

**City of Hyattsville
Race & Equity Task Force
February 22, 2021, 7:00 PM
Zoom
Minutes**

Present:

Task Force Members:

- Co-chair Andrea Dargin
- Co-chair Stacie Whitesides
- Rodrigo Blanco
- LaToya Robinson
- Joanne Waszczak
- Ashleigh Brown-Grier
- Malcolm Clarke

Council:

- Councilmember Daniel Peabody

Staff

- City Administrator Tracey Douglas
- Staff Liaison Jan Guszynski

Guests:

- Charmin Members
- Chuck Perry
- Emily Williams
- Matt Carl
- Melena DiNenna
- Thoa Hoang
- Angela Justice

Members Absent:

- Monica Sharma

Meeting called to order at 7:09PM by co-chair Dargin

1. Welcome and Call to Order

Review and approval of previous minutes (August 25, 2020, September 29, 2020, and December 2020)

- RB moves to approve all the minutes, co-chair SW seconds, all in favor

2. Green Owl/Mural Project

Green Owl

- Redoing mural in Centennial Park
 - o Something around arts
 - o Focus on who the subjects are who we want to portray
- Magruder Park rec center will also have murals on every side except the façade

- Want to make sure that it's appropriate (educational and informational, involves children, makes them think)
- At later date, façade may have new name of park painted on it
- JG: For the Centennial Park mural, you mentioned artists, are we as a group to generate ideas for historical figures to represent?
 - Would like to keep it centric to figures in the arts. If there is a compelling drive to include a certain figure, then that can be considered.
- AD: Agree with new theme, since original seemed less tailored to Hyattsville as a community. If we put up murals with people, there is hesitation around naming something after a person and then something comes out. What is the process of making sure that the chosen figures are positive representations? Are we limiting the figures who are native to Hyattsville or who have lived in Hyattsville for a period of time?
 - Let's go with deceased figures. Not explicitly limited to Hyattsville figures
- JG: Hoping that committee members can email 3 names of figures that meet criteria by March meeting and Angela will return on April meeting with another assignment
- JW: Suggest that we can use a Google spreadsheet to track the names and include brief bios or link to artistic works.
 - AD: Will work with co-chair to get that going

3. Administrative Announcements/Debriefs

Magruder Park renaming:

- Stacie and Jo reviewed memo drafted by Don Burger and will meet with Peter on March 8 to review the presentation to council on March 15.

City Attorney Response to Information Sharing and Use of Communication Channels

- Use listserv only for information related to RETF business, such as logistics on events/meetings, information that is to be presented to the public, or that has already been presented to the public. Per City Attorney, public comments should be made during meetings so that they can be publicly addressed, and not in email chain.
- JG: During monthly meetings we will voice comments in the Zoom chat and Q&A, but will not read emails received via the listserv. Per our City Clerk and attorney, there is no problem with posting advance reading or documents for membership on RETF Google Drive
- ABG: When sending emails via the listserv, make sure that those messages relate to the task force business

4. Race and Equity Task Force Committee Debriefs

RFP for Equity Plan Consultant

- Co-chair Dargin is drafting to complete this week and pending review by co-chair Dargin, will go over to the city.
 - Will be largely barebones, but ensure that the committee can manage the consultant in a way that allows the committee to focus on the purpose of the committee and supporting Hyattsville

- SW: We want to help coach this person along, and not have them do all the work for us.
- JW: Generally we have to have a contracting office's representative present during any communication with a contractor. Will Jan serve in that role
 - JG: Will have to inquire as to what city protocol is for that
 - SW: With RFP, we will vet through city attorney in addition to just the council, but we will have to work through what we can do as a task force and the possible conflicts of interests with regard to contractors
 - AD: Scope of work will be provided for in order to determine what we are getting and what we are not getting

Discussion of definitions in draft plan with regard to the mission of the committee:

