



CUYAHOGA COUNTY CITIZENS' ADVISORY COUNCIL ON EQUITY  
Monday, September 12, 2022  
1:30 PM – 3:30 PM

**I. Call to Order**

Chair Taylor called the meeting to order at 1:40 PM.

Non-member meeting attendees included Educational Service Center (ESC) of Northeast Ohio Superintendent Bob Mengerink, and Assistant Superintendent Jennifer Dodd, Assistant Law Director Reid Stephan, County Council President Pernell Jones, Jr. (District 8), County Councilwoman Meredith Turner (District 9), William Tarter, Jr. from the Center for Community Solutions Inc., and Dr. Peter Hovmand from Case Western Reserve University.

**II. Roll Call**

In Attendance- Eddie Taylor, Annette Blackwell, Stephen Caviness, Habeebah Grimes, Marsha Mockabee, Dr. Charles Modlin, LeVine Ross, and Yanela Sims.

Excused Absence- Colleen Cotter, Rev. Kenneth Chalker, India Pierce- Lee, Jenice Contreras, Dr. Heidi Gullett, Randell McShepard, Glen Shumate, and Sheila Wright.

Member Modlin introduced himself. He is a Urologist & the Medical Director for the Office of Equity, Inclusion & Diversity for MetroHealth Hospital. For 28 years, he served as a Kidney Transplant Surgeon and Urologist at Cleveland Clinic.

Member Modlin is dedicated to improving the health of the community. Last April, he led the initiative to hold the 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Minority Men's Health Fair. The next health fair will be held on Thursday, April 27, 2023. In addition, MetroHealth is currently developing several clinical health equity centers designed to help tackle health disparities across all areas of medicine. Member Modlin also works to recruit



a more diverse and professional staff at MetroHealth while mentoring a number of students.

Member Modlin expressed his appreciation for the nomination and invitation to join the CACE.

### **III. Moment of Silence and Reflection**

Clerk Byrd encouraged the CACE to remain focused despite the injustices and inequities we all see and experience in our country, neighborhoods and communities. Her comments were followed by a brief moment of silent reflection.

Chair Taylor commented there is much going on in the world, but the CACE should continue to make changes, adjustments, and influence when and where possible.

Member Blackwell shared there was a police involved shooting in Maple Heights. The officer involved is currently on administrative leave. She also shared there have been protests at the Maple Heights City Hall. Member Blackwell added most people employed at Maple Heights Police Department do not look like her. However, the officer involved in the shooting is black and has a wife and two children who are terrified because they have been threatened. Member Blackwell asked the CACE to think of people in leadership roles who are making life altering decisions. Member Blackwell believes individuals need wisdom, support and grace to help them do the best job they can.

### **IV. Public Comment**

There were no public comments submitted via email to [equity@cuyahogacounty.us](mailto:equity@cuyahogacounty.us) since the July 2022 meeting. In addition, no public comments were received during the meeting.



Chair Taylor stated he believes public comments will increase once anticipated plans move forward. He added the CACE wants to hear from the public and welcomes their feedback.

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

Executive Budish shared the Cuyahoga County Division of Senior and Adult Services (DSAS) is beginning a new initiative called “Livable Cuyahoga- A Community for All Ages”. The goal is to improve the community for older Americans, outdoor spaces and buildings, transportation, communication and information, civic participation and employment, respect and social inclusion, health services and community support, social participation and housing.

The County has started projects in a number of these areas, including in the Division of Senior and Adult Services (DSAS) Program and Adult Protective Services. If someone is the victim of abuse or neglect, the County investigates and will take steps to resolve the issue. There are also programs in the Consumer Affairs Division including the newly created game SCAMO (based on the game BINGO) which is geared towards educating seniors about scams. Executive Budish stated housing is a big issue and the County is working with County Council on affordable Housing Projects. In addition, there are several programs focused on homelessness, such as the Options for Living program which provides necessary home health care and home health care aids. The program also sends people to homes to assist with home adaptations (grab bars, ramps, etc.).

Cuyahoga County wants to be a place where people can age in place, at home.

