



**MINUTES**  
**CUYAHOGA COUNTY CITIZENS' ADVISORY COUNCIL ON EQUITY**  
**Monday, August 9, 2021**  
**1:30 PM – 3:30 PM**

**I. Call to Order**

Nailah K. Byrd awaited a quorum and called the meeting to order at 1:45 PM.

**II. Roll Call**

Quorum present.

In attendance - Eddie Taylor, Danielle Sydnor, Heidi Gullett, India Pierce Lee, Glen Shumate, Rev. Kenneth Chalker, Levine Ross, Victor Ruiz, Yanela Sims, and Habeebah Grimes

Excused absence – Cordell Stokes, Marsha Mockabee, Jenice Contreras, Randell McShepard, Stephen Caviness

Absent - Sheila Wright and Rabbi Joshua Caruso

**III. Moment of Silence and Reflection**

During the moment of silence Clerk Byrd reflected upon the disparate impact of evictions on communities of color and particularly Black women and children.

As stated in the CACE's initial Status Report to the Community 80% of those evicted in Cuyahoga County are Black women. These evictions lead to less housing stability, higher rates of homelessness, and children switching schools and/or missing days of school. In addition, eviction often results in families moving into subpar rental housing where children are exposed to environmental risks such as lead poisoning.

On August 3<sup>rd</sup> the CDC issued a new eviction ban temporarily halting evictions in counties with "substantial and high levels" or virus transmissions. Based on the increasing spread of the delta



variant the moratorium covers approximately 90% of the US population. The extended moratorium on evictions was issued following intense criticism regarding the expiration of an earlier moratorium on July 31<sup>st</sup>. The intent of the moratoriums has been to prevent people losing their homes and ending up in homeless shelters throughout the pandemic. The most recent moratorium expires on October 3<sup>rd</sup>.

A recent Census Bureau survey states as of June of 2021 more than 224,000 Ohioans were behind on their rent or mortgage, and more than 125,000 said they would likely face eviction or foreclosure. Local stakeholders have reported the moratorium has been a key tool in preventing mass evictions during the pandemic-induced recession that began in early 2020.

The extended moratorium provides tenants extra time to receive much needed rental assistance. In July, the Justice Department, in conjunction with the moratorium extension, also sent a letter to state courts encouraging them to take measures to give landlords and tenants more time to seek rental assistance. Among the measures recommended is to temporarily require landlords to apply for rental assistance before filing an eviction case.

Cuyahoga County and the City of Cleveland have contributed a combined \$48.5 million for rental assistance since the pandemic began last spring. The County also provided \$1 million to the Legal Aid Society of Cleveland to help tenants facing evictions. The program expands the free legal services provided through Cleveland's "Right to Counsel" program to the suburbs; however, Cleveland is currently the only municipality providing "right" to an attorney in eviction proceedings.

Tenants in need of rental assistance, legal help or other resources can call 216-861-5835 or visit [freeevictionhelp.org](http://freeevictionhelp.org).

#### **IV. Public Comment**

Three public comments were submitted via email to [equity@cuyahogacounty.us](mailto:equity@cuyahogacounty.us) on July 20<sup>th</sup>, August 6<sup>th</sup>, and August 7<sup>th</sup>.

The comments were distributed to CACE's members by email. Two of the three emails were read to the members during the meeting. One email was not read due to content and length.

Emails were sent acknowledging receipt of the public comments.

No requests for in person comments were submitted.



Chair Taylor opened the meeting with an invitation to members to respond to the reflection and/or comment on a recent article regarding sentencing disparities.

Chair Taylor also discussed the new procedure for submitting public comment and shared the language added to the website regarding the guidelines.

Member Chalker shared his experience with First Church Cleveland and the church's role as a homeless shelter. He reiterated the importance of examining the impact of homelessness on Black single mothers and children.

Member Sydnor requested the council look at permanent solutions to the issues causing homelessness. She also encouraged the members to think about how to monitor and track data through the criminal justice system.

Member Pierce Lee indicated her subcommittee will be further researching the sentencing database.

Clerk Byrd shared information on the topic and offered to facilitate a meeting with leaders in sentencing reform.

Member Sydnor provided the background of the recent cases regarding sentencing disparities. A White public official from Chagrin Falls stole \$250,000 and was sentenced to probation a Black public official from Maple Heights stole \$40,000 and received 18 months prison time. Member Sydnor called for a system allowing the public to track these types of sentences.

