



MEETING MINUTES  
CUYAHOGA COUNTY CITIZENS' ADVISORY COUNCIL ON EQUITY  
Monday November 30, 2020  
3:00 PM – 5:00 PM

**I. Call to Order**

Nailah K. Byrd called the meeting to order at 3:03 p.m.

**II. Roll Call**

Present – Eddie Taylor, Stephen Caviness, Heidi Gullett, Randell McShepard, Habeebah Rasheed Grimes, Phyllis Seven Harris, Rev. Kenneth Chalker, Rabbi Joshua Caruso, LeVine Ross, Yanela Sims, Victor Ruiz, Sheila Wright, India Lee, Danielle Sydnor, and, Marsha Mockabee, Quorum present.

Excused absence – Cordell Stokes, Jenice Contreras

**III. Moment of Silence and Reflection**

Clerk Byrd convened a moment of silence to reflect upon the roughly 25 percent of CMSD kindergarteners who had at least one blood test revealing elevated lead levels. According to a report published by Case Western Reserve University in 2019, children in neighborhoods with poor housing stock, were disproportionately affected by lead exposure. The study revealed higher elevated blood level proportions observable among children on the eastern side of Cleveland and lower rates among children on the western side of Cleveland. Based on demographic data, the differences in elevated lead blood levels are clearly tied to racial disparities. Lead exposure is concentrated in areas of disinvested neighborhoods, historically tied to segregation, redlining, and subprime lending. The lead crisis is affecting our black children at a much higher number than our white children.

The Case Western Reserve University study also confirmed negative conditions associated with lead poisoning follow these children into adulthood. Elevated blood lead levels lead to a host of harmful outcomes for young people in education, behavior, and health. These “downstream” consequences can also include increased involvement with the juvenile justice system, adult incarceration, reliance on public assistance programs, and homelessness, according to the study.



#### **IV. Public Comment**

One public comment was submitted via email to [equity@cuyahogacounty.us](mailto:equity@cuyahogacounty.us) . Clerk Byrd's staff forwarded the email to all the CACE's members.

Members of Clerk Byrd's staff acknowledge receipt of each comment received via return email and Chair Taylor and Clerk Byrd meet with everyone who requests a meeting.

A follow up discussion with Chair Taylor and Clerk Byrd is planned with the organization.

#### **V. Message from County Executive**

Executive Budish remarked, this year has presented some rough times for all of us. Must take holidays like Thanksgiving to try to create some normalcy.

Executive Budish thanked the CACE for their efforts and hard work addressing structural racism in the community. Executive Budish further stated "We can't make change unless we take a hard look at what is going on both in County Government and in the County generally. I know this committee is taking that hard look."

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

Chair Taylor stated he would like to save as much time as possible to discuss subcommittee reports. He thanked the CACE members for their time attending various meetings and their efforts to date.

He indicated various discussions occurred with concerned community members. Dozens of interviews were conducted, and preliminary findings were collected. Chair Taylor reminded the CACE of the report deadline.

#### **VII. Unfinished Business**

##### **a. Governance Discussion – Bylaws**

Prior to the meeting, the bylaws were circulated to the CACE members for their review and revisions.



During the November 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting, Ms. Nelson Moore was asked if the bylaws must be ratified in a public meeting. Ms. Nelson Moore advised the by-laws should be accepted during a public meeting.

Ms. Nelson Moore was also asked if County Council appointees are available for reappointment and advised the Council appointees are eligible for reappointment if they express a desire for continued service. Clerk Byrd will reach out to all who have a one-year term to see if there is interest in being reappointed for a three-year term.

Language regarding reappointments is incorporated into the bylaws.

Member McShepard discussed item five and seven on page which appeared redundant. He asked if the items could be blended.

Ms. Moore believed there was overlap and the language could be updated to reflect and combine the two items.

Member McShepard also requested language regarding the CACE meeting to “conduct business” and provide a forum for the public be added to the bylaws.

Clerk Byrd deferred to the CACE on approval to add the language. The CACE members agreed.

Ms. Moore stated, the Governor issued another executive order permitting virtual meetings. H.B. 404 extends the ability to hold virtual meetings through July 2021.

