's request for a co-chair.

The councilmembers discussed the selection of a co-chair or vice-chair.

Member Chalker offered his assistance with the process but expressed concern regarding the optics of having an older white male in the role.



Member Stokes recommended having a female and/or Hispanic serve as the co-chair or vice-chair.

A co-chair and/or vice chair was not selected. Chair Taylor suggested deciding at a later time and the members agreed. The topic was tabled until the next meeting.

i. Bylaws

Assistant Law Director Awatef Assad was present for the meeting. Bylaws have been drafted, but not yet finalized. The councilmembers will receive a draft soon and were asked to review them prior to the next meeting.

b. Subcommittee Discussion

The councilmembers discussed the need for additional subcommittees and how the subcommittees will be structured.

The councilmembers were reminded of the focus areas outlined in R2020-0122 and the priorities identified during their confirmation hearings.

Chair Taylor indicated Dr. Hovmand will address a systems analysis later in the meeting, but asked the councilmembers to identify their top priorities.

Member McShepard discussed county policy as foundational to the Council's work. He identified economic equity and adult/juvenile justice as critical areas.

Member Wright identified economic equity as a thread throughout the categories. She requested more clarity as to the specifics and intention of the area.

Member Stokes discussed the County's hiring practices as an area of focus. Specifically examining how to increase diversity and inclusion in the hiring processes.

Member Mockabee suggested economic equity as a mission vision north star and looking at the pillars connected to it.

Member Harris expressed the need to look at the interconnectivity.

Chair Taylor explained the importance of looking at the interconnectivity, but that they must have a product.



Members also identified healthcare as another topic to prioritize.

Member Grimes identified educational inequities as a priority.

Member Caviness identified the top three areas as economic equity, health care, and the justice system.

Chair Taylor encouraged the Council to identify a theme and key influencers for the direction in which they want to proceed.

Member Ruiz stated the mapping could influence their decision making.

c. Additional Voices

The councilmembers discussed how to engage community representatives and community organizations in the Council's work. Nailah Byrd heard from individuals interested in engaging in the Council's work. Will Tarter from the Center for Community Solutions has requested to provide testimony to the Council. Phyllis Benjamin, who submitted public comment, also reached out to Nailah Byrd separately offering her assistance. The Council previously discussed involving Peggy Zone and her work with the Diversity Center.

Ms. Byrd asked how the Council would like to engage individuals.

Member Pierce Lee requested additional clarity from the mapping and to then identify the areas the individuals can assist.

Member Harris recommended using the resources to assist in communicating information.

Chair Taylor asked councilmembers if they are okay with hearing testimony. Councilmembers were in agreement testimony was important and to provide opportunities for individuals to address the Council.

VII. New Business

a. Update/Message from Chair

No update as Chair Taylor provided comments throughout the meeting.

b. Report from Systems Discussion with Dr. Peter Hovmand

Dr. Peter Hovmand, a PhD, MSW who works at Case Western Reserve University, was present during the call. Dr. Hovmand's work focuses on social systems designs. Member Gullet previously discussed Dr. Hovmand's work during the August 11, 2020 Meeting.



Dr. Hovmand introduced himself and provided background on his work illustrating how systems work together to impact outcomes.

Member Gullet provided additional information on how Dr. Hovmand's work can frame the Council's work. She indicated systems thinking and mapping can serve as a tool to improve equity and provide recommendations to make transformative change. The mapping can serve as a tool to increase efficiency and provide guidance on the Council's focus.

Chair Taylor indicated the systems map will be important in framing work and asked if councilmembers had any questions.

Member Ruiz requested an example from Dr. Hovmand. Member Harris asked if additional information about systems mapping can be provided so the Council and the community can learn more.

Dr. Hovmand offered to provide examples and additional information regarding systems engagement.

Member McShepard asked if County officials would be included in the information gathering. Dr. Hovmand said that is possible and the members can provide guidance on the direction.

Member Gullet shared information gathering sessions are already planned as part of Dr. Hovmand's work.

Member Caviness requested clarification on Dr. Hovmand's work plan and Dr. Hovmand explained methodology options.

Member Gullet explained Dr. Hovmand has committed his expertise to the process of moving the work of the Council forward.

Member Caruso requested the video and Dr. Hovmand shared the link.

