



MEETING MINUTES  
CUYAHOGA COUNTY CITIZENS' ADVISORY COUNCIL ON EQUITY  
Thursday December 17, 2020  
3:00 PM – 4:00 PM

**I. Call to Order**

Nailah K. Byrd called the meeting to order at 3:02 p.m.

**II. Roll Call**

Present – Eddie Taylor, Stephen Caviness, Heidi Gullett, Randell McShepard, Habeebah Rasheed Grimes, Phyllis Seven Harris, Rev. Kenneth Chalker, Rabbi Joshua Caruso, LeVine Ross, Yanela Sims, India Pierce Lee, Danielle Sydnor, Cordell Stokes, and Marsha Mockabee. Quorum present.

Excused absence – Sheila Wright, Victor Ruiz, Jenice Contreras

**III. Moment of Silence and Reflection**

During the moment of silence Clerk Byrd reflected upon the lives of the 120 babies who died during their first year of life in Cuyahoga County in 2019. Most children born in Cuyahoga County are white, yet the number of Black babies dying each year is vastly disproportionate to the total number of births. In 2019, Black babies accounted for 38% of births and 73% of infant deaths in Cuyahoga County. Furthermore, while the infant mortality rate has slowly declined for white babies, the rate of infant death in Ohio's Black community remains high. In 2018, Cuyahoga County had the second highest infant mortality rate among large Ohio Counties. A report issued by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found Black women's babies died at a rate of 10.97 per 1,000 births – more than twice the rate of White, Asian, and Hispanic women.

Institutional racism plays a part in the longstanding birth inequalities, maternal health, and infant deaths. Toxic stress associated to racism has been shown to contribute to conditions such as hypertension and pre-eclampsia, which increase the risk of premature birth and its complications – the largest contributors to infant death. Programs such as First Year Cleveland are committed to addressing implicit bias and racism in all County systems that serve, house and care for Black women to effect long term change.



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

The CACE did not receive any public comment.

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

Executive Budish stated it was good to see everyone present especially during this busy holiday season. He thanked the CACE for their commitment to the very significant and important efforts they are undertaking. County Executive Budish stated he receives regular updates from Clerk Byrd about the great work of the subcommittees and explained the County government is also working on equity initiatives.

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

Chair Taylor stated he would like to hear highlights of the initiatives from County Executive Budish. County Executive Budish stated since the Disparity Study was released, he has worked with other County officials to create four or five Executive Orders based on the recommendations included in the Disparity Study.

He stated another initiative is the Diversion Center which is designed to divert people with mental illness and addiction out of the Criminal Justice System and into a treatment program in an appropriate setting outside of the jail.

Executive Budish also explained during the COVID-19 crisis, much of what the County has done has significantly impacted minorities. The County recently completed a third round of small business funding. During the first two rounds, half of the funds went to minority owned small businesses.

Chair Taylor stated those are great highlights and they also speak to the commitment not only in terms of people and personnel and decision making, but also to the financial resources.

County Executive Budish stated he also introduced a budget revision for 2021 which was passed by County Council to include \$500,000.00 for the Equity Council and Commission for resources.



## **VII. New Business**

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

Prior to this meeting the minutes from the November 30, 2020 meeting were distributed for the CACE's review.

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

### **b. Update on Report Drafting from Subcommittee Chairs**

Clerk Byrd stated as discussed in the prior meeting, the primary purpose of this meeting is to discuss the status of the CACE's report which is due to County Council and the Executive on December 31, 2020.

Chair Taylor asked each Committee Chair to give an update on the progress of committee reports and provide next steps.

#### **i. Communications' Subcommittee**

Subcommittee Chair Harris stated the Communications' Subcommittee is committed to making sure all County residents and those who do business and partake in services in the County receive information.

The website is live, and language will be added to attract people there. The subcommittee is currently discussing ways to engage residents who do not have access to the internet.

Social media efforts will be used to circulate and promote the CACE's reports.

The County's newsletter will also highlight the CACE's report and will be sent to local nonprofits for dissemination to their constituents, mixed media organizations, and radio stations.

A virtual public meeting will also be held at the City Club.



Chair Taylor mentioned some of the public outreach is still in formation, including what will be done with the information presented and additional comments submitted from the community. He thanked the subcommittee and the County Communications' Department.

Chair Taylor stated he is very proud of the work done by all the subcommittees. The CACE received great input from County personnel, from the community, and from each other. There is additional work to be done, but the report is an important and meaningful first step. He explained the subcommittees identified issues and made appropriate recommendations. He explained the recommendations will be adjusted, will grow, and will be tweaked. He thanked the community and County Council for getting the CACE to this point and Clerk Byrd and Ms. Black for keeping the CACE on task.

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

Subcommittee Chair McShepard shared the sentiments of Chair Taylor and said there are many great recommendations and ideas.

He explained his subcommittee focused on statistics effecting quality of life in the County and information obtained through interviews with County leadership. Subcommittee Chair McShepard stated he was glad the committee decided to start conversations with County leadership because it helped to understand the gravity of the situation and the pros and the cons of what is happening at the County. It helped clarify how the departments are run, where the work intersects with the community at large, and it gave the committee a context around why certain things happen the way they do in the County. The subcommittee detailed preliminary findings; some may sound as if subcommittee is stating the obvious, but Subcommittee Chair McShepard thinks it is important to share some of those findings.

