

City of Hyattsville
Race & Equity Task Force
April 27, 2021, 7:00 PM
Zoom
Minutes

Present:

Task Force Members:

- Chair Andrea Dargin
- Rodrigo Blanco
- Joanne Waszczak
- Malcolm Clarke
- LaToya Robinson

Council:

- Councilmember Daniel Peabody

Staff

- Administrator Tracey Douglas

Guests:

- Angela Justice
- Marshall Marshall
- Gina DeFerrari
- Jennifer Gafford

Members Absent:

- Monica Sharma

Meeting called to order at 7:03PM by chair Dargin

1. Welcome and Call to Order

Roll Call by Secretary Clarke

- Four committee members present, two* absent
 - o Member LaToya Robinson joined later

Departure of Committee Members

- Co-chair Stacie Whitesides and Member Ashleigh Brown-Grier resigned due to move from Hyattsville
- Jennifer Gafford in attendance as prospective new joiner to the committee

Review and Approval of Minutes from March 23, 2021 meeting

- Moved by JW, second by MC
- Approved unanimously

2. Green Owl Mural Project

Committee tasked with submitting names of Black artists to put on mural in Centennial Park
AJ: Green Owl working on mural project, and narrowed down options to 8 contenders, who have connection to DMV area

- Debbie Allen
- Lucille Clifton
- David Driskell
- Roger Wendell Hill
- Billie Holliday
- Toni Morrison
- Amy Shearlds
- Chadwick Boseman

Projected start date is May 17 to begin work on mural and will also likely solicit help from volunteers for some of the painting work. Second round of design to come and will keep committee informed. Second part of mural project is going to be in the former Magruder Park and expecting designs from artists now.

AD: Are these eight candidates going to be who is on there?

- AJ: Yes, but if you are especially interested in having someone on there, reach out to Angela or the committee. Will likely have 2 living artists on the mural, and would be nice to have them come to the ribbon cutting/reveal of the mural

TD: Mural has been a long time coming. Need to brief mural proposal scope to the council and see if any feedback or discussion is forthcoming.

RB: Understood that mural design stems from resolution for Black Lives passed by Mayor Hollingsworth, will there be anything saying why this is here and what is being communicated?

- AJ: Since mural is in the arts district, thought that design should have a connection to the arts, and to the greater DMV area.
- TD: Resolution sparked interest, but there is no direct connection to the resolution. Might be nice to do a placard or monument so that passerby can understand who these people are and their connection to the community.

JW: Will there be any chance for the community to participate in the painting of the mural?

- AJ: Centennial Park mural is painted on plywood and hung, and has held up really well, intend to do the same thing with this mural. For Magruder Park, thinking more of a opportunity for community involvement

3. Administrative Announcements/Debriefs

- Magruder Park Renaming

Council has narrowed the rename to two names, and there are some options that can include both names (David Driskell Park and Nacotchtank Park)

- TD: Two names bubbled to the top, but at last meeting David C. Driscoll Community Park name won the vote, and this is the name that will be presented at the next council meeting on Monday. Deed has been changed, but some further paperwork needs to be completed and a resolution needs to be drafted.
- DP: Thanks this committee and the Health, Wellness, and Recreation Committee for work on sorting through name proposals. Also got a question from this committee about memorializing things that are important in our public areas. While Magruder Park renaming process is concluding, there is still a lot of opportunity for naming areas. There was discussion of placing markers and renaming other areas of the city, in light on considering city's legacy after 135 years, and for making room for more representation in the city. Still room for discussion on renaming of the park as well.

- New Committee Procedures and Handbook Highlights

Handbook sent to committee members for review. Highlights:

- Terms now all end on October 31, effective this year.
- Obligation to attend a certain number of meetings as a committee member, and holding members accountable by taking dedicated roll at the beginning of the meetings

JW: Question on annual report due from each committee.

- AD: New requirement and procedures remain tentative
- DP: This committee has presented to the Council on a regular basis, but want to have understanding of what committees have accomplished over the course of the year
- TD: One pager would be acceptable for the report, and will provide a template once the handbook/procedures are confirmed by council

- Equity Officer Position

Initial presentation to the council requested an equity officer position for the city, and to have someone on staff who is knowledgeable on how to implement equity in city's daily operations in tandem with the work of the committee

- TD: City budget recently completed, and will go for first reading on Monday night, and also included funding for an equity officer. Do not know what resource requirements for equity officer will look like, so proposed this as a contracted position. Reached out to Takoma Park and they are interested in sharing a resource, since not sure what the requirement for this position will look like and if this is something that requires a full-time employee. Would initially like to get someone onboard, and then first order of business would be to draft plan for where community want to go in terms of race and equity. Budget takes effect in July and will likely not onboard anyone until fall.
- AD: Excited that this has become a line item on the budget, but we are still in the weeds on what this looks like operationally. Would they assist in writing the plan or work on operationalizing the plan? How would they operate with us as a committee?
 - TD: Vision is that the resource would do the writing of the plan and developing it with the support of the committee. Should be advising on how to achieve the identified priorities of the community.
 - DP: This committee should be looking at the vision of priorities for equity and inclusion for Hyattsville, and person in this role should have administrative and technical knowledge to operationalize the vision. Committee will set main areas of focus and resource will work to operationalize for city staff and city council. Sees resource as a monitor for actions city staff is already taking and priorities committee has identified in the equity plan, among other areas
- LR: Question of whether there is an opportunity to bring in a training institute that teaches not only city staff, council, and committee, but also community actions to take on undoing racism? Systemic actions require principles and culture of the community to be interwoven with inclusivity, equitable access to resources, and antiracism. In order to develop a plan, we need to identify the needs of the community.
 - TD: City administrator best practice is to bring in person on staff who identifies areas for training and organizations to carry out that training. Several hurdles required in order to achieve inclusion in the community and need to hold people accountable.

- JW: Envisioned equity officer as member of city leadership team and reporting directly to city administrator who could ensure that equity was considered throughout all conversations and discussions, such as budget, programs, hiring, and outreach. Also considered contractor being brought onboard in order to develop the equity plan, who was a separate person from the equity officer. Is that possible?
 - o TD: This year we are not hiring an equity officer, but the role may evolve if we have a need for an equity officer. We are not doing so currently because of the resource need. Often, we start this way and annually review and determine if there is a need for a fulltime position. Few municipalities have an equity officer on staff fulltime. While it is not unlikely, hiring senior staff is a process and we want to understand what the job is and that we have enough work to sustain a fulltime position. As RFP is developed, we want to make sure that committee priorities are included.
 - o JW: Would like to consider a stepwise approach and have someone with report drafting skillset, and then another individual with a monitoring skillset to come onboard for implementation
 - DP: While this isn't everything that the committee has asked for, it is a step in that direction

4. Open Discussion/Community Comments

No comments from the public.

5. Adjourn Meeting

Review Agenda for next meeting

- Next meeting is May 25
- Will discuss equity plan
- JW: Ask for brainstorming of diversity and equity events, and update on the ideas

RB move to adjourn, LR second.

Adjourned at 8:18PM