Member Modlin asked if the work highlighted will be linked into a Metrohealth initiative? Executive Budish was not certain of the answer to Member Modlin’s question, but shared Metrohealth has partnered with Cuyahoga County on many projects and he continues to welcome a partnership and involvement.

Member Mockabee asked Executive Budish about safety and security issues with respect to keeping seniors home and in place. She furthered, she receives complaints and concerns about safety and security from people living outside the home, or in



high-rise apartments. Executive Budish requested Member Mockabee provide anyone with those types of complaints the phone number to the DSAS.

Councilwoman Meredith Turner shared a card (attached) containing the contact information for the Division of Senior and Adult Services.

Member Blackwell thanked the County Executive for attending the groundbreaking for the new Senior Center in Maple Heights. Executive Budish invited everyone to visit the new Senior Center. Member Blackwell added it is also important to remember how valuable communication is to people living at home and not in a facility or center.

Cuyahoga County Council President Pernel Jones Jr. added there are still issues with the digital divide. He shared the County is adding services where a company will come to your church and help seniors gain computer access and training. He said, “every resident should have an expectation of having access to capital within their own community.”

Executive Budish added he and County Council President Jones have visited several new developments within the County for more affordable living for seniors and others.

Chair Taylor said the CACE has always elevated the good work of the County such as the work deriving from the disparity study, executive orders, the creation of the Cuyahoga County Department of Equity and Inclusion, etc. He offered the Executive an opportunity for thoughts or comments in response to current headlines regarding issues with children or ARPA funds.

Council President Jones shared he and Executive Budish met and discussed a framework for spending the ARPA money. According to Council President Jones, that conversation resulted in, among other things, an allocation of \$66 million dollars (roughly \$6 million per Councilperson) for Council communities to address issues caused by Covid. Council President Jones furthered, Council members proceeded to speak with each of their district Mayors to seek the needs of their communities. As a result of those conversations, Council received project proposal applications for some incredible projects. Council President Jones detailed how the proposed projects were vetted through Council meetings, and while the newspaper articles may not have been



positive in nature, Council President Jones was excited to see the projects selected listed in the newspaper and he is proud of the projects selected.

Councilwoman Meredith Turner thanked both Council President Jones and Executive Budish for their partnership on this issue. She shared how she met with each of the Mayors in her district and discussed their needs. According to Councilwoman Turner, there were no secret negotiations. She delivered on much of what was asked. Additionally, she still has funds remaining and has been attending the CACE meetings to receive feedback from the work and research of the CACE to see how she can utilize the remaining funds to potentially address the needs of the CACE.

Council President Jones shared when referencing Council's role in the use of the ARPA funds, the newspaper used terms like "slush fund". According to Council President Jones, the Prosecutor stated the action of the Council regarding the allocation of ARPA funds is not illegal. Council President believes County Council Members did not violate a single sunshine law; everything was done above board.

Executive Budish added if you look up "slush fund" in the dictionary, the definition discusses bribes and illegal efforts, which was not the case. The Executive stated no one on Council received a penny for their work regarding the ARPA Fund allocation; there were no bribes. Executive Budish reminded people of how public the County has been about ARPA dollars and the use of the funds; nothing was done in secret.

Chair Taylor shared Mayors he has spoken with have all said the process was all above board and they are grateful.

The County Executive shared the County is the final landing place for children to go when there is nowhere else. According to the Executive, children are at times dropped off at the Cuyahoga County Jane Edna Hunter building. County staff places approximately 90% of the children who according to Executive Budish, arrive at the Jane Edna Hunter building within hours. Executive Budish noted if children want to leave, per an opinion from the County Prosecutor, they can. Executive Budish shared the current issue with placing troubled youth is a national problem, and if the children are older and troubled, they are harder to place. However, according to Executive Budish, the County has developed a plan which includes efforts to protect the children



in the building and the staff by assigning a Deputy to the Jane Edna Hunter building 24 hours a day and by significantly increasing the pay of employees.

County Council President Jones reminded everyone these are abused and neglected children. President Jones shared he has been to the Jane Edna Hunter Building and met with social workers regarding the challenges they encounter.