Member McShepard asked where the work begins and Dr. Hovmand explained presentations and testimony can be incorporated into his work and he can reflect and report back at the next meeting.

Member McShepard suggested gathering insight of senior County officials and Member Stokes agreed with the recommendation.



Member Mockabee expressed concern regarding focusing on what is being done now versus identifying what practices and policies are contributing to institutional racism and how can they be corrected.

Chair Taylor agreed gaps are real and the Council needs to address those gaps. He also believes the County has made advancements but may be helpful to see where they want to go.

Member Stokes recommended a small ad-hoc committee to look at the work being done by the County.

Ms. Byrd offered assistance in setting up meetings. Chair Taylor assigned Members McShepard and Mockabee to lead the work. Members Caviness and Pierce Lee indicated they would like to be involved in the listening sessions.

Chair Taylor requested providing notice to all members so they can choose to join the sessions.

Members Mockabee and McShepard will work with Ms. Byrd to determine who they will speak with. Ms. Byrd will coordinate a call later in the week to further discuss.

Chair Taylor indicated the Council will look internally and externally to guide Dr. Hovmand's work.

Member Gullet suggested including Executive Budish's global perspective and Executive Budish agreed to assist.

Chair Taylor indicated he intends to ask other members to assist him in reviewing policies.

Member Mockabee requested clarification on whether work will be primarily focused on infrastructure of the county or the infrastructure of the county and community systems. Chair Taylor directed the Council to the legislation and requested guidance from the Council. Ms. Byrd explained this Council would look outward and Executive Budish explained the legislation created two bodies including an internal commission to look inward.

Member Sydnor asked how the Council plans to work with similar groups tasked with examining racial equity. Members discussed how to share information.

Member Ross suggested reaching out to users of County services and consumers of businesses.

Chair Taylor summarized the discussion and indicated he will reach out to the Council members with requests.



c. Subcommittee Reports

i. Community Outreach Subcommittee

The Communications Subcommittee met on Thursday August 27th. The meeting was attended by Nailah K. Byrd, Eliza Wing (Communications Director for Cuyahoga County), as well as, councilmembers Phyllis Harris, LeVine Ross, Habeebah Grimes, and Victor Ruiz.

The subcommittee discussed focusing on what other communities, cities, municipalities are doing in this space and what their communication plans are. They also discussed the need for a mission statement. During the meeting, Phyllis Harris agreed to Chair the subcommittee.

Subcommittee Chair Harris explained the meeting set a framework of how they would like to communicate the Council's work and how the Council can be transparent and build trust.

A doodle poll has been distributed to schedule the next subcommittee meeting the week of September 7th.

Mr. Ruiz discussed his request to have County staff/resources available to assist with Council's work.

Members discussed their belief the Council was moving in the right direction.

d. Discuss Plan for Report Drafting

Ms. Byrd discussed the reports the Council is responsible for drafting. A status report is due by December 31st regarding Resolution R2020-0122. A semi-annual report regarding recommendations for policies and programs is also required.

Chair Taylor will be the first to present to County Council and requested another member to join him. He will determine when County Council meets next. Each member will be asked to present to Council in the future.

The members discussed the two reports and requested clarification on the reporting expectations. Assistant Law Director offered to research the legislation's expectations and get back to the Council.

Chair Taylor and Ms. Byrd will look at the Cuyahoga County Council schedule to determine the councilmembers availability to present an update.



VIII. Next meeting

A doodle poll will be distributed to determine availability for September 24th and September 25th.

IX. Adjournment

Prior to adjournment Nailah K. Byrd provided councilmembers information regarding a 12 week course on racial equity being provided by the University of Akron's Law School. The course will take place virtually on Wednesday's from 5:30 PM – 6:30 PM from September 2nd to November 18th. Ms. Byrd has enrolled in the course and offered to update the group if relevant information is discussed.

Chair Taylor requested volunteers to assist writing the report. Member Caviness volunteered. Dr. Gullett expressed hesitancy to lead the effort but offered assistance, as did councilmembers Chalker and Mockabee.

Member McShepard encouraged the Council to focus their efforts on Cuyahoga County government. Member Gullett indicated the larger context may be illustrated by the mapping. Executive Budish emphasized the importance of coordinated recommendations to ensure results.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:54 PM.