



MINUTES  
CUYAHOGA COUNTY CITIZENS' ADVISORY COUNCIL ON EQUITY  
Monday, September 13, 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 was not present.

In attendance - Eddie Taylor, Heidi Gullett, Rev. Kenneth Chalker, Yanela Sims, Habeebah Grimes, Glen Shumate, LeVine Ross, Stephen Caviness (late)

Excused absence – Cordell Stokes, India Pierce Lee, Rabbi Joshua Caruso, Jenice Contreras, Victor Ruiz, Danielle Sydnor, Randell McShepard, Sheila Wright, Marsha Mockabee

**III. Moment of Silence and Reflection**

During the moment of silence Clerk Byrd reflected on systemic racism's impact on Black children's educational opportunities.

As highlighted in the County's resolution declaring racism a public health crisis, Black students in the Cleveland Metropolitan School District are 1.7 times more likely to be suspended than White students and approximately 61% of Black Ohioans graduate from high school versus 86% of White Ohioans.

Additionally, Ohio has **far** fewer minority teachers than minority students in the State's K – 12 public education system. In fact, according to the Ohio Department of Education, about 1 in 3 of Ohio's public schools have a 100% White teaching staff.



In the 2019 – 2020 school year, state data showed 16.8% of Ohio’s students were Black compared with 4.3% of Black educators in grades K -12. 6.4% of Ohio’s students were Hispanic and only .7% of K -12 Ohio teachers were Hispanic.

Research has consistently shown teachers of color can help students of the same race perform better academically. Studies demonstrate students with teachers of the same race realize gains in test scores, have a higher likeliness of staying in school, and show increased intentions to go to college. These students also have a lower likeliness of chronic absence and experience less discipline. Studies also show Black and Brown teachers help White students understand the importance of diversity.

The CACE reflected upon the lack of representation in our public schools, the need for improved efforts to diversify Ohio’s educators, and the critical need to provide cultural competency training in our public education system.

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

One public comment was submitted via email to [equity@cuyahogacounty.us](mailto:equity@cuyahogacounty.us) August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

The comment was distributed to the CACE’s members by email prior to the meeting. It was also read to the CACE’s members during the meeting. An email was sent acknowledging receipt of the public comment.

No requests for in person comments were submitted.

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

Executive Budish discussed how he and his wife went to the Fresh Fest at Rid-All Urban Farm. He highlighted the farms community value and explained Rid-all will provide trees for the County’s effort to increase the region’s tree canopy. The County is also looking to use vacant lots created through demolition as farm space or mini/pocket parks.

The Executive also indicated the County is introducing Source of Income Legislation. The legislation would prohibit discrimination against people who use the Section 8 voucher and would have a significant impact on equity. Clerk Byrd and her team met with landlords regarding the legislation.



The County Executive and Council President Jones will provide an update on spending American Rescue Act Funds at an upcoming Board of Health Briefing.

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

Chair Taylor requested discussion and feedback from the CACE's members.

Member Shumate suggested the County utilize a participatory budgeting process. The County Executive requested Member Shumate provide additional information on the topic.

Clerk Byrd discussed Executive Order No. EO2021-0015 establishing "Equity Zones" in response to historic disinvestment. A copy of the order was distributed to members prior to the meeting.

The Executive Order directs the Department of Equity and Inclusion, in consultation with the County Equity Commission and the CACE, to propose a map of the County identifying areas of historic disinvestment. These areas will be known as Cuyahoga County Equity Zones. Following the identification of the Equity Zones the Department of Equity and Inclusion is directed to work with various departments to develop policies and procedures resulting in the County providing additional consideration to investment in road projects, building projects, and development projects.

The Executive Order is intended to address historical policies and practices such as discriminatory lending practices known as redlining which have historically shaped Cuyahoga County's neighborhoods through decades of disinvestment.

Based on Clerk Byrd's involvement in developing and piloting the program, Director Lockett has requested she and her team review and provide feedback of a draft policy. Clerk Byrd and her team recently participated in a meeting on September 8th with Director Lockett, the County Planning Commission, and stakeholders of the policy to discuss procedures associated to the Executive Order.