- Established as a task force charged with calling out inequities within the City of Hyattsville.
 - In reviewing equity plan, noted that we had certain definitions. We do call out certain definitions relating to race and equity, but we don't specifically call out what "race" is.
 - Also need to determine what we want to consider in addition to race. However, we don't consider that just because someone is of a certain race or a certain ethnic background, they may not be disadvantaged. Do we want to call out people who are underrepresented or disadvantaged as well?
 - Which definition of race do we want to use?
 - LR: Race is a broad and ambiguous term, and individuals have different definitions of race. May not be helpful to use outside definitions of race, since race is a social construct. There are institutions that do workshops on understanding race and racism, and may be helpful to participate in this workshop as a task force, with the council.
 - AD: Would be helpful for the plan to say "race is defined as is"
 - ABG: Race can be used multiple ways, but if we define it, whenever it is used in the plan, it will carry that definition in the plan.
 - LR: Since we are speaking to the community at large, it is important to understand how the plan and the definition translate and are communicated to the community at large
 - AD: Would be useful to have the writer work with us on developing the definition, although it still may be very broad. WE should try to come up with a definition for race.
 - ABG: Should also include definition for gender
- Coming up with definitions that speak to historically disadvantaged or historically underrepresented, then by benefitting those groups, we improve members of all groups. We should also work to include that in our purpose.
- We also need to talk about some sources of our data
 - Would charge the contractor with Hyattsville-specific data, since in previous editions of the plan, data was generalized on a national level
 - ABG: Even without the purpose, we should still have some points of direction for the consultant to serve as a guide for them.

- AD: We have a deficiency regarding Hyattsville-specific data, and could benefit from people doing interviews and focus groups
 - RB: Doubt that we will get precise data at the city level, but if we can get data at the county level, that would be useful. We should make sure that information we are referencing is useful and included purposefully, even if it is not as precise as we'd prefer. It is also important to ensure that the data is current, in order to maximize utility of the report
 - ABG: Compare newer data to older data in order to identify any trends
 - JW: Trends will be important to identify, specifically on the housing market and it will be important to find fresh data
- We should have more definitions, considering the plan's length
 - LR: Do we include a definition for culture?
 - SW: There needs to be more in-depth discussion on these definitions before we can assign definitions to additional terms. With regard to the data, we need to ensure that any data used is current

5. Race and Equity Plan – Ms. LaToya Robinson/Committee

Review of Equity Plan Housing Section – Ms. LaToya Robinson

- City brought in consultant to help them develop a toolbox to measure their affordable housing process
 - Status of the process is unclear
- Reached out to county councilmember, Deni Taveras, about affordable housing vouchers for Prince George's County, but these programs are consistently inactive
- Hyattsville lacks a designated housing department for residents to communicate with regarding housing services, and affordable housing strategy does not include residents
 - Although there is an eviction moratorium, residents are still being harassed by landlords
- For Hyattsville to demonstrate its progressiveness, recommendations include
 - Looking at affordable housing strategy
 - Invite Deni Taveras into conversation with Mayor and council
 - Understood that housing issues go hand-in-hand with racism
 - Could be useful to have residents come to meeting with city council and the mayor to present understanding of what is going on in the lives of Hyattsville residents
- Something to review (1:27)
- Resources and funding available are for disabled or older adults, and should be made more accessible, and amount of red tape should be decreased
 - AD: Need to look into how to remove barriers to access, since currently process to access resources is involved, and doesn't guarantee access to resources. Also need to ensure that programs are active programs that can be accessed by residents. Need to identify what is wrong with resources and specifically how they can be fixed
- Housing takeaways: why is it there

6. Open Discussion

Community Comments/Open Discussion

- Chuck Perry:
 - o Is a Maryland broker and does research reports for financial databases, and deals with this information on a daily basis. With regard to affordable housing, what is the internal rate of return. Enterprise offers IAR, and question of how that is tied to market rates and rents, since it is antithetical to affordable housing. Concerned about entering into public/private partnerships with regard to affordable housing, since fundamental internal rate of return questions never get asked
 - o Impact of policy v historical nostalgia. Nostalgia like murals is important but need to determine how it applies to impactful policy regarding the police. More than half of arrests in past 3 years have been Black men, despite previous chief's discussion of 21st Century policing. Police department should publish arrest data on a monthly basis on the city website. What is the material impact of the city's actions to get to better, more equitable numbers of arrests? There is also a concern about the composition of the police department, which is predominantly white and male in a majority-minority community. The task force doesn't appear to have a specific plan to address these issues.
 - AD: Want to incorporate questions (?)
 - AD: Regarding demographics of policing data, we have discussed this previously, and former chief discussed efforts to recruit individuals with diverse background, which have been transitioned to the interim chief, but we will note the suggestion that the numbers should be published on a monthly basis.

7. Adjourn Meeting

Next meeting agenda items

- Administrative overview and discussion of committee guidelines
- Discussion on definitions
- Green Owl artist submission discussion

SW: Action for co-chairs to create and upload spreadsheet to Drive, and have more information on RFP for consultant

JW moved to adjourn.

Adjourned at 8:40 PM