

Howard County Racial Equity Task Force  
Economic & Workforce Development Meeting Minutes  
Chair: Candace Dodson-Reed  
March 10, 2021

**Panelists Present** – Aaron Johnson, Leonardo McClarty, Minah Woo, Ayesha Holmes, Roger Barnes, Pamela Pina, Lauren Marra (Facilitator), Theo Wimberly (Central Staff), Michael Harris (D2), Ashley Alston (D2).

**Not Present:** Darin Atwater, Jonathan Studdard, Nat Alston, and Young Ran Smith.

**Opening:**

Candace did attendance and introduced the meeting.

**Discussion Points:**

Candace opened the meeting with the approval of last month's minutes

- Moved to approve the meeting minutes from February 10<sup>th</sup>
  - Second by Roger
  - Approved by everyone

Candace began discussing the Open Meeting on March 4<sup>th</sup>

- During the meeting a community member made hateful and racist remarks
  - The Task Force views those statements as unacceptable and as an inadequate reflection of the Task Force values. We stand together, especially with the Asian and Latinx community, to denounce and condemn this hateful rhetoric.
  - Candace is in support of the County Council and staff
    - She reminds the public that any public testimony could be emailed to [racialequitytf@howardcounty.md.gov](mailto:racialequitytf@howardcounty.md.gov)

Lauren introduced the first speakers, members from the Association of Community Services (ACS), Joan Driessen and Laura Salganik

Ayesha welcomed Joan and Laura and explained their background

- Laura-
  - A sociologist and statistician who worked many years at the American Institute of Research in Washington, D.C.
  - She has lived in Howard County for over 35 years and has been involved in the community
  - She began to produce the Self-sufficiency Indicator Report at ACS and is now on her 5<sup>th</sup> report
  - On committee and sits on Board
- Joan-

- Been with ACS since 2008
- Been Executive Director since 2012
- Prior to ACS, she used to work for the Horizon Foundation
  - Very passionate about her work with children with intensive needs

Joan begins by discussing an overview of the data

- **Referring to the report Laura will introduce**
  - This data has been collected since 2008
  - Data is primary to look at individuals who are at risk of economic instability in Howard County
  - Look at many indicators:
    - Financial housing
    - Childcare
    - Food
    - Health
    - Demographic data
  - Purpose of the data is to inform:
    - Advocacy efforts
    - Program development
    - Policymaking
  - The elected officials have paid close attention to these in the past.
  - This year, ACS has doubled the number of indicators
    - They have begun to collect disaggregated data based on race and ethnicity
- Last year, Laura did an intensive demographic analysis of the County by regional planning district to look at race and ethnicity and how that has changed over time in each of those districts.
- This year, Laura has worked hard to disaggregate the indicators that have traditionally been in the reports to look at the disparities

Laura began her presentation

- Stated she does not know what other presenters have said to this subgroup
- Stated she is not a workforce expert, but she can share what she has learned in ACS about self-sufficiency in Howard County
- ***Refer to the presentation***
  - Laura showed a Howard County Population by Race since 1920 graph
    - Asian population grew fast
    - Asian and Black population are roughly the same
    - Hispanic population is growing
    - White population is declining
  - 2020 ACS Self-Sufficiency Indicator Report
    - New aspects:
      - Many disaggregated by race/ethnicity
      - Shows Pre and Post pandemic
      - More information about social and economic context of Howard County
  - Chart depicting the poverty rate from 2012 and 2019
    - Poverty rate for Blacks is three times as much as Whites
    - Asian poverty rate is higher than Whites

- Hispanic poverty rate decreased
    - Laura is unsure as to what caused this decrease
  - Shows poverty rates of single family homes compared to married families
  - Shows poverty rates of those working part-time/ full-time less than a year compared to those who work full-time year round
- Laura spoke about the issues with poverty rates
  - Poverty rates do not show who is poor
  - Income determines program eligibility
  - People have tried to come up with different measurements of self-sufficiency
    - i.e. ALICE Report
    - ACS specifically used a measurement developed by the University of Washington
      - This estimates how much a household much earn to meet its basic needs without public or private assistance
      - **Refer to presentation for exact numbers for Howard County**
- How do people have enough money to pay for their basic needs?
  - Refer to presentation for average salaries of Howard County employees as of 2021
    - Laura- To be over self-sufficient levels, you would need two of these incomes
  - **Refer to presentation for scenarios of people who would possibly face self-sufficiency challenges**
- Laura shared two graphs depicting an answer to the question "Who are poor?"
  - The percentage of Black people poor in Howard County is almost double the population of Blacks
  - Asian and Hispanic percentage are about the same as their population
  - Whites percentage of poor are less than the population
  - 16,000 Howard County residents live below the official poverty level
- Laura shared the 2020 ACS Report
  - She noted that Blacks are disproportionally represented throughout the report
  - **Refer to presentation to read full summary of "Assistance for Those with Low Income"**
    - Blacks are represented at double their percentage of the population (or more), while Whites, Asians, and Hispanics are either at their percentage of population or below.
  - Graph of those who call the Grassroots Crisis Hotline disaggregated by race/ethnicity
    - **Refer to graph**
      - Blacks are the highest number of people called
      - Asians and Hispanics are barely calling
  - Graph of those who needed home energy assistance disaggregated by race/ethnicity
    - This is a program the Community Action Council administers
    - **Refer to graph**
  - Graph of those who needed SNAP disaggregated by race/ethnicity
    - **Refer to graph**
      - More Whites and Asians shown , but Blacks make up the highest percentage

