

Howard County Equity Task Force  
Education Meeting Minutes  
Chair: Karen Randall  
January 11, 2021

**Panelists Present** – Karen Randall, Erika Chavarria, Patricia Silva, Bitia Dayhoff, Jacky McCoy, Ying Matties, Sabina Taj, Mavis Ellis, Meina Liu, and Natalie Pretzello. Ashley Alston (D2), Michael Harris (D2), Lauren Marra (Facilitator), Charity Respass (Council Staff)

**Guests Joining/Attendee:** Amanda Mihill and Gary Kuc

**Not Present:** Grace Ko

Charity announced the meeting is being recorded

**Opening:**

Karen Randall did attendance and introduced the meeting.

Karen Randall also acknowledged that they are meeting on indigenous land with a moment of silence.

**Discussion Points:**

Karen started with the approval of last meetings' minutes

- Moved to approve the meeting minutes from December 14th
  - Mavis objected and pointed out mistakes
    - Change the phrase "use County finds to use County funds" Pg. 1
    - Update the phrase "Howard County in Columbia" to include "and Howard County outside of Columbia" Pg. 2
    - Update the phrase "Mavis-does not think 2 hours will be enough" to include "2 hours once a month in meetings will be enough" Pg. 2
- Moved to approve the meeting meetings with the modifications
  - Second by Bitia Dayhoff
  - Approved by everyone

Review of objectives

- No further questions

Review of partnership agreements led by Karen

- Respect each other's time, resources, identities, experiences, and expertise
- Please remember to put all tech on silent and stay "checked in"
- Connect to your core values and speak from your heart
- Be accountable to your commitments and honest about your limitations
- Give each other and ourselves grace
- Keep the task force purpose and specific meeting goals in mind

Everyone was in agreement and no further questions

- "Yes" from Jacky

Karen facilitated check-in/ "temperature check": Use 3 words to describe how you are doing

- Jacky- pronouns: she/ her/ hers; anticipating, concerned, and glad
- Meina-pronouns: she/ hers; concerned, anxious, and hopeful
- Erika-pronouns: she/her/hers; ready, exhausted, and determined
- Amanda-here, happy, and hopeful
- Bitia-pronouns: she/her/hers; energized, concerned, and hopeful
- Mavis-pronouns: she/her/hers; okay and Jacob Blake is her cousin

- Natalie-pronouns: she/her/hers; worried about inaction
- Sabina-pronouns: she/her/hers; grateful, concerned, and hopeful
- Ying-pronouns: she/her/hers; shocked but not surprised
- Gary-pronouns: he/him/his; concerned thankful, “cautiously-optimistic”
- Ashley-not shocked
- Lauren- pronouns: she/her/hers; humbled, focused, and determined
- Karen- pronouns: she/her/hers; disappointed, hopeful, and determined

Lauren provided context before presentation

- They are here to answer the question “what is in the council’s legislative authority and what is not?”
- They are here to set what parameters exist
- General overview

Gary begins by stating that both he and Amanda work for the County and Office of Law

- Two biggest things to highlight:
  - Issue of power
    - How power over the school system exists between the County and the Board
    - Howard County, MD is a charter county under the State Constitution and is separate and distinct legally/functionally from the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS)
    - HCPSS is really run by the Board of Education (BOE) of Howard County, which is created by separate state law that has elected members who are answerable to the voters and charged with running the school system (primarily by hiring a superintendent).
    - Courts and Attorney General for the State have universally held that counties, cities, etc have no jurisdiction or authority to dictate to the Boards of Education around the State what the educational policies or running of the school system should be like
  - Money
    - Each year, the BOE comes up with its budget that it believes it needs to operate the school system as it sees fit for each fiscal year (July 1 to June 30<sup>th</sup>)
    - The County is required by State law to fund that budget
      - The roll of the Executive and Council is relatively limited (under State law)
    - The Board and the Superintendent follow their own process to come up with what the budget will be and then submit that to the County
      - The Executive gets the “first cut” at deciding if they want to fund the budget at the levels requested or something less. The Executive may reduce a request
      - Note: The Board submits a request in accordance with categories that are all set by State law. Those categories have a number attached to them, which the Executive could reduce
    - Council’s Powers once budget is submitted to them:
      - Appropriate money
        - Executive could propose, but the County Council is the body of government that can actually say yes
      - Restore cuts that the Executive may make to the proposed budget by the Board
        - Put back money that the Board wanted
- Recap:
  - Control of the system, running of the system, and funding decisions are with the Board