Chair Taylor requested Clerk Byrd read the language added to the CACE website regarding public comments.

Members of the public who wish to make public comment shall submit a "Public Comment Request Form" to Clerk Nailah K. Byrd, or her designee, at least 10 minutes prior to the meeting's scheduled start time. During the public comment portion of the agenda, commenters will be invited to approach the podium and asked to state their name and address prior to making comment.

Members of the public are expected to conduct themselves in a civil and respectful manner at all times. Public comments must be directed to the CACE as a whole as opposed to any individual member, must not contain obscenity, commercial advertising, or defamatory remarks.

Comments are limited to three minutes in length.



The CACE reserves the right to silence and/or remove members of the public who make comments which are inappropriate in nature or unrelated to the function of the body.

Members of the public may also continue to submit written public comments by sending an email to [equity@cuyahogacounty.us](mailto:equity@cuyahogacounty.us). Written comments may be published on the CACE website. Comments are subject to the provisions of Ohio public record laws.

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

Executive Budish discussed the newly returned requirement for public bodies to now meet in person and thanked the members for attending. He also shared details regarding the County's efforts to address evictions through rental assistance and legal services. He indicated the County is also working towards long term solutions.

The Executive shared the County's funding for the Cleveland Indian's baseball team and the community benefits agreement ensuring MWBE contractors are utilized for upcoming projects.

Member Sims recommended looking at all hires and ensuring a sustainable wage is paid to the employees. Chair Taylor suggested a meeting with leadership to further discuss the agreement. Member Shumate suggested a transparent mechanism to illustrate the community benefits of the project and for the CACE to be involved in discussions regarding equity and inclusion for economic development projects.

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

Chair Taylor provided details of a recent discussion with State Board of Education Member Meryl Johnson regarding critical race theory education. State School Board Member Johnson requested the CACE's support of the Honesty for Ohio Education organization.

Member Rasheed Grimes provided context regarding the two House Bills, HB 322 and HB 327 the national effort to silence educators. She encouraged the members to review the bills and seek a consensus amongst their networks to build opposition.

Clerk Byrd offered to have Laura Black distribute additional materials regarding the bills.



Member Gullett shared the website [honestyforohioeducation.info](http://honestyforohioeducation.info). She also discussed the Ohio Board of Education's declaration against racism. Member Gullett also sought clarification on the CACE's role in supporting or opposing policy and their ability to put out position statements.

Member Sydnor also encouraged connecting the dots between redistricting and legislation.

Member Gullett mentioned opposition testimony to the two House Bills has not been scheduled yet. Clerk Byrd offered to keep the CACE members informed of the bill's movement and scheduled hearings.

Chair Taylor requested research regarding the CACE's ability to support/oppose policy and Clerk Byrd indicated the Law Department would research the issue.

Executive Budish recommended the CACE weigh in on the redistricting maps.

## **VII. New Business**

### **a. Approval of Minutes**

Prior to the meeting, the minutes for the 6/14/2021 meeting were distributed for the CACE's review and comment.

A motion to accept the minutes was made by Member Pierce Lee. The motion was seconded by Member Sydnor. There was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

### **b. In Person Public Meeting Public Comment Procedure**

Chair Taylor covered this topic earlier in the agenda.

### **c. County Executive Request for Feedback on ARPA Fund Spending**

Clerk Byrd shared information regarding the approximately \$240 million dollars of American Rescue Plan funds Cuyahoga County will receive over the next two years.



The primary ways that ARPA funds can be spent include:

- Continuing to support the public health response by funding COVID-19 mitigation efforts, medical expenses, behavioral healthcare, and certain public health and safety staff.
- Addressing the negative economic impacts of the public health emergency by responding to economic harms on workers families, small businesses, nonprofits, and impacted industries and rehiring public sector workers.
- Replacing public sector revenue loss and continuing providing government services despite a reduction in revenue due to the pandemic.
- Providing premium pay for essential workers who were and are exposed to the greatest health risks because of their service in critical infrastructure.
- Improving water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure to improve access to clean drinking water, wastewater and stormwater infrastructure, and provide unserved or underserved locations with new or expanded broadband access.
- Implementing transformative and lasting initiatives.

In June, the County Executive and a few members of the CACE discussed programs and initiatives to spend the funds.