Member Gullett discussed an inconsistency in the bylaws. Page two article two section one of the bylaws states, “County Executive shall appoint *15 County residents*” but the website for the CACE indicates residency of the county is not a requirement to become a member.

Executive Budish explained the inconsistency. He provided the history of the legislation and explained when it initially passed citizens did not have to be residents. The Ordinance may be amended to include language to say members do not need to be a resident.

Clerk Byrd requested a motion to accept the bylaws. A motion to accept the bylaws with the changes discussed was made by Member Sydnor. The motion was seconded by Member Mockabee. There was no further discussion and the motion passed unanimously.



## **VIII. New Business**

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

Prior to the meeting the minutes of prior meetings were distributed for the CACE's review.

Clerk Byrd requested a motion to approve the minutes. A motion to accept the minutes was made by Member Chalker. The motion was seconded by Member McShepard. There was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

### **b. Discussion re Disparity Study**

Chair Taylor stated the study was important and confirms there are disparities that exist with people of color and women. The report will inform the CACE's discussion and writing going forward. He indicated the study gives the County Executive and the County Council more ammunition to make changes that can make a difference in the lives of people attempting to do business with the County.

Member Sydnor asked if there would be value in the group having an opportunity to engage with the authors of the study. She wondered what value could be derived from engaging with them directly?

Executive Budish provided background to the members. He explained the study is conducted every five years and forms a basis of what the County can do as a government entity. He also discussed the cost to bring the firm in to discuss.

Chair Taylor inquired if the firm would be willing to have a thirty-minute discussion on the telephone and asked if someone could reach out to the firm to have the initial exploratory conversation.

Member Sydnor reiterated she would like to hear the firm's perspective of items that may not have made it into the document.

Executive Budish will inquire and ask those questions.



### **c. Subcommittee Chair Reports**

#### **i. Communications Subcommittee**

Subcommittee Chair Harris stated the communication effort is growing and improving. The Communication Subcommittee met on November 20, 2020 and looked at updates to the website.

She explained there will be a survey provided to the public on the website similar to the follow up survey provided to the Community Conversation attendees.

#### **ii. Equitable Quality of Life Subcommittee**

Subcommittee Chair McShepard thanked committee members, Chair Taylor, and others who have participated in the many conversations. He explained his subcommittee met with officials from RTA, Chief Economic Opportunity Officer Ted Carter, and Health and Human Service Leaders.

Member McShepard explained he also attended a meeting with the Director of Northeast Council Commission for the Homeless (NEOCH). The meeting illuminated the many different aspects of how the County touches the homeless. He indicated a conversation is set for later in the week with the Fair Housing Working Group.

Chair McShepard provided an overview of the discussion with the Director of NEOCH regarding tenant rights, the criminalization of the homeless, and a Bill of Rights for the homeless.

#### **iii. Criminal Justice Subcommittee**

Subcommittee Chair Pierce Lee provided a summary of her subcommittee's work. The committee conducted interviews with Judge Thomas O'Malley, Deputy Chief County Prosecutor Michael O'Malley, Sheriff David Schilling, and Deputy Chief Bryan Smith. The subcommittee believes systems are disconnected from each other. Subcommittee Chair Pierce- Lee indicated the challenge is going to be where to start bridging the services. She explained her subcommittee will meet December 2, 2020 to discuss themes and areas of focus. The subcommittee also met with Legal Aid to discuss the work Legal Aid is doing not just from a criminal side but also from the civil side.



#### **iv. Health and Healthcare Subcommittee**

Subcommittee Chair Gullett stated the committee has concluded all scheduled interviews. The Committee discussed interviewing the CEO's of the five health systems in Cuyahoga County and attempted to schedule with one CEO but was unsuccessful. She recommended revisiting the interviews after the first of the year given the COVID 19 surge.

As part of the county health improvement plan, Subcommittee Chair Gullett met with all hospital leaders. She indicated there is an aligned strategy between the Health Department, United Way, several social service agencies, and all five hospital systems. There is a commitment to eliminate structural racism in Cuyahoga County. Her committee has received updates on the activities at the hospital system including declarations of racism as public health crisis and efforts made over the course of 2020.

