

Howard County Racial Equity Task Force  
Economic & Workforce Development Meeting Minutes (Approved)  
Chair: Candace Dodson-Reed  
January 13, 2021

**Panelists Present** – Aaron Johnson, Ayesha Home, Leonardo McClarty, Minah Woo, Nat Alston, Pamela Pina, Nathaniel Alston, Lauren Marra (Facilitator), Theo Wimberly (Council Staff), Michael Harris (D2), Ashley Alston (D2).

**Not Present:** Darren Atwater, Young Ran Smith, Roger Barnes and Jonathan Studdard

**Opening:**

Candace Dodson-Reed completed attendance and introduced the meeting.

**Discussion Points:**

Candace started with the approval of last meetings' minutes

- Moved to approve the meeting minutes from December 9<sup>th</sup>
  - Second by Ayesha Holmes
  - Approved by entire subgroup

*Candace facilitated the check-in: In two words please describe how you are doing today.*

Rozanna Hightower- wonderful and great

Lauren- pronouns: she/her/hers; focused and focusing onward

Minah-pronouns: she/her/hers; cautiously optimistic

Aaron- pronouns: he/him/his; good and safe enough

Ayesha-pronouns: she/her/hers; worried (with glimmers of hope) and concerned

Ashley-thankful for people showing their true colors

Leonardo-agrees that it is good that people are showing their true colors, but he is concerned about what happens after January 20<sup>th</sup>

Michael- thankful for people showing colors, yet still disgusted by their behavior.

Pam-pronouns: she/her/hers; reflective and wondering how we get past this

Nathaniel-America is in crisis and we need to address the racism/white supremacy in this country.

Glad the former president was impeached; feels angry and vigilant, but excited for the new administration

Candace-seeking solutions; looking at non-people of color to come up with solutions too

Lauren began the discussion by reviewing the focus/goal of this group

- Januarys meeting is about action planning
- Goal is to be in a learner and listener mode to develop a shared understanding for January and February
  - March is for analyzing the “so what” and thinking about recommendations

Lauren mentioned having two meetings in February

- Proposed date is February 24<sup>th</sup> (Wednesday from 6:00pm to 8:00pm)
  - Regularly scheduled meeting is still February 10<sup>th</sup>
  - A second Wednesday might not work out for Leonardo
  - Lauren suggested leaving that whole week open for a possible meeting (looking at Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday).

Lauren reviewed the topics from the last meeting

- Disparities in hiring and employment practices

- Private employers and the County
  - Looking at what the County can do policy wise to potentially support or amend/adapt to address the discrimination in hiring practices and the workplace
- Procurement
  - Discrimination and disparities in County and commercial procurement processes
- Income inequality
  - Shortcomings and minimum wage policies
- Access and Mobility
  - Underfunding for and lack of access to training with/across industries that promote economic mobility
  - Insufficient pathway programs embedded into K-12 and community college systems
  - Insufficient County-supported public-private partnerships that support apprenticeships
  - Insufficient funding and support for entrepreneurship education, mentorship, and know-how
  - Potential for harmful policies that hamper small business ownership or small business growth
- Lauren posed the question “Do folks agree with this recap and are there any additions that need to be made?”
  - Leonardo- had a question about the shortcomings of minimum wage policies; sees that more of a state issue instead of County issue
    - Ayesha- point was related to the knowledge Howard County has over the wage. As we are working towards equity, she would like to work towards decency and conditions in which people are living. Wants people to make enough to only have to work one job. Thinking about immigrants and about the County contracting.
    - Candace- Part of it is how we keep this issue on the forefront. Maybe a recommendation could be that the County Council could advocate for fair wages at the State level or research done. What was settled last year is still inadequate to live in Howard County and we want to make sure this issue isn’t overlooked.
    - Minah- Mentioned that when EDA does grant and loan programs they give priority to the people hiring at minimum wage. They recommend \$15 an hour. Perhaps, when the County invests into a business/start up they provide guidelines that make it more attractive for entry level positions to earn a higher wage.
      - Leonardo is not familiar with the loan programs and if they have a wage program but would have to check with EDA.

*Lauren shifted gears and asked the group to determine what kinds of perspectives would be helpful to bring into this group to go over the pros and cons of each solution.*

- Thinking question: What can the County do about earning power and decency in working conditions?
- Minah- Income inequality could be minimum wage, but it could also include looking at the income equality of similar positions at similar levels. Also, goes back to the point of hiring. Hiring is one thing, but she would like to know if there are opportunities for advancement and promotions. Is there representation in the leadership roles?
  - Leonardo agreed with Minah
  - Lauren asked Minah what exactly she was thinking
    - If this would start with the County?
    - If she was thinking of what’s in the County’s control?
    - What are the influences that the County may have on any kind of private or public employers?