The Executive shared details regarding two options the County is considering: Option 1- The Christian Home in partnership with the Centers for Families and Children, would accept County children without eject or reject options. That contract will be on an upcoming County Council agenda. Option 2- The County will create a youth diversion program to keep children out of the criminal justice system, similar to the adult diversion program.

Chair Taylor said the best outcome is for the communities intended to be served are served.

Chair Taylor added Member Grimes and other CACE members will discuss CACE funding from operating (not ARPA). We have a duty and an obligation to discuss the use of funding in doing this work.

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

Chair Taylor shared he and the CACE Subcommittee Chair Members Grimes and Caviness recently met with the Cuyahoga County Internal Equity Commission. The Internal Equity Commission is comprised of 5 County leaders in various areas including, Director of Health and Human Services David Merriman, Department of Equity and Inclusion Director Lenora Lockett, Public Safety and Justice Services Director Brandy Carney, Director of Economic Development Paul Herdeg, and Interim Chief Human Resources Officer Sheba Marshall.

Economic Opportunity Subcommittee Chair Caviness shared his thoughts on the importance of this meeting. He believes everyone is pouring their heart into this work. There was brief discussion regarding the upcoming change in County administration. Based on the discussion, Member Caviness believes if the work of CACE is well



documented, this work will remain intact as we move forward. He plans to continue working with Director Lockett and Director Herdeg as related to Economic Opportunities. Member Caviness envisions the CACE and Equity Commission developing a meeting cadence and the CACE beginning to serve as an advisory to the Commission.

Communication Subcommittee Chair Grimes shared her thoughts on the meeting. She believes the culture being built inside County government will sustain the work of the CACE. In addition, according to Member Grimes, the exemplary work Director Lockett has done could serve as a model for other municipalities and public systems. She is hopeful the CACE and Equity Commission can establish a meeting cadence.

During the aforementioned meeting, Director Merriman also expressed his significant concerns for the children residing in the Jane Edna Hunter building. Member Grimes recognizes this is not a new situation, but these circumstances for young people have root causes. She hopes as we work to stabilize care for the children, we also recognize there is a thread of common challenges amongst the children including adversity and trauma. She believes Cuyahoga County has an excellent infrastructure, but it is underutilized. She also believes collaboration and partnership are not maximal.

Member Mockabee shared she is co-leading the work along with Helen Forbes Fields at the City of Cleveland. Member Mockabee shared this is a good time to discuss additional collaboration possibilities across the City and the County. According to Member Mockabee, the City of Cleveland also has an internal structure designed similar to the CACE, and although activities are moving forward with solutions and their meetings are not public, they do have a strong community engagement plan.

Chair Taylor thanked Member Mockabee for her comments and noted he would like to pursue planning a meeting with the City of Cleveland group.

Council President Jones added the issue is upstream. According to Council President Jones, systemic racism has pushed back our community and hindered our capacity to move forward. Council President Jones questioned how we create an environment where everyone can be successful. Council President Jones noted he worked diligently with Member Mockabee on closing the achievement gap by engaging youth and





implementing innovative ideas such as placing mentors in schools, offering tutoring, providing opportunities to attend Black College Tours, etc.

Executive Budish thanked the CACE for meeting with the Internal Equity Commission. He hopes those meetings continue. He shared in general, the County does not oversee education; nonetheless, the County recognized the importance of education. According to the Executive, the County helped to double enrollment of high-quality Pre-K programs, and the County is working with the City of Cleveland on their Say Yes Program.

## **VII. New Business**

### **a. Presentation from Educational Service Center (ESC) of Northeast Ohio**

Educational Service Center (ESC) of Northeast Ohio Superintendent Bob Mengerink and Assistant Superintendent Jennifer Dodd presented, with the use of a Power Point presentation, on the work of their organization and their view of the current status of education across Northeast Ohio.

Chair Taylor shared the CACE has formally opposed Ohio House Bills 322 and 327. Chair Taylor asked if there is validity to these concerns related to both equity or critical race theory? Dr. Mengerink stated he does not believe there is any validity. He shared generally; critical race theory has become a problem in the white suburban districts.