- There was an increase due to the Pandemic. In June, 10% of the houses in Howard County were utilizing SNAP
- Graph of those who receive FARM benefits disaggregated by race/ethnicity
  - **Refer to graph**
    - Almost half of the Black students received FARMS
    - More than half of the Hispanic students received FARMS
    - Almost a quarter of all students in the school system received FARMS
- Laura shared her concluding thoughts
  - Paychecks are too low
  - People are not in the labor force:
    - Disabled
    - Caregivers
    - Students
  - Although this impacts everyone, the data shows that there are people who are in this position are disproportionately.
    - Black and Hispanic residents
      - Therefore, these factors affect them to a larger extent compared to other race/ethnicity groups
  - Education and training gives people the skills they need for jobs, but there is more to it
    - If an individual gets the skills to obtain a job but does not make enough money, then we have not accomplished making people self-sufficiency
    - Urges this subgroup to look at race equity in the labor market as well as workforce development
      - It is well documented that resumes are evaluated differently for example
      - Job requirements, like requiring a college degree when those jobs do not necessarily need a degree
- Questions:
  - Roger asked a clarifying question- Were the statistics at the federal level or the state level for comparison?
    - Laura- The statistic rates about poverty were all about Howard County. The only thing that was at the national level was the rectangular chart.
  - Jon Lau asked to what extent does State or Federal Government factor into the assistant programs.
    - Laura- Most of the programs are funded by Federal and probably State funds
    - Joan- Federal money comes through the State and is administered by the Department of Social Services
  - Ayesha asked a question specifically about FARMS data- Has that data been fully collected? What impact could this mean for our families? ( So that they can make decisions related to how Howard County may increase program eligibility to the community)
    - Laura- FARMS data was from the whole year. The ones that include pre and post pandemic are SNAP, food bank, and temporary cash assistance.

They do not have the FARMS data from pre and post pandemic or know if it was even processed during the pandemic

- Ayesha- FARMS was suspended for a period of time. If folx don't apply soon it could impact who receives the benefits and which schools.
- Ayesha- Thanked Laura for pointing out the inequity in the workforce and how even professionally trained legal secretary and accountant (in Howard County) combined would not necessarily have enough money for all of their needs in Howard County
  - Joan- Yes, we must look at the factors that drive people into poverty. The biggest factor is childcare. It is very expensive. So how do we support parents with young children?
    - Lauren- Reiterates how this was a common thread shared during the last meeting when the ALICE Reports were shared.
- Minah- Wondered if we are capturing the Hispanic population properly because there are some gaps and disparities in the data that don't make sense. Suggest that perhaps we should dig more into the FARMS data.
  - Joan- Agrees with Minah's point. Thinks that they should look to see if there are any barriers in place that are preventing people from getting assistance
  - Laura- For some programs, you have to have proof of legal residency. However, you do not need it for the food banks, which could explain why the Hispanic numbers look the way they are. Or also, not wanting to take public benefits
    - Leonardo- Notes that you can only study the data that's there. Looking at cultural norms or other politics that might play a role in a case of underrepresentation.
      - Ayesha- Biden Administration has pulled back on public charge, which is something that places fear in many people and discourages them from taking public assistance. She is hopeful that we will see more positive numbers
- Candace- Understood that some of their recommendations might relate to legislative things. Also, suggests that they think about recommendations related to increased communication. How do we engaging a diverse community? Sometimes it is beyond legislation. It is communication, outreach, and connectivity.
- Roger asked- Is it necessary to have documented disparity data in order to try to advance legislative initiatives dealing with inequity issue? Do you have to actually have documentation?
  - Candace- Thinks it is a combination of stories and tangible data (statistics).
  - Lauren- There can be a broad look at the term "data" that could be used for recommendations
- Lauren asked- Are there neighboring counties or counties across America that have enacted certain policies related to the labor/workforce development that we could borrow and look into?

