

**City of Hyattsville  
Race & Equity Task Force  
March 22, 2022 7:00 PM  
Zoom  
Minutes**

Present

Task Force Members:

- Malcolm Clarke
- Jennifer Gafford
- Alicia (ah-**lee**-syah) Freemyn
- Daniel (dah-nee-**ehl**) Vallejos-Avila
- Rodrigo Blanco

Council:

- Interim Mayor Robert S. Croslin

Staff:

- Staff Liaison Jan Guszynski

Guests:

- D. Marshall

**Meeting called to order at 7:08 PM by Chair Clarke**

**1. Welcome and Call to Order**

Roll Call – Chair Clarke

Acknowledgement of Meeting Guests – Staff Liaison Jan Guszynski

Approval of Minutes for January and February 2022

1<sup>st</sup> Rodrigo, 2<sup>nd</sup> Alicia

**2. Administration Announcements/Debriefs**

- Equity Officer Update
  - o Jan G: One candidate interviewed by the panel. Another candidate is scheduled on March 28. This candidate comes to us from DC through a contact at Mayor Bowser’s Race and Equity office. The first candidate is an educator primarily. She also has her own equity network that she has created.
  - o IM Croslin: Strong candidate
  - o Jan G: Both candidates have very different experiences. The interview panel consists of Interim Mayor Croslin, Council Member Joanne Waszczak (founding member of RETF, City Administrator Tracy Douglas, Acting Deputy City Administrator Suzie Ludlow and Community Services Director Sandra Shepherd. Hopefully we will have something to announce at the next meeting. If the two candidates do not work out, we would talk about a contractor to cover this area.

- Centennial Park Update –
  - Jan G: We moved from a mural installation to a freestanding 3-D installation of art applied to fabricated metal cutouts of “Hyattsville”. We have received a couple of quotes for that installation for the fabricator to not only make the letters but also for installment and possible relocation, should we need to do so. Next steps are to run this by an engineer and bring this to the Executive Committee of the Council.
- Cultural programming ideas for Community Services
  - Jan G: Looking for this group to give some thought to a combined event for Summer Jams and Juneteenth. Cheri Everhart (Community Services Deputy Director) is asking if anyone has ties to black-owned businesses. If there are multicultural musicians or speakers for the entertainment portion of the program to be thinking about that. I’ll work with Malcolm to put something in our Google Docs area where you can go in and share.
- COG (Council on Government Meetings) Resources
  - Jan G: They prove to be a wealth of information on things that I often find would help inform our equity plan. Once the equity officer is hired this person will become more involved with this group. In the interim, there will be programs that we will be offered to attend. I highly recommend if the topic area pertains to the portion of the plan that you are drafting or reviewing that you try and attend. The resources are tremendous. I will send presentation materials to the equity group for review individually. Lots of information on housing.
- Census Information
  - Jan G: Our department of Community economic development shared basic demographic information. I will share after this meeting. If you'd like some deeper information as it pertains to the portion of the plan that you're drafting, I can either go to the Census Bureau or go back to our planners in development and have them dig a little bit deeper. A lot has changed.
  - AF: I would love to see a comparative analysis between 2010 and 2020. I had a couple of questions. The first is about the recent equity staff person that’s going to be hired. Did you say what the timeline is for hiring that person?
  - Jan G: There will be panelist and administration discussion after Monday the 28<sup>th</sup>. I will have something to report to you by email once our communications department makes an announcement. I’ll have another status report for you before we meet the fourth Tuesday of April.
  - AF: My second question is about the event you shared from Cheri. I know you mentioned Google Docs, but are there other preferred ways that folks like to communicate. Have we considered slack or any other method?
  - Jan G: I abide by what the Communications Department and the City Clerks Office has set up for each advisory committee and right now it is Google Docs on google drive. As our Director of Communications/City Clerk looks to roll out other platforms, I will keep you all posted. For now, Google Docs is the best means.
  - MC: Would there be any objection with using Slack informally? I know that we have restrictions about how we discuss.
  - Jan G: To play it safe, I would have to run it by our City Clerk. We must consider security.

### 3. Check-In/Equity Plan Presentations

- MC: In regards to sending out contact information for the group, has that info be sent out?
- Jan G: I don't believe this was sent out. I will put together the list. Please share your phone numbers with your reviewer partner.
- DVA: Our phone numbers are not public record with the City?
- Jan G: The city is short staffed, so they are not able to put together a roster. I will put one together.
- Marshall (chat): Committee members share phone numbers are generally not given out by the city staff. Committee members may have listed the phone numbers, but the city usually does not provide them.
- MC: I think there is also a question of the schedule of presentations. I can run through them now and send an email out after the meeting.