Community members can submit recommendations on the County's website by clicking on the American Rescue Plan Act link at:

[www.cuyahogacounty.us/executive/results/covid-19-federal-funding/american-rescue-plan-act](http://www.cuyahogacounty.us/executive/results/covid-19-federal-funding/american-rescue-plan-act)

Executive Budish shared the County has received over 250 suggestions which have been individually reviewed. He welcomed additional suggestions from the CACE's members and explained the County has a longer timeline to spend the funds than they did for the CAREs Act Fund.

He further explained there have been internal discussions regarding how the funds will be spent and the broad categories of spending include: revenue shortfall, public health and safety, economic recovery, transformative projects, and miscellaneous projects.

The Executive indicated CACE Members Jenice Contreras and Marsha Mockabee are members of a small group discussing transformative funding ideas.

Chair Taylor encouraged the members to continue sharing ideas and feedback.

Member Sydnor asked how the suggestions are being tracked and if it was possible to have it sorted.



The Executive indicated they could look into it.

Member Sydnor asked how equity will be incorporated into the funding distribution.

Executive Budish provided information regarding equity efforts and criteria for funding.

Member Sydnor encouraged the County examine how the dollars can be spent to reduce structural/systemic disparities.

Member Gullett discussed how the systems mapping will inform ways to use the funds for transformative projects.

Executive Budish indicated one of the transformative projects may include a workforce project to keep Black residents out of the criminal justice system.

Member Chalker asked if there was a way to find out if their recommendations would be implemented and if so, can they be part of the implementation process.

The County Executive explained the final funding decisions would be made by County Council; however, he was open to meeting to further discuss.

The members discussed the next steps for gathering and discussing recommendations.

Member Sims made a recommendation to prevent homelessness by addressing the causes of homelessness. She reiterated her concerns regarding people earning a sustainable wage and compensating essential workers. Member Sims requested a follow up meeting with the Executive to further discuss her concerns.

Chair Taylor reminded the CACE the funds have not yet been spent.

Clerk Byrd indicated a list of the CACE's ideas have been provided to the County Executive and can be shared with members. She also indicated she was willing to assist Member Sims with scheduling a meeting with the Executive.

#### **d. Update on Department of Equity and Inclusion**

Clerk Byrd provided a brief update on the Department of Equity and Inclusion.

The Department of Equity Inclusion will focus on equity related issues in contracting as highlighted in the recent Disparity Study. The Department will also work with the Department of Human Resources to develop and implement programs and training to build a culture of equity with respect to race, gender and sexual orientation throughout County government.



At this time, Director Lenora Lockett is serving as Interim Director of the Department of Equity and Inclusion. The Director position was posted, and candidates are currently being interviewed.

#### **e. Department of Equity and Inclusion Purchasing and Contracting Forecast**

Clerk Byrd shared the Department of Equity and Inclusion posted Cuyahoga County's first Forecast of Contracting and Purchasing Opportunities in late June 2021.

Cuyahoga County's purchasing and contracting forecast provides details on contracting and purchasing opportunities for a 24-month period. The forecast will be updated semiannually, and updated versions will be posted by January 1<sup>st</sup> and July 1<sup>st</sup>. This forecast enhances competition by helping vendors learn about potential prime contracting opportunities early in the process. Furthermore, it is anticipated that the advance notice will enhance participation by small business enterprises, minority business enterprises, and women business enterprises.

The forecast is available for downloading at: <https://opd.cuyahogacounty.us/en-US/Forecast.aspx>

Director Lockett provided a seminar regarding the forecast on July 13, 2021. During the presentation, she reviewed the findings of the Disparity Study, summarized the related Executive Orders, and detailed the purpose of the forecast. The Departments of Health and Human Services and Information Technology provided "procurement profiles" regarding the types of services and goods purchased by their agencies. A video of the seminar can be found on the County's YouTube page.

Prior to today's meeting, Director Lockett emailed information to the CACE's members regarding the forecast and training opportunities associated to the information which was emailed to the CACE's members.

#### **f. Cuyahoga County Equity Commission**

Since the last CACE meeting, the Cuyahoga Equity Commission met on June 17, 2021, and July 15, 2021.

During the June 17<sup>th</sup> meeting, each Commission Member provided an update on their agency's equity efforts. Director Lockett indicated her department was on track to meet the July 1<sup>st</sup> deadline for the 24 Month Contracting and Purchasing Forecast recommended in the Disparity Study. The Department of Development has allocated \$3 million to be used over a two-year period starting in October. The Department of Public Safety provided an update on a recent presentation given to staff about the County's equity and inclusion efforts. They plan to mirror the diversity, equity, and inclusion



efforts implemented by the Department of Health and Human Services. The Department of Human Resources provided an update on their internal equity efforts which include the creation of a steering commission and a newsletter.