Dr. Dodd shared she believes House Bills 322 and 327 will fall off by the wayside; however, she said House Bill 616 is a bill we should monitor.

Member Modlin shared his experience with divisive concepts in the Shaker Heights School District. He asked if the presenters had heard of certain school districts eliminating advanced placement and honors courses. Dr. Dodd responded she had not heard of districts making those changes because of equity. She was not sure where districts landed regarding any further actions.

Member Blackwell shared she visited the ESC center with the Maple Heights School Superintendent. According to Member Blackwell, the ESC program is an economic





development initiative, quality-of-life initiative, and addresses youth violence. She added Maple Heights School District has a 97% graduation rate. She also shared the importance of involvement and joining the fight for education alongside educators.

Dr. Mengerink provided some insight into school boards and their membership requirements. He is concerned people are running for these positions for the wrong reasons.

Dr. Mengerink shared he recently attended a Superintendents roundtable and he asked what the most challenging thing currently facing schools. According to Dr. Mengerink, the most encouraging response for him was hearing people say they had a great start to a new school year. He said that was because school superintendents are dealing with the students and children. Dr. Mengerink added, "If you get the parents and the adults out of the way, students will do really well."

Dr. Dodd will provide information on House Bill 616 for distribution to the CACE.

Member Grimes shared there was a portion of the bill that restricted what schools could do in support of LGBTQ community. She believes the inclusion of such statements deepens the tragedy of the bill. She asked if that language was still in the bill. Dr. Dodd responded she would need to go back and look to answer the question.

Chair Taylor thanked the presenters and asked them to share their thoughts on HB 616 when they provide additional information on the bill.

Dr. Mengerink thanked the CACE for their invitation to the meeting and for their work, specifically regarding the CACE's resolution regarding pending legislation.

## **b. CACE Funding**

Chair Taylor shared the CACE was approved a \$500,000 allocation. The CACE Subcommittee Chairs and any other members who want to join will discuss and strategize the use and deployment of these funds. More information is forthcoming.



**c. CACE Community Forum**

Chair Taylor shared the County Executive suggested the CACE host a community forum similar to the Community conversations CACE previously hosted. Clerk Byrd added the content of the forum would be to discuss and share how the CACE began, where we are now and future plans. The forum would provide an opportunity to hear from the community. Chair Taylor said everyone will be invited to provide input as plans unfold.

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

Director Lockett shared the GARE survey closed on July 22<sup>nd</sup> and more than 40% of Employees responded. She expects a draft report from GARE by late September or early October. The final report will be disseminated within 30 days of receipt of the draft report.

Director Lockett also relayed the County is in the midst of the All-Staff Town Hall DEI training with Cuyahoga Community College. Employees completed Townhall one (titled “The Case for DEI in Cuyahoga County”), and we will soon begin Townhall two (titled “Increasing Self Awareness”), followed by Townhall 3 (titled “Improving Emotional IQ and Inclusivity”). Prior to the start of the All-Staff Town Hall DEI Trainings, more than 700 County Managers and leaders completed their training.

Director Lockett stated the Department of Equity and Inclusion completed internal webinars regarding Equity Zones, Map and Policy, the DEI Scorecard, and the Equity Assessment Tool.

Member Caviness asked if there was a way to conduct a case study regarding the Equity Zones. He gave an example if an award had been given, which otherwise would not have been given if it had not been for the equity zones. He shared it would be helpful to see examples of instances when or where the Equity Zones have worked. Director Lockett responded by sharing the Equity Zone Map was approved in February and Divisions are utilizing the Equity Zones. She could provide a summary outlining the three areas the Equity Zones have been utilized. Unfortunately, she



does not have data to show where projects were awarded based on the Equity Zones that would not have been previously awarded. However, Director Lockett has access to information related to scoring which could illuminate how the equity tool has been used, by whom and the associated scores, number of applicants and amount awarded. She also has data to show which projects were awarded that were not Equity Zones. She does not know if an awarded vendor/ organization would not have submitted a bid without the scoring. But she does have data to show what projects received those points and what percentage of them were in the awarding zone.