- The County is a “funder” of those policy choices

Amanda begins her presentation

- Counties are pretty preemptive from telling the schools what to do
- State law allows for the school system to have to kind of follow the same budget procedures
- However, the County cannot regulate the schools in terms of trying to put conditions on appropriations
- The County can put certain conditions that are related to financial issues, but not in terms of regulating; regulating education policy is something County cannot do
- There is some financial oversight: State allows local jurisdictions to do purely financial audits of school systems, but cannot do any sort of performance audits
- Funding
  - Effort levels:
    - Counties cannot go below the prior year’s per pupil spending
- State law does not require school resource officers, but the law does require local jurisdictions to provide adequate law enforcement coverage
  - “Adequate” has not been fully defined and of course laws can change

Open the floor for questions

- Mavis
  - There are relationships between the school board members and the County Council members that may impact funding
    - Ex: In Board meetings, Board members have said “Well, I talked to this County Council person and here’s how they would like for us to spend our money.”
    - Even though the Council cannot tell the Board legislatively what to do, the relationships are there, that may impact the funding
    - Ex: (From the year before last) The County Council gave the Board \$700,000 with the request of possibly (can’t remember the exact split) \$300,000 to be used for a \$5 a day substitute pay raise and the other \$400,000 be spent for bus routing software
      - This was the year that the Board cut a significant amount of remedial math teachers and remedial reading teachers for the poorest students. But because they had Board members who said that the request was made from the County Council, those dollars were used as directed as opposed to supporting our neediest children.
        - Mavis stated the Board vote on it a couple of times, and they did. However, each time it did not pass because the relationships exist even though legally the Board connects independently
- Ying
  - Asked for an explanation of what the County Council resolution will do to educational policy or general what does it do
    - Gary answered- A resolution is a way for the legislative body to express a policy preference or policy position. A resolution requires 3 votes of the 5 to pass. A resolution may have some resonance with the Board.
    - Amanda- Council can encourage changes to occur
  - Also wondered what would happen if our subgroup makes recommendation that is conflicting with another subgroup?
    - Ex. The Public Safety group wants to keep SROs in schools and our group recommends removing them
      - Gary answered- That would be for the County Council to resolve. This group is charged with addressing issues that you have and the specific

area. To the extent that there's overlap and there are different results, the Council would have to take that into account. How they decide is by a majority vote.

- Lauren- We have met with other chairs to talk about meetings and issues brought up to identify any overlap
  - Ex: language inclusivity in communications/programming, SROs
  - The facilitators will bring to each group the idea of creating a cross-group working group if there is a plan to listen to the same speakers.
- Erika
  - Asked what would be the strongest legal move we could make that results in the biggest impact (and upholds the specific tasks that we are charged to do)
    - Gary suggested looking at what the next ring around the school system from a policy standpoint that would help in addressing inequities. Are there programs or policies that this group could identify that have a direct positive influence on a child's performance and access to resources within the schools that the County does have control over?
      - Examples:
        - Think about land use in the perspective of what benefits a student in relationship to their school
        - Think about resources for school in a way that would supplement what a child brings to the classroom so that they are prepared
        - Tutoring Programs
        - Supplies
    - Erika voiced that this specific suggestion is not systemic; it is more like charity work. Reminds the group that there needs to be change with the policies and practices that directly impact students. Reiterates that she wants to influence policy because that is the only way to make systemic change. Reminds the group to think big.
      - Need influence over budget and influential power on the BOE
      - What is the highest level of influence that this group has?
    - Mentioned data this group will begin to look at:
      - Arrest rates of black children
      - Suspension and expulsion disparities
      - Lack of access to higher level classes
      - Segregation within school buildings
    - Mentioned that there isn't a black male in this subgroup
      - Our subgroup should be more equitable
      - There aren't any males at all

**Meeting was cut short due to technical difficulties.**