Director Lenora Lockett was in attendance and introduced herself to the CACE as the Interim Director of the Department of Equity and Inclusion. Director Lockett explained she has been nominated to fill the appointment. She provided the CACE an overview of what she hopes to accomplish as the Director of the Department. Chief Taylor discussed the importance of the Director of Diversity and Inclusion.

Clerk Byrd explained the County Council appointment process.



There was a brief discussion on program analysis and embedding equity as part of every integral facet of the County.

Member Shumate expressed support of Director Lockett's nomination based on her qualifications and emphasized the need for the position to have a strong role in the administration.

Executive Budish spoke briefly on where the Director of Department of Equity and Inclusion was in the County's reporting structure.

## **VII. New Business**

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

A motion to approve the minutes was not made based on the lack of quorum. The August 9th, 2021 minutes will be included on the next meeting agenda.

### **b. Law Department re Proponent/Opponent Position Statements**

Law Director Huth was present to provide a response to CACE's inquiry on the whether or not the group can take a position of support or opposition in legislation policies.

Director Huth advised there is nothing in the County Code or Charter prohibiting the CACE from taking positions and further explained it is something they should be doing.

Clerk Byrd provided an update and status of House Bills 322 and 327. Following the CACE's last meeting her staff distributed additional resources regarding House Bill 322 and House Bill 327 currently pending in the Ohio General Assembly. Specifically, the bills prohibit educators from discussing "divisive concepts" or "controversial content related to race, sex, and current events."

Specifically, online resources, articles, as well as the bills' text and analysis were provided. Clerk Byrd and her team are continuing to monitor the bills progress and at the time of the meeting no additional hearings had been scheduled for either bill.

Member Gullett will coordinate with the Communications teams from The Cuyahoga County Board of Health and the County Executive's office regarding addressing the legislation in a Board of Health media briefing.



**c. Redistricting Updates and Discussion**

Following last month's meeting Clerk Byrd's staff distributed additional materials regarding the Redistricting Process, including a schedule of the Ohio Redistricting Commission's regional hearings.

A regional hearing was held in Cleveland on Monday August 23rd at Cleveland State University and additional information was distributed to the CACE's members following the event.

The Ohio Redistricting Commission failed to meet the September 1st deadline to adopt a map and has until September 15th to approve a 10 year map or a 4 year map without support from the Democrats.

In late August the Cuyahoga County Districting Commission approved a new County Council District map. Just under 30,000 Cuyahoga County residents will be in new districts and the biggest changes are in District 7.

Chair Taylor discussed the significance of the redistricting process and the impact of district packing and gerrymandering on the Black vote.

Executive Budish emphasized the importance of having diverse representation across districts to add balance to the Ohio General Assembly.

**d. Updates on House Bills 322 and 327**

This item was discussed earlier in the agenda.

**e. Update on RFP for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Training**

The RFP process for the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Training is continuing to move forward. The selection process is still in progress but a recommendation is expected to be provided to the Executive in the next 2 weeks.

Member Caviness asked if the training is available to the County's Board and Commission members. At this time, the training is intended to be made available to employees of Executive agencies.



Member Shumate recommended providing the training to a broader scope of County representatives to expand awareness of the County's commitment to improving equity.

Member Sims suggested developing an internal training program.

Member Caviness recommended the Department of Human Resources revisit the County's Value Statement and possibly add language regarding equity. Clerk Byrd will follow up with the Director of Human Resources.

**f. Update on Department of Equity and Inclusion**

This topic was addressed earlier in the agenda.

**g. Cuyahoga County Equity Commission**

Clerk Byrd provided an overview of the membership of the Cuyahoga County Equity Commission and provided an updated from their meeting on August 19<sup>th</sup>.

During the meeting, each Commission Member provided an update on his/her agency's equity efforts.

The Department of Development's RFQ for small business will be finalized and the Department intends to announce winners at the next Equity Commission meeting.