During the July 15<sup>th</sup> Meeting Director Lockett provided an update on the purchasing and contracting forecast and the July 13<sup>th</sup> seminar referenced earlier in the agenda. The Commission also discussed the timeline for their next report. They plan to submit a draft report to the Executive by January 12, 2022 and a final copy to the public by the end of January 2022.

Clerk Byrd continues to meet with members of the Equity Commission to discuss the work of the CACE and potential opportunities for collaboration.

Chair Taylor requested additional details regarding the composition and focus of the HR Equity and Inclusion Steering Commission and Clerk Byrd offered to research and present additional information at the next CACE meeting.

Member Gullett requested an update on the status of the RFP for Diversity and Inclusion training. Clerk Byrd explained the RFP Selection Committee, including herself, Director Lockett, and Director Drucker, conducted additional meetings with the applicants over the past weeks and they are still in the decision-making process. Chair Taylor requested the CACE members included on the original selection panel be apprised of any decisions once made.

#### **g. Update on Semi Annual Report**

Chair Taylor provided an update on the report's progress and explained the Subcommittee Chairs are currently drafting their portions of the update.

#### **h. Subcommittee Chair Reports**

##### **i. Criminal Justice Subcommittee**

Chair Pierce Lee indicated her subcommittee plans to further examine issues associated to juvenile justice including binding over of youth and the underutilization of programs such as CASA. The subcommittee also plans to research disparities. The subcommittee intends to determine who has authority over each area, what resources are available to implement, and opportunities for the subcommittee to work with other subcommittees with intersectionality.



## **ii. Health and Healthcare Subcommittee**

Subcommittee Chair Gullett provided an update on the County Health Assessment which will occur in 2022 and encouraged the members to think of issues through the lens of health which can help with funding. She also touched upon the need to examine community benefit agreements and leverage those requirements to improve equity. She also discussed a health-based data depository which could be used to illustrate how race impacts health in the region.

## **iii. Equitable Quality of Life Subcommittee**

Subcommittee Chair McShepard was unable to attend this afternoon's meeting and Chair Taylor provided an update in his absence. A draft written was provided to Chair Taylor on Friday. The Equitable Quality of Life Subcommittee plans to continue pursuing legislation for housing and will also examine healthy food access options and best practices during the remainder of 2021.

## **iv. Economic Opportunity Subcommittee**

Member Sydnor provided the report in Chair Caviness's absence. She explained the subcommittee intends to be thoughtful on how they can work with the County regarding new projects such as the baseball stadium renovation, workforce opportunities for private public partnerships, and the spending of the ARPA funds, education and the potential of the County to serve as a convener for countywide strategies at a systemic level.

### **i. Communications Subcommittee**

Subcommittee Chair Grimes provided an update regarding her subcommittee's work. The youth toolkit is in the final stages of drafting and will be distributed to community partners for training and facilitation. The subcommittee is also finalizing a communication regarding the disparity study executive orders and a survey to add to the CACE's website to gather feedback regarding residents' experiences with racism. They are also exploring an outreach opportunity with ideastream.

Chair Taylor requested the Members feedback whether the group feels they are 1) on pace, 2) more talk than action, 3) things are fine but acceleration is needed.

Member Sims responded 2 but qualified her response. She believes the group is further along in some areas but not in others.



Members Sydnor, Grimes, Ruiz, and Gullett selected option 3.

Chair Taylor asked if Members believed there was a fourth category. Member Chalker indicated his expectations are higher and he is impatiently awaiting change. Member Pierce Lee indicated she felt similarly, and different groups were going to move at different speeds.

**i. Systems Mapping Update from Dr. Hovmand**

Dr. Hovmand provided an update regarding his systems mapping work and discussed a high-level causal diagram and an interface for simulation models to show solutions.

Member Gullett explained the high-level model as a simplified version of the really detailed map which can inform leverage points and levels of impact.

**j. GARE Update**

The GARE update was distributed to the members by email.

**VIII. Next meeting**

The CACE meetings occur on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of each month and the next meeting is September 13<sup>th</sup> from 1:30 PM – 4:30 PM. For now, the meetings will be held in person in Room 5-006 located on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor of Administrative Headquarters.

Members were asked to make Clerk Byrd and Laura Black aware of any absence so they can ensure there is a quorum for each meeting.

**IX. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 3:33 PM.