

**City of Hyattsville  
Race & Equity Task Force  
July 25, 2023  
Zoom  
Minutes**

**PRESENT**

**Task Force Members:**

- Co-Chair Alicia Sanchez Gill Freemyn (AF)
- Co-Chair Jennifer Gafford (JG)
- Record Keeper Secretary Jocelyn Medallo (JM)
- Member Daniel Amador (DA)

**Staff:**

- Race & Equity Officer Shakira Louimarre (SL)
- City Planner and Interim Director, City of Hyattsville Community and Economic Development Department, Holly Simmons (HS)
- Councilmember Edouard Haba (EH)

**Guests:**

- Marshall

**7:03 pm - Welcome & Call to Order – Co-Chair Freemyn**

**7:00 pm - 7:05 pm – Roll Call – Co-chair Gafford**

**7:05 pm - 7:10 pm – Acknowledgement of Guests– Co-chair Freemyn**

- Welcome to Holly Simmons, City Planner and Interim Director, City of Hyattsville  
Community and Economic Development Department and Councilmember  
Edouard Haba

**7:10 pm - 7:15 pm – Adoption of June Meeting Minutes- Co-chair Gafford**

- JM moves to approve; AF seconds

**7:15 pm -8:00 pm – Affordable Housing Section Presentation and Discussion– Co-chair**

Freemyn and Liaison Louimarre

- Director Simmons: I am the acting Director of Community and been in position for 3 months and with the City of Hyattsville for 8-9 months. The Dept has four primary functions:

- 1) economic development and community planning;
- 2) geospatial analysis and mapping;
- 3) business and rental licensing; and
- 4) housing policy, though we have not had a dedicated staff.

The plan is to bring in a Housing Manager for FY24. We have been undergoing a rent stabilization analysis at the direction of Council – what would rent stabilization in the City look like both in terms of administration of a program but also speaking to the various stakeholders’ needs and concerns? This was one of the recommendations coming out of the Housing Agenda that came out in 2021.

- Presentation slides (available [here](#))
  - Why Racial Equity Matters to Housing: 2019 Draft Equity Plan cites housing as one of the top issues for low to moderate income families in the City. Since the initial iteration, the 2022 Housing Action Plan has taken strides toward greater housing affordability.
  - Adequate housing is a human right and home ownership has been a pathway to generational wealth building, prosperity and inclusion. The history of racial disenfranchisement has created barriers to home ownership as well as the ability to access fair rental housing.
  - Snapshot of Housing Data for City of Hyattsville & Data on Hyattsville Housing Market (see slides)

- Data on “Cost Burden” in Hyattsville (see slides)
  - Nine out of ten households making less than 20,000 annually are cost-burdened and most of these households (73 percent) are severely cost-burdened.
  - Renters in Hyattsville are more likely to experience cost-burdens than homeowners with a mortgage.
  - Demographics: Latino residents are the primary driver for population growth. Latin residents account for 35 percent of total population share. Disproportionate share of Latino PGC residents live in Hyattsville.
  - The rates between homeownership for white, black, and Hispanic households has widened. Hispanic home ownership rate took a sharp decline from 59 percent to 28 percent.
- RETF Equity Plan
  - Assets: Hyattsville Housing Action Plan is the city’s guiding strategic plan for the next 10 years. Prince George’s County Comprehensive Housing Strategy begins to establish an affordable housing policy for the County through 2035. The City dispersed over 1.8 million on COVID-19 Household Emergency Relief. Notable service providers and partnerships Service providers and partnerships that serve residents in the community have existing programs. Cost-burdened renters have access to direct financial assistance through countywide and statewide programs, though the program is in high demand and there may be waiting lists. There are

also existing first-time homebuyer programs provided by the County. PGC adopted CB-007-2023, legislation establishing Rent Stabilization Act of 2023. There is a Housing Manager position that will build capacity across the City.

- Gaps: County sets affordable housing policy, but currently there are no affordable housing incentives or requirements for new developments in PGC. No ability to develop accessory dwelling or smaller units on existing lots. New single-family housing will be market driven and the community continues to be seen as a desirable market. The increase in annual property taxes puts them at risk for losing their home. Concern around house flippers targeting low-income.
- Next Steps:
  - Address priority housing needs regarding lack of rental units for low income families
  - Achieving housing outcome of creating deep affordability for low-income households
  - Lower housing cost-burdens
  - Add an affordable housing requirement for multi-family developments
  - Further advance rental regulations
- SL: Reiterate that a lot has changed since the initial Equity Draft Plan, so many recommendations are drawn from the Housing Plan and put a finer point on the recommendations that could be prioritized.

- DA: Participation and who is invited to participate – I serve on the development committee and there is a lot of ward 2 members, but not a lot of community members from other wards. How are our committees structured and to get more tactical – is there a requirement that allows for more diversified participation? Of the meetings we are presented with development projects when they are very late stage. Communities need to be engaged at multiple points.
  - Director Simmons: There were two recommendations for zoning and the City does development review. But when a development proposal comes in, we are limited as to what we can do as a municipality in PG County. The County is involved in reviewing and approving development proposal and they determine the timeline for review. But we as the City are well positioned to be an advocate. Typically the City is trying to get as much input as possible. The timeline provides restrictions on engagement.
  - SL: What does advocacy look like for the City to the County and on behalf of residents?
    - Director Simmons: If residents want to advocate, approaching the appropriate Committee can be the place to start to be put on the agenda. Then it's up to the Committee if they want to take it on and make a recommendation to Council. At the beginning of Council meetings, residents can also provide comments.
  - DA: Changing how County does things may be a long-term goal. Very difficult for people who are working to access information.

- Marshall: All Committees try to commit from all Wards but there is low participation from some parts of the City. I have been on the planning committee since early days but it has been a persistent issue to retain members from all wards. Almost all committee members are from Wards 1 and 2.
- EH: It is the goal of Committees to recruit from all Wards? What we can do as a City? That is tough. We don't have zoning authority so we can provide comments, like any entity, but the County gets to decide how they proceed. The County Council can tend to defer to County Council member from the area. We do have a tax credit in place that allows low income residents to access low income rental units. The City Treasurer is reviewing homeowner and rental credit.

#### **8:00 pm – 8:15 pm Culturally Inclusive Winter Holiday Decorations Discussion**

- SL: Requested RETF to send recommendations for culturally inclusive winter holiday decoration discussions. I will be gathering this in a document to share by August 10<sup>th</sup> for Department of Public Works to consider.
- Brainstorm: Yard signs using Hello Lamp Post software.
  - DA: Holiday tree that allows people to drop off their cultural ornament; inviting residents in different languages to record 30 second video on what the holiday season is for them
  - JG: House light decorating contest. Could we add an award that has an inclusive element to it? We could change name on “Claus Applause” to something more inclusive.

- EH: Add a category of inclusive decoration for the light decorating contest.

**8:15 – 8:25 pm Review of City Communications Design of Collateral for Outreach and Discussion**

- SL: Councilmember Denis committed to donating Ward funds for collateral outreach.  
Review draft designs on flyer and banner.
- AF: Choose a picture with diverse group of people. Should be in different languages.
- JM: Add language on stipend for Committee.

**8:25 pm – 8:30 pm – Community Comments**

- None

**8:35 pm – Adjourn Meeting – Co-Chair Gafford**

AF moves; DA seconds.

- Review of items on September's agenda
  - Transportation
  - Timeline for follow up in preparation for Council presentations