- Minah acknowledged that it may be difficult for us to influence the private sector and suggests looking at data and learning perspective. Looking at representation in non-profits (which are oftentimes County funded) and the opportunities they are afforded by the County
- Candace wanted to expand on the representation in leadership by looking at the Boards and Commissions.

Lauren reviews the Active Planning Chart

- proposes the group look at the type of data they want from each category
- What perspectives would the subgroup wish to invite to provide insight?
- Category Items:
  - Overall economic Health
    - Action Items:
      - Gathering data that provides a baseline snapshot of Howard County citizens based on demographics disaggregated
        - Howard County analytics presented at the Land Use meeting the night before pertains more to disaggregated household income and ownership vs. rental in Howard County. Lauren suggests possibly consulting more sources.
      - Gathering data on small business ownership and trends in recurring complaints
    - Ayesha is willing to reach out to Joan Driessen the director of ACS and ask her to share to the group. Joan can provide a snapshot of the nonprofit community
    - Leonardo thinks that the County's Economic Development Authority would be good to bring in to present data.
  - Hiring and Employment
    - Leonardo suggested having someone from the State SHRM (Society of Human Resource Managers) Chapter or Howard County affiliate
      - Nat joins in and suggests the data come from the Howard County Workforce Development (Fran)
        - Ayesha agreed with inviting Fran
      - Leonardo does not disagree but was looking at it from a data standpoint.
      - The NAAHR

Candace suggested having subgroup members come up with questions to ask the people who come present so that the group can have a better understanding of what else is needed to do research. Questions would be for all categories.

- Lauren-everyone should commit to sharing questions with the volunteer by a certain date.
  - Lauren- suggest asking the Office of Human Rights (Yolanda) for data
  - Action item-develop questions related to specific to the speakers and following these interest areas:
    - Discrimination in hiring practices and the workplace
    - Promotion and mobility within industry
    - Representation of the leadership and Boards
    - Disparities in earnings of same positions
  - Leonardo volunteered himself responsible for contacting SHRM, Fran, and Economic Development Authority
  - Ayesha volunteered to reach out to the Office of Human Rights
- Procurement

- Nat suggested contacting the County Purchasing Director and reaching out to Dean Hof to provide an overview of procurement (quarterly summaries)
  - Note: The EBOC has already asked the County to do a disparities study, and County Exec said no. The EBOC was looking to see if there was equity in the contracts being awarded. Was the procurement process equitable and fair throughout the whole process? They wanted to get benchmark data from the surrounding counties.
    - Leonardo- The disparity studies give the local governments cause for being able to implement certain policies (as it relates to other minority businesses)
  - Candace recommended to pinning this conversation and come back to it later once the group decides if they would like that to be a recommendation from this committee.
    - Lauren wonders “what is there to learn that would help this group shape a recommendation if there is not data?”
      - Leonardo- the big thing is asking who is being awarded contracts and where are they.
      - Nat disagrees by putting a pin in this conversation. He would like to see where Howard County “stacks up” to the other surrounding counties in Maryland.
        - Candace clarifies “putting a pin” and Nat agrees
  - Candace recommended inviting other entities:
    - Doug prouder (schools)
    - Libraries
    - College
    - Columbia Association-Nat
  - Nat and Roger will get in contact with these people.
- Income Inequality
  - Leonardo-United Way (Alice Report) and the Baltimore Metropolitan Council
  - Candace- State elected official, but they might be unavailable and Attorney General Office
  - Minah volunteered to contact speakers (United Way and Baltimore Metropolitan Council)
- Access and Mobility
  - Candace-contacting UMBC training center. These centers allow individuals to get certification. Also, inviting the HCPSS Superintendent
  - Areas of interest:
    - extent of availability, affordability, and uptake in training (HCC, UMBC, EDA)
    - extent of availability, affordability and uptake in pathway programs embedded into K-12 and community college system
    - insufficient County-supported public-private partnerships that support apprenticeships
    - insufficient funding in support of entrepreneurship education
  - Minah-suggested contacting Fran’s group again and President of Howard Community College
  - Candace is interested in contacted the perspective speakers for the first two action items
  - Minah- wanted to invite the Chief Innovation Officer
  - Minah- volunteered for outreach for apprenticeships

Lauren went over deadlines and upcoming meetings

- Overall Economic Health due by February 10<sup>th</sup> meeting
- Hiring and Employment due by February 10<sup>th</sup> meeting
- Procurement due by February 10<sup>th</sup> meeting
- Status of the speakers should be given by January 27<sup>th</sup>
- Income Inequality is due by February 24<sup>th</sup>
- Access and Mobility is due by February 24<sup>th</sup>
- Finalized questions (to circulate to group for feedback) due by January 27<sup>th</sup>
- Send questions to speakers by February 3<sup>rd</sup>
- Agenda due by February 8<sup>th</sup>

**Meeting adjourned 7:27pm by Candace with no further questions.**