Findings include items other subcommittees referenced. For instance, there is disparity as it relates to race and equity training amongst the various County departments and it is hard to know where the County should go and how to get there if every department is going about the work differently. He explained some departments have had extensive training while others have had little to no training. Many departments are using different consultants and receiving different training curriculums which opens the door for inconsistencies. The subcommittee believes it would behoove the County to institute comprehensive Racial Equity Training for all County departments.



He also explained many leaders in the County were White males and more people of color are needed. County government should be reflective of who it serves. As a County we should do all we can to ensure people of color are in the pipeline for advancement. Subcommittee Chair McShepard stated another item included in the report is the need for State and Federal support. The County budget is finite and there is a need to find better ways to leverage State and Federal resources through strategic planning.

Several additional recommendations were offered by the subcommittee, including leveraging the Office of Innovation to fund Data Analyst positions to create equity related data.

The subcommittee also suggested the County think about the repair of roads and bridges in communities of color. Subcommittee Chair McShepard explained there needs to be a comprehensive strategy which brings together housing, transportation, public works infrastructure, and the digital divide. One of the subcommittee's aspirational recommendations is the County consider appointing a Cabinet position which would focus on Equitable Quality of Life topics.

County Executive Budish stated the subcommittee should consider contacting Allegheny County regarding the Department of Data Research Analysis, which could provide the subcommittee with more ideas to include in the report.

Executive Budish also mentioned money allocated for road work is being approached from an equity standpoint. Three or four major jobs have been added to support different communities. The County has been communicating with the drafters of the Disparity Study to find out what can be done to create equity zones as part of the road and bridge analysis.

### **iii. Health and Healthcare Subcommittee**

Subcommittee Chair Gullett explained in addition to participation in the Common Ground events and the interviews, data from the Cuyahoga County Health Assessments which started in 2013 was reviewed. The subcommittee examined hospital data, public health data and quality of life surveys completed in the context of health and healthcare.



Subcommittee Chair Gullet stated the report also includes expectations for the CACE's work in 2021 and who will be interviewed. Member Gullett stated she is grateful for her committee and everyone taking an opportunity to share their perspective and help shape the recommendations and the path going into 2021.

#### **iv. Economic Opportunity Subcommittee**

Subcommittee Chair Caviness thanked the County Executive and his leadership team. He also thanked Chair Taylor for chairing this effort, his fellow subcommittee chairs for their hard work, and his subcommittee for time spent.

Subcommittee Chair Caviness explained the work of the Economic Development Subcommittee has been a discovery process and they wanted to highlight such in the report. He explained some areas are more mature such as procurement. The information in the Disparity Study allowed the subcommittee to be more comfortable in developing recommendations. He is looking forward to the Executive Orders which will be released in January.

The subcommittee identified areas the County is already involved in but could possibly build upon. They also identified areas where there could be more due diligence to determine if there are opportunities to leverage across the entire County, particularly in the education space and how the County could be a partner in the efforts to close disparities.

Subcommittee Chair Caviness explained in 2021 there will be a period of further discovery to try to determine long term strategies.

#### **v. Criminal Justice Subcommittee**

Subcommittee Chair Pierce Lee stated, like the other the subcommittees found, there is a lot of disparity around Racial Equity Training. She wanted to add, as the County thinks about the training, it would be incumbent that all staff, starting with leadership, complete the training. This will aid in everyone understanding the ramifications of the work and having an investment from the highest level.



The subcommittee, consisting of Member Chalker, Member Caruso, and Member Stokes, conducted interviews and learned much about the County system.

Subcommittee Chair Lee explained there is a need to address the inequities, hiring practices, and recruitment and training in the County. The subcommittee also examined Bail Reform.

Subcommittee Chair Lee stated over the next six months, the subcommittee would like to dig deeper and work with the other subcommittees to see the interrelation and overlap among recommendations. The County should consider consolidating training and ensuring accountability among leadership.

Member Stokes asked about the Diversion Program and whether it included youth. Member Stokes believes the subcommittee needs to focus on both youth and adults and the Diversion Program needs to be rigorous and detailed for both.

Executive Budish stated the Diversion Program will be partnering with existing or soon-to-be existing programs within the community.

Clerk Byrd stated herself, Chair Taylor, and Member Pierce Lee discussed having a meeting with Brandy Carney, Chief of Special Operations, after the New Year.

Chair Taylor reminded everyone many of these good ideas were in place or considered before the work of the CACE started. The subcommittees may not have answers for some things but can monitor and have some ability to make certain promises are being fulfilled to the community.

Clerk Byrd stated the report is due according to the Resolution on December 31, 2020 and Chair Taylor has committed to it being ready. Chair Taylor stated he wants everyone to review and comment on the contents of the report.

Clerk Byrd thanked her Chief of Staff, Laura Black, for working tirelessly and effortlessly on behalf of the CACE. She also thanked the CACE members for their dedicated work. She stated the CACE has much to be proud of and has done a tremendous amount of work in a very short amount of time.



**VIII. Next meeting**

The CACE will not meet until after the New Year.

**IX. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 3:54 p.m.