Month	Topic	Presenter	Reviewer(s)
April	Housing	Daniel Vallejos-Avila	Daniel Amador and Latoya Robinson
May	Aging and People with Disabilities	Rodrigo Blanco	Daniel Vallejos-Avila
June	Transportation	Malcolm Clark	Rodrigo Blanco and Daniel Amador
July	Community Policing	Alicia Freemyn	Jennifer Gafford
August	Community Engagement	Latoya Robinson	Alicia Freemyn
September	Jobs	Jennifer Gafford	Malcolm Clark

- DVA: Is Jan going to send the presentation from POG?
  - o Jan G: I will email the presentation. It shouldn't cause DVA to amend his presentation.
- DVA: It looks like we are spending a good part of this year giving our presentations. And in the meantime, the city council is waiting. Wish there was some way to expedite it.
  - o Jan G: Don't feel too much pressure. The city council knows that we have been waiting to hire an Equity Officer that would help to guide and refine the plan for presentation to the council.
  - o DVA: I was getting nervous about all the waiting for hiring.
  - o Jan G: The officer would be responsible for helping to manage what gets approved by council.
  - o DVA: We are responsible to the Council, and we have to get things done. As a task force we deliver to the council with recommendations. I feel like there is too much staff stuff going on. Seems like we should not wait. Perhaps staff should take on 2-3 jobs to get this done.

- Jan G: With all do respect, I don't think that is plausible to ask of the administrative staff. We as a task force cannot dictate staff to take on more. They are doing a very good job. You are going down the right track as far as what is expected. The first step is to hire an equity officer. This board has almost completely turned over. We only have 2-3 legacy people on this task force. You are doing what is expected of you. As your staff liaison, and our two liaisons from council will let you know if those expectations change. We cannot ask more of the administration.
- Chair Clark: I think what I'm hearing is that you don't think we are working quickly enough. Once we hire this Equity Officer, they can take our presentations and form it into a section of the plan. It's not like there is no work being done.
- DVA: There's more to it than that. At one point the task force presented a plan. It was a good plan. Our work is just to make an update to the plan. Instead, it's like we are having to take a new plan and taking info from outside entities. It feels all too bureaucratic to make progress. The task force were given a two year time limit. They did get a plan to the council. There was no feedback since then. If there is already a plan, how can we supplement the plan and not create a new plan.
- IM Croslin: I would like to speak about the staff issue. The staff at this moment is overburdened. The reason we have a citizens committee is so that we can get ideas/advice from you folks. The product that you want to present to the council should be a good product and so we don't want to rush. We lost a Deputy Clerk (who runs the elections). So we have a special election coming up. The City Administrator are overworked. We are in the process of looking for an assistant. Let's just say that no, we don't punt this to staff. It looks to me like the Equity Officer will be on board soon.

#### **4. Open Discussion/ Community Comments**

- AF: Thank you for insight, wisdom, and feedback. I appreciate the sense of urgency and also the importance of being thoughtful and intentional about this plan. I also want to recognize capacity as many of us have full time jobs and families. I am curious as a new task force member, I am curious about process and logistics. Does Chair Clark have feedback about whether it is helpful to have a PPT or a list of documents shared ahead of time.
- Chair Clarke: No specific presentation format. Could be easier to present as a PowerPoint, but if you find another method easier, that is fine. Please share presentation ahead of time, so that people can review before and after.
- Jan G: Don't forget that the Equity Officer will be a good guide for talking with City Administrator Douglas for what is appropriate format given what else is on the agenda.
- Rodrigo: I'm not sure the I recall the format of the last council presentation. Most people did a PPT. We focused on what was covered in the original draft of the work plan and looked at what has happened in the city since then: new things that the city has done and gaps that still exist. Looking at material and update demographic