- Laura- She is sure there are, but does not know too much. Suggests looking into [www.hamiltonproject.org](http://www.hamiltonproject.org) for more information.

Candace introduced the next speaker, Jon Lau, and explained his background

- Jon Lau-
  - Chief Technology Officer at UMBC Training Centers
    - In this role, he is responsible for all technological training programs
  - Prior to working at UMBC, he spent 17 years in IT consulting as he developed and managed critical information systems for Fortune 500 and government clients
  - Masters Degree in Electrical Engineering from Cornell University
  - Bachelors' Degree in Physics from UMBC
  - Over the past 5 years, his research and education focus has been on cloud computing, big data, and development ops

Jon Lau began sharing his presentation

- He has been elevated to President of UMBC Training Center at the start of this year.
- **Refer to Presentation**
  - Overview of UMBC Training Centers
    - Started in 2000
    - Provide non-credit program and students do not require academic admission into UMBC
    - Mission is to improve the professional lives of students and the performance of organizations through the delivery of high quality education and training services
    - Two student populations:
      - Workforce development- try to bring alternative populations into the professional workforce
      - Professional development- up-skilling the existing workforce; build resume, etc
    - Separate entity, so they have more flexibility in the types of programs that they offer.
    - Located in Howard County
    - Context:
      - Information Technology
      - Leadership & Management
  - Workforce Development Mission
    - **Refer to presentation for more details**
      - Committed to providing training to those who are alternate to the traditional college degree programs, or people who would otherwise have limited access
        - These include women, minorities, and other people of color.
        - Transitioning into military veterans, underemployed, unemployed, or displaced workers
        - Economically-disadvantaged population
      - List of programs that they deliver

- Most of these programs will help individuals get into the tier of employment and professional occupations with higher levels of income, affordable for Howard County
  - Many employers have a shortage of people that they want to hire that cannot be achieved by the traditional program study (college)
  - Cyber is a big focus
  - One of the best medical sonography programs
  - Always trying to create new programs
  - Technology sales program just opened in 2020
  - Amazon Webbed Services (AWS) Cloud Technology program coming soon
  - All programs are approved by GI Bills
  - They work with Maryland and County agencies that help with underemployed/nonemployees get into programs
- Workforce Funding
  - **Refer to presentation**
    - Grants help underrepresented groups:
      - Women
      - People of color
    - Work with organizations with philanthropic funding
- Professional Development
  - Working directly with corporations and government agencies to improve their workforce
  - Center for Leadership and Innovation
    - Helping companies work on their diversity, equity, and inclusion with customize programs/trainings
      - **Refer to presentation for how they are upholding these values within a company**
        - Target audience can be senior leaders all the way down to individual contributors
        - Could be online or self-paced programs
      - Address these issues from both the workforce side and the employer side to create greater diversity and equality
- Role of Government and Legislation
  - **Refer to presentation**
    - Funding
    - Monitoring some profit organizations
    - Continue to minimize the four year and technical degree requirement for some jobs
- Questions
  - Leonardo- How do people, specifically the population they are trying to assist, find out about the training center and how do you find them? How do you stop an employer from requiring a four year degree if they want someone who does?
    - Jon- It is an ongoing challenge. Sometimes it is a dialogue with HR or if companies are in dire need, they are more willing. It is not always immediate change, but there is openness. Apprenticeships and internships have succeeded.

They do a lot of marketing and host monthly information sessions open. Specific programs do outreach and there are admission specialists who help students with funding.

Lauren transitioned to next agenda item, recommendations

- Over the next two to three subgroup meetings and through small working group meetings among members, to draft recommendations to submit to the Council.
- They will go over how things make the final report
  - Agreement process among members
- Template of the final report
  - Potential blueprint to work off of
- Timeline:
  - Goal is to have a complete set of draft recommendations by the end of their May meeting
  - Finalize recommendations in June for a report due to the Council by July 1<sup>st</sup>
    - Questions:
      - Candace- Should we start coming up with recommendations in this meeting or could they digest the information that they were given and think as they go?
        - Lauren suggests- Use some time now to digest what was shared and also allow Leonardo to share his findings on leadership, which could evolve into a recommendation. Afterwards, they can solicit what people would like to include as additional recommendations via email and Lauren can compile the recommendations and present during the next meeting. Then, small groups could break out and start drafting.