Subcommittee Chair Gullett identified how the subcommittees are discussing themes in the data collected. Health seems to be a common in all reports. She mentioned possibly focusing energy on policy levers to be impactful in multiple subcommittee areas.

She further explained attending a meeting on November 30, 2020 with the Core Model Building Team which is working on a community health improvement plan.

Member Chalker asked if the committee will have any input on how the COVID vaccine will be distributed to people in the community who do not have access? Will the equity issue count them out?

Subcommittee Chair Gullett explained equity has been a driver for how Board of Health has managed COVID 19 response and testing. The Equity Advisory Team within the County meets regularly. She explained there are fixed sites conducting testing and will provide the vaccine once available. The Board of Health is awaiting guidance from the State of Ohio to decide who gets the vaccine first.

#### **v. Economic Opportunity Subcommittee**

Subcommittee Chair Caviness thanked fellow council members, Clerk Nailah K. Byrd, Laura Black, and other subcommittee chairs for helping to schedule the meetings expeditiously. He indicated there are themes surrounding where the County is concerning equity. He stated some departments are further along than others in terms of awareness of equity and there are positive elements happening at the County level.



He discussed current questions such as: What are current leadership ideas? How can leadership be empowered or enabled to increase the positive work trying to be accomplished?

His subcommittee plans to schedule a meeting the week of November 30, 2020.

Member Sydnor asked, how can current systems be evaluated to show equity is already built into the system? She stated power of committee can be to figure out how to drive the County and other systems to think about coalition, to have better communication with residence and service providers to ensure equity happens across all different systems.

Chair Taylor stated the comments added by member Sydnor are exactly what the committee needs to be mindful of moving forward.

Member Harris requested for Member Grimes to speak to the input she received surrounding youth in the County. Member Harris also indicated Executive Budish offered his assistance and is creating a format for young people to participate and provide insight.

Member Grimes explained a key organization missing is the school districts which could help to amplify youth voices. She expressed there is an absence of school accountability and interaction with County Government.

Member Mockabee shared with the Council members the Urban League is establishing an Institute of Equity and Excellence in Education beginning in January. The Urban League is working with the State Superintendent and CMSD, and four other school districts. They will also launch a "My Brother's Keeper and Saving our Daughters" initiative with the Cleveland Cavaliers.

Member Wright added the committees need to think about how to leverage their personal areas of expertise to support the County and think about predictors in terms of equity and how to allocate resources. She indicated there are areas in the County that do not have anchors and are not receiving a lot of investment such as Garfield Heights. She would like to raise the awareness and be mindful of zip codes when it comes to equity.

Member Rabbi Caruso mentioned the committee needs to use discernment when trying to figure out what is missing. He stated the committee needs to find a way to merge play



books and there are a lot of departments with individual play books but may not communicate with other agencies.

Member Ruiz stated committees need to be mindful that the people who work at the County are also citizens of the County. What is the work that must happen in the County for the work to be successful outside the County?

Chair Taylor reminded the committee everyone is bringing a unique voice with the discussions.

Member Grimes asked the group if there were organizations, they should reach out to concerning youth. She mentioned the Education Service Center of Northeast Ohio and the Lake Erie Native American Council.

Chair Taylor stated those organizations will be added to the list.

Member McShepard asked if there are any glaring omissions of County leadership who should be interviewed.

Clerk Byrd will research the information to see if there are department leaders who should be interviewed and were overlooked.

**d. Update from Dr. Peter Hovmand re Systems Mapping**

Dr. Hovmand shared an overview of the evolving systems' map. He provided an overview of common themes across systems in terms of issues, County Government, and organizations.

**e. Update on Report Drafting**

Chair Taylor suggested subcommittee chairs should meet with committees and the writing should commence within the next week. Templates have been provided to the subcommittee chairs to manage expectations. The subcommittees should each have between one to ten pages in the completed report.





**IX. Next meeting**

The CACE will hold an hour-long meeting in December.

**X. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned 5:04 p.m.