Lindy Burt from the Department of Public Safety introduced herself and provided information regarding the creation of a Diversity and Inclusion subcommittee for the department.

The Department of HR subcommittee plans to meet twice a month and will create a diversity statement and a pay equity study.

The Department of Equity and Inclusion hired three employees who are scheduled to attend a national training institute for contract compliance officer certification.

The Department of Health and Human Services explained they are hosting "crucial conversations" with staff to normalize conversations about race and equity. Director Merriman also acknowledged Director Paul Herdeg's involvement in the recent Townhall event regarding



the surge investment in Central which was held the same week as the meeting. Director Herdeg shared information regarding the surge project which focuses on communities with historic disinvestment. The pilot surge in the Central Neighborhood intends to match residents with good paying jobs, provide support for small businesses, bridge the digital divide, improve the neighborhood's tree canopy, reinvest in the neighborhood's recreation center, and provide road and bridge funds to enhance the neighborhood's infrastructure. The Town Hall event consisted of community members and organizations who will be included in the project.

The Equity Commission also discussed the need for equity related data to guide the overarching goals for the Department of Equity and Inclusion. A workgroup will be created to examine where data is needed.

Director Merriman concluded the meeting by mentioning the need to identify opportunities for the County to support small minority businesses.

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

Chair Taylor provided an update on the upcoming status report. He asked the Subcommittee Chairs to submit their reports by September 20<sup>th</sup>.

The members discussed the status of Member Sydnor as result of her recent announcement regarding her departure from her role as President of the Cleveland Chapter of the NAACP to pursue an opportunity in Franklin County.

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

Member Chalker provided the committee's update in Subcommittee Chair Pierce Lee's absence. The subcommittee continues to interview judges and become more aware of the complexity of the criminal justice system. The subcommittee's report includes articles of initiatives of what should be done and what is failing in regard to bail reform.

Member Chalker discussed an emerging concern, regarding the recommendations made in their reports and the follow up on those recommendations. Chair Taylor suggested chronicling updates and progress made.



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

Member Gullett provided an update on her subcommittee's work. She discussed the Community Health Assessment and the commitment from health systems to make the 2022 assessment a collaborative process. She discussed the importance of metrics in the collaborative process.

Member Gullett reiterated the importance of community engagement at every step of the process when working on equity issues.

Member Ross proposed having the Center for Community Solutions provide a presentation regarding ARPA spending. Clerk Byrd will reach out to the John Corlett who is the President and Executive Director at the Center for Community Solutions to coordinate a future presentation.

Member Ross also highlighted the work of the Cuyahoga County Council Community Reinvestment Subcommittee and invited the CACE's members to attend the meetings.

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

Subcommittee Chair McShepard was unable to attend this afternoon's meeting. Chair Taylor provided updates in his absence. The subcommittee submitted their reports and continues to focus on housing issues.

## **iv. Economic Opportunity Subcommittee**

Subcommittee Chair Caviness reiterated the subcommittee's focus on procurement, workforce and education. He explained the subcommittee hopes to serve as a voice to the community regarding the County's equity related initiatives in those areas.

## **v. Communications Subcommittee**

Subcommittee Chair Grimes provided an update on the youth toolkit which will be used to seek feedback on how systemic racism is impacting young residents. The subcommittee is also continuing to develop a community survey to gather feedback from the community on the CACE's website.

## **i. GARE Update**

Clerk Byrd's staff attended a GARE event on August 23rd on the topic of developing future leaders in the movement for racial equity. The discussion highlighted the need to plan for the future and



provide opportunities to youth to develop their cultural competency skills. The Director of the Human Rights and Relations Office of Orange County, North Carolina provided an overview of local training program including twenty-five 11th and 12th graders focused on civic engagement, open conversations on race, listening to communities of color, and building trust.

**VIII. Next meeting**

The CACE will not meet on October 11<sup>th</sup> due to the Columbus Day holiday. The CACE will meet on October 25<sup>th</sup> from 1:30 PM – 3:30 PM in the same location. The CACE will not meet in November.

**IX. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 3:36 PM.