

**Howard County Racial Equity Task Force**  
**Economic & Workforce Development Meeting Minutes**  
**Co-Chair: Aaron Johnson**  
**April 7th, 2021**

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

**Not Present:** Candace Dodson-Reed, Nat Alston, Jonathon Studdard, Roger Barnes, Darren Atwater, and Young Ran Smith.

**Opening:**

Aaron completed attendance and introduced the meeting; There were only 4 subgroup members, which is not a quorum. Therefore, they did not vote on last meeting's minutes.

Lauren reviewed the timeline in close detail and the content of the desired final report

- First draft of recommendations is due April 28<sup>th</sup> submitted to co-chairs, Ashley, and Lauren
- There will be a second public hearing in early May
  - Looking at May 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>
  - This is specifically for feedback, reactions, or experiences related to the recommendation put forth
    - Have a clear prompt
- Discussed draft recommendations as a group during May meeting
- Groups will have all of May to refine and revise recommendations
- During May, draft recommendations will also be sent to the Office of Law for feedback
  - After feedback from the Office of Law, subgroups are responsible for refining and revising recommendations
- All recommendations will be included in the report; it is just a matter of where
- In June, we will finalize recommendations and vote on them
  - Looking for majority
- Final report completion
  - Report will have the following: Cover letter, Main body and Several appendices
  - Required that the Chair submits a final report to the County auditor on or before July 1<sup>st</sup>
- County auditor will review the report and provide fiscal notes
- Subgroup meetings are TBD
- Discuss a presentation to the County Council on August 1<sup>st</sup> - Chairs will submit final report to County Council

Lauren reviews other aspects of the document

- Breakout into small working groups
  - Responsible for drafting
  - If you are not in a small group, but interested in an area, it does not mean you will not have an opportunity to weigh in on a recommendation; Weighing in will take place during meetings

- Most small groups have 2 to 3 people; Do not convene with no more than 4 people at any one time
- All members are in subgroups, including Chairs

Lauren reviews final report guidance

- Cover letter from the Chair
  - Overview of the task force purpose and process
  - Reflection on the experience
  - Overarching takeaways
  - Recommendations for consideration of this kind of process in the future
  - Overview of the report flow
- Main Body
  - Recommendations will meet two criteria:
    - Within the Council's legislative authority according to the Office of Law
    - Supported by most group members
  - All recommendations must contain certain information
    - Recognition of what's being asked of you in your voluntary time
  - Council's legislative authority
    - New County policies
    - Changes to County ordinances
    - Legislation
    - Recommended actions to Howard County entities, especially those that receive County funds
  - Must have data that supports your recommendations
    - Broadly defined data: testimony, own experience, quantitative, anecdotal, data from other counties
  - Helpful to know respective impact of recommendation
    - Who will it help and how?
    - Clarify the intent of the recommendation
  - Metrics (term used broadly) was requested by some Chairs
    - Some indicators that will allow the County Council and Community to know that there's been progress
    - Suggested for the sake of accountability
  - Time-frame impact
    - Immediate impact
    - Systemic, structural impact that might take awhile
- Appendices
  - Honor the effort that everyone has put in
  - Although something might not fit in the Council's authority at this time, it doesn't mean that it couldn't at some point
  - This is a place to capture the remainder of recommendations that were either not within the Council's; legislative authority or did not receive majority of vote
    - Voting is unlimited amount
  - Places for additional communications that are important to document for future references
  - Overview of process
  - List the members on the Task Force - Names are also on website

Lauren opened the floor for questions

- Leonardo- Will the Chairs, ultimately, pull the document together? Will they make sure that the report reads like one coherent document?
  - Lauren- Chairs will compile recommendations for their subgroups and Karla and Lauren will help. Chairs will be writers of the cover letter. The whole subgroup will write the main body. Chairs will write some of the appendices, like more of the process. Karla and Lauren will compile the document and make sure that it is in the correct format and flows in a professional manner. That will be shared with the Chairs to ensure that the content has been retained. Ultimately, the report will represent the group's perspective
  - They haven't discussed if they would share the document back with the group before sent to the Council. They will think on that, but they do not want to burden the subgroup members with a lot of work

Lauren completed a recap and will ask other group members to read the document and reply back to the email