- information in the city currently. I recall Malcolm Clark emailed a link to the google drive. We can use google drive to keep the information together.
- Jennifer: Google drive link was shared January 27. Any members who joined after that date may not have the link.
  - MC: I will resend that email
  - DVA: Was there a reaction to the plan when it was presented to council?
  - MC: I believe it was approved.
  - DVA: If it was approved, then why are we working that?
  - MC: It is being updated. I think it was intended to be a document that was going to be updated periodically.
  - Jan G: In 2019, the draft plan was presented to Council. I don't know what the overall feedback was, only that when I stepped in, it came back to department Directors for feedback. Some of that happened, and some of that didn't -- particularly with the police department, and as you know was the department was under another Chief at that time. Some of the recommendations were not actionable based on the department set-up. We have to wait for the Equity Officer to come on board and let our new Mayor weigh in. We'll have a better understanding of how to move forward then. We had a first draft and it was good.
  - DVA: I think the draft was written up by Council Member Waszczak. It looked like a good draft to me, but just a little broad. Maybe it needed to narrow down to 4 or 5 objectives. City Government can't do everything. We can't collectively to everything. That's why when we get something good, we have to go with it, not wait for a new Mayor. Waiting for a police chief, I don't think that is worthy of a wait. The City Manager and the people under the City Manager, they shouldn't be at the will of the council.
  - IM Croslin: Directive to the committee comes from the Mayor and the Council. The report goes to the mayor and the council. Part of the plan was to get an Equity Officer. That was approved by the council and that is what we are working on. Even though there were different members of the committee when that plan was first drafted, it's still your plan. You can change it, update it. It's based on what you see on the streets. What do you think the city needs to make sure we are diverse and that people are treated equally in this town? We need that question answered by you. You mentioned that the police chief needs to come in and hit the ground running. It's not like that. When you get a new employee, and as a head of a department, they have to get acclimated to that department. They have to check and see if changes need to be made and make those changes and get the department up and running. I don't know why this comes up in this conversation. I know at one point there was a suggestion by Mayor Hollingsworth that we pull these two groups together. From my point of view, it works perfectly separate. But member of this group can certainly visit with other committee meetings. We can send a request and ask to make a statement in another committee.
  - Jan G: Daniel to be clear, I was using the police as an example. I didn't want you to take that out of context.
  - DVA: I didn't think I was. I watch all the Council Meetings. For example, time is taken at the Council meetings to introduce new individual patrolmen. It should just be the department and the chief.

- Jan G: I think we are getting a little off topic here. Chair Clarke? Make sure everyone has their questions answered but sally forth with the agenda.
- MC: Yes, does anyone have any questions?
- Marshall: I WANT TO COMMENT ON THE JUNETEENTH INQUIRY.....IN MY OPINION.....JUNETEENTH SHOULD NOT BE LISTED OR PRESENTED AS A “MULTICULTURAL” HOLIDAY OR EVENT.....IT IS TIME FOR PEOPLE TO STOP CHANGING OR REDIRECTING A “BLACK” CULTURAL EVENT AND MAKING IT SOMETHING OTHER THAN WHAT IT ACTUALLY IS.....THIS IS THE SUFFERING AND ENSLAVEMENT OF BLACK PEOPLE IN AMERICA.....NOT OTHER ETHNICITIES.....THANKS.....MARSHALL.....ALSO.....THANK YOU FOR ANOTHER INFORMATIVE MEETING.....KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK.....REMEMBER.....”YOUR WORK.....YOUR PACE”.....
- Jan G: This comment is in line with a discussion I had with Deputy Community Services Director Cheri Everhart. I will feed that back to her. She has a lens for how Juneteenth should and would be presented.
- Robert: Marshall is right.
- DVA: What is Juneteenth?
- IM Croslin: After the emancipation proclamation, when the federal government declared all slaves to be free. I think it took like two years to reach Texas. The people in Texas were enslaved for another two years. So they got it on June 19th. For those particular slaves, June 19<sup>th</sup> was a holiday because they became free. That’s what Juneteenth is, June 19<sup>th</sup>.
- Jennifer G: I have a question about the last meeting. Why was Lt. Thomas was pulled from a different county? Does PG County not have their own resources?
- Jan G: We do have a wonderful Mental Health Programs Coordinator by the name of Adrienne Augustus. We should invite her back to address the RETF. After the death of Mayor Ward, she put together a list of resources for staff and residents. She also found additional resources to assist our community. These resources spoke to each of the advisory committees, and we had sessions internally. We may have had sessions in other portions of the community, as well. I believe Lt. Thomas came to us from our former chief of police who is now the Chief of Police in Anne Arundel County.
- IM Croslin: If you would like Adrienne to speak to the group, I think you should invite her and give suggestions.
- DVA: In my opinion the police chief that just started has hit the ground running.
- MC: Do we have any other comments or discussion? Before we adjourn, I want to review agenda topics

## **5. Adjourn Meeting**

Review Agenda for Next Meeting

- Equity Plan Housing presentation
- Equity officer update
- Cultural Programming Update – Cheri Everhart

MC Motion to adjourn meeting. DVA move to adjourn. RB second. All in favor.

**Adjourned 8:17 PM**