Leonardo discussed what he had put together for the group

- Last meeting, they discussed potential policy around leadership
- Leonardo starting digging more into the legislation that was introduced by the Maryland House Speaker
  - Also looked at legislation introduced elsewhere and talking with other people
- When making recommendations, he suggests that the group looks at it from an impact standpoint
  - Long- term, short-term, or mid-term
  - This won't be an immediate impact
- After conducting his research, he thinks that there is a general sentiment that agrees that diversity in workforce and leadership is good.
  - How is our desired impact going to be achieved?
- **Refer to documentation for more details about the Maryland HB**
  - In essence, there needs to be local diversity or corporate board diversity, or you will be at risk of losing incentives, like tax credits, grants, or certain contracts.
  - There are challenges from a small employer vs. big businesses.
    - Howard County is majority small business
    - Different set of nuances:
      - Family-owned businesses

- Think about overall compliance and oversight
  - What are the prerequisites
  - What documents are going to be submitted
- Procurement needs to be separated
- Questions/Reactions:
  - Roger- Under procurement, Leonardo made reference to the potential topics of disparate aesthetic. This is related to his earlier question regarding whether or not there has to be documented disparate data to support legislative efforts. Wants to acknowledge that there is a connection. Also agrees that this is a different topic on the economic side.
    - Lauren- Contain this to leadership and procurement as a separate body. Asked Roger if he will have the ability to gather the data that exists and can support a recommendation, which he could then share.
      - Roger- Yes, he believes so
  - Leonardo- Make goals within goals because statically Howard County is doing well as it relates to minority spending but people's experiences say otherwise. "Peeling back the onion" in the data to find issues
    - Candace- Agrees with Leonardo. We must look at disaggregated data. Perhaps, this could be a part of a recommendation
      - Minah- Agrees. You have to look at it in multiple ways
      - Candace- How are we looking and analyzing the data? It is more than what is on the surface level.
      - Ayesha- Some of this data might be at the State level procurement
  - Lauren invites folx who would like to develop a procurement related set of recommendations as a possibility for gaining more data to support that
  - Lauren asked how Candace felt about the information shared by Leonardo
    - Candace- Thinks they should be thoughtful and bold as it pertains as diverse leadership broadly. Thinks Leonardo did a fantastic job. Also, wants to make clear that diverse leadership is more than Black people

Lauren shared her screen with the set of topics previously discussed by the group and invited speakers

- It would be ambitious to have recommendations for every single topic
- Lauren suggests that everyone takes time to reflect on all of the information heard and coordinate with Aaron and Candace to solicit folx initial thoughts on potential recommendations. Between meetings, here from groups on what's on people's mind for potential recommendations. From there, they will assign groups
  - Ayesha asked if the group was able to use different platforms to share documents
    - Lauren- asked Ayesha to share the specific platform she is suggesting

Candace opened a conversation around what happened at the Public Testimony

- Minah- appreciated the Chairs putting out a statement. Reiterates Candace point that diversity is more than a Black White issue, it is an everybody issue. Because hate crimes are happening in business, perhaps this group could take a deeper look at what's going on
  - Candace- It is terrible to see what is happening to Asian American business in Howard County. It was a hate crime. We should continue to call out the hate for what it is. Again, this is more than a Black White issue

- Ayesha- felt as though the pain that is happening in the community is wide, but specifically the hate seen with the Asian community feels personal. Thinks that it is important to very vocal in the solidarity with one another. Also, is grateful that there was a statement made. Thinks it is a long road for Howard County. The work that they are doing now is great way to call things out as they are. What can we do? Ends by thanking Candace for her leadership.
  - Candace- With all six Chairs, there were no hesitancy. They all agreed that they needed to speak out
- Minah- In response to Ayesha's question, they could be more diligent about raising awareness. This could be a possible recommendation as well. This could influence many areas. "Choose Civility" was a big campaign and they could do the same by proposing recommendations. Also, wants to point out that during the public testimony , there was talk about more diverse leadership
  - Ayesha- There's also a lack of access that was discussed, which could affect leadership.
- Minah- Spoke with the President of Leaders of Howard County, Stacy Hunt. She is willing to come speak with the group if they are interested.
  - Candace- Agrees that it is great idea and having this exposure.
- Candace reminded the group that they can make recommendations that go beyond legislation
  - Lauren- Points out that the Land Use Subgroup is talking about recommendations around changing the narrative within the community (West and East part of the County) and feeling a sense of belonging. Also, the Legislative Process Subgroup is thinking about recommendation about accessibility and outreach. Wanted to bring these connection points to the group.

Lauren recapped the next steps and emails

- Next meeting April 7<sup>th</sup> from 6:00pm-8:00pm
- May meeting is May 12<sup>th</sup> from 6:00pm-8:00pm

Candace and Aaron thanks the group for their incredible work and contributions

**Candace adjourns the meeting**