Chair Taylor stated this is great work and commended Director Lockett.

Chair Taylor shared a comment regarding his professional business experience with the County Procurement Process. According to Chair Taylor, the County was recently seeking a Risk Manager. The prior Risk Management company had a minority component. Chair Taylor's company and others submitted bids for this opportunity. A decision was made, and the County awarded the contract to a company with no office in Cuyahoga County, no employees in Cuyahoga County and no diversity component. The winning company's closest office is in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. Chair Taylor furthered that we want the County to hire the best; if we cannot find companies or organizations who are the best in or near this county, that is problematic.

#### **e. Systems Mapping Update**

Dr. Hovmand provided a PowerPoint presentation. He reviewed systems' map of visualization of regionalized equity related in health. A QR code was included for individual exploration. Chair Taylor said this is an example of how policies discussed are enacted, and the pursuit towards equity is attainable. Dr. Hovmand added, the goal of the systems' map is to help people focus on and appreciate equity, not just equality. Member Blackwell added the simulation map is the culmination of the work Director Lockett has been engaged in.



**f. Update on RFP for CACE Community Survey**

Member Grimes is working on the Community Survey. More information to come as progress continues.

**g. Subcommittee Chair Reports**

**i. Criminal Justice Subcommittee**

Subcommittee Chair Pierce-Lee was absent.

**ii. Health and Healthcare Subcommittee**

Subcommittee Chair Gullett was absent.

**iii. Equitable Quality of Life Subcommittee**

Subcommittee Chair McShepard was absent.

**iv. Economic Opportunity Subcommittee**

Subcommittee Chair Caviness provided a brief update. He shared the subcommittee continues to meet with the Cleveland Guardians Baseball Team Leadership related to three areas including stadium renovations, internal evaluations of contracts, employee wages and concessions. He is looking forward to building on this strong partnership and seeing the impact of positive adjustments implemented.

Chair Taylor thanked the Subcommittee and also thanked Cleveland Guardians Employee Neil Weiss for continuing these impactful efforts.



#### **v. Communications Subcommittee**

Subcommittee Chair Grimes provided a brief update. She first thanked Dr. Hovmand for his collaboration and partnership with the Communications Subcommittee. She also shared Dr. Hovmand has assisted the Communication Subcommittee on ways the CACE can share information with the community which would provide everyone an opportunity to understand how systems change can impact their immediate conditions.

The Communications Subcommittee is also reviewing 4 responses to the RFP for the CACE Community Survey.

#### **h. Miscellaneous Business**

Member Modlin shared his thoughts on the final comment made by Dr. Mengerink during his presentation. Member Modlin believed Dr. Mengerink, stated schools would be better off if the parents would get out of the way. Member Modlin was perturbed and disturbed and wanted the public to understand the CACE does not necessarily agree with what Dr. Mengerink said. Member Modlin shared he believes the CACE members can all agree children are better off when parents are involved with students.

Member Sims shared unfortunately there are some parents who fuel the fire. But as a parent, she is very much involved.

Council President Jones shared he believes we have to continue to resist the negativity and speak the truth. According to Council President Jones, we need parents in the lives of all our children; don't rationalize it or try to figure it out; instead reject it.

Member Sims added it is unfortunate, but next year it will be something else.

Member Blackwell shared she understood the comments from Dr. Mengerink to be expressed from a place of understanding how difficult it can be to see parents doing negative things, especially as a school board member.



Chair Taylor said we will work to get clarification from Dr. Mengerink.

Chair Taylor closed the meeting by thanking Council President for attending the meeting and again welcoming the newest CACE member Dr. Charles Modlin.

#### **VIII. GARE Update**

Due to time constraints Clerk Byrd will distribute the update to the CACE members via email.

#### **IX. Next meeting**

Because of an unknown conflict, the originally planned date of the next meeting will be changed. Once a date is confirmed, Clerk Byrd will send the CACE members an email.

#### **X. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 3:34 PM.