Lauren transitioned to next agenda point

- The group agrees to workshop a recommendation together as practice
- Suggests doing a workshop around apprenticeship recommendation
  - Challenges that Larry and Fran brought up were access to capital, digital access and staffing at the workforce development office
  - Lauren's example for recommendation for these challenges
    - Better funding and more dedicated staff at the workforce development office regarding apprenticeships
      - Leonardo- Recommend funding in a broader context.
        - From his experience as a member on the economic development committee for the County Executives' transition team, one problem the workforce development presented was the resources to adequately promote their services.
        - Shares another example from a legislative bill to contract with someone to help and market the programs. Often, they are given programmatic money, but do not have the funds to promote the programs. They could be short-staffed.
        - Apprenticeship may be the end goal, but he would suggest broader funding, so it can cover more than apprenticeships and perhaps focusing on targeting underserved communities
      - Minah- Agrees with Leonardo. It is not necessarily the position, but it is about raising awareness and educating businesses of this option. The Department of State and Department of Labor at the state and national levels have training funds that are reimbursable for employers who hire apprentices. Maybe the County could extend that and say "if you are hiring an apprentice who fit the DEI lens, then maybe there is an incentive of offsetting additional training dollars that the state does not cover"
        - Shares another example from Florida and how they merge procurement and apprenticeship efforts
    - Lauren recaps Leonardo's and Minah's points and ensures that she is capturing the correct intent.

- Leonardo- Also adds tasking them with more metrics specifically around the demographics that they are serving. This group could start building data around this. Better tracking might be easier to implement as opposed to funding
- Minah goes over her idea in more detail
  - Leonardo- Mentions how Minah's suggestion is used in a lot of major cities
  - Minah- Another indicator other than zip codes is looking at people working on the job or people getting contracts (ex: hiring subcontractors)
    - Leonardo- suggests considering extent to which disparity study is required to mandate this requirement beforehand.
    - Lauren- Makes a note that this area is for Roger to follow-up
- Economic Stability possible recommendations
  - Ayesha-
    - Wage laws and income disparities. County may not be able to change wage laws, but they could encourage the County to ensure that wages and earnings of County employees are indeed livable.
    - ACS disaggregated data; ask if they have finished this data
    - Increase access to affordable Child care
      - Look at the Department of Social Services and their voucher program
      - County could expand the number of people who can access vouchers
      - Lauren shares some overlap with Education subgroup
    - Transportation does not support economic stability
    - Collect data on employment, types of employment, educational credentials that may stand in the way
    - Offers to talk to Education subgroup about universal breakfast for students
    - Still thinking about what is actionable
  - Leonardo- asks for clarification on County employee earnings. Is it related to pay bands?
    - Ayesha- Yes
      - Leonardo- Add that language so it is more clear
      - Lauren added to her document "creation and publication of pay bands"
        - Leonardo- Add comparing data to other jurisdictions
        - Minah- We should compare ourselves to similar cost of living not necessarily neighboring counties
  - Minah- Thinking about: What could be done about the benefit cliff? and What changes can be made to avoid this? Perhaps, the County could support the ALICE population, so they do not have to go back to the poverty level and transition more towards self supporting.

- Leonardo- Great point because you need a little bit of help to get over this barrier. Draws the question of “why I work this hard to move forward if I may end up worse off?”
  - Ayesha- Agrees with Leonardo’s point. Are there other benefits within the benefits cliff that could be expanded to allow families to move forward?
    - Minah- Implement other things that the county could leverage to allow those individuals to move up.  
Coupling the benefits and other benefits
- Leonardo- One general recommendation could be start tracking data (services disaggregated by race/gender/age)
  - Minah- Agrees with Leonardo. What gets measured, gets done. We need to start asking the question: are you serving these populations? The data could allow them to help put more money into raising awareness and begin fixing the problem. If they keep hearing it over again, it could make the message stronger.
  - Ayesha- Agrees with both. Adds that the County has to fund this.
  - Leonardo- The other part to this that dollars being limited, it is difficult to add more money. If you have better data, it may help you in terms of refocusing funding.
  - Minah- For data, maybe it is not the staff that’s needed, but a better system or infrastructure that is needed.
- Aaron- For childcare, we want them to do more but we want to be mindful to not drive out those services. He is interested in the landscape. How much childcare is provided privately and if there is any leverage the county holds in lowering childcare cost and enhancing accessibility?
  - Lauren- Reminds the group about a report

Lauren reviewed other topic areas and next steps

- Hiring practices and leadership
  - Nat and Candace have signed up for this
- Proposes to the group to workshop as much as the group would like and then adjourn
- At the next month meeting, they will meet with sub group to further develop recommendations
- Minah asked- Logistically, are they charged with meeting with other group members to draft recommendations? Is there something more formally organized?
  - Lauren- Everyone will organically connect with other members. She will send a email discussing this
- Leonardo- He is comfortable stopping here
  - Minah- Seconds
- Leonardo- Asks for clarification on what is meant by “draft” recommendation
  - Lauren- Must have a clear top line recommendation. The data, intent, etc could still be worked on. With the group, you can expand upon the top line.
- Lauren will send a follow up via email for any other questions

**Aaron adjourns the meeting**