

Howard County Council

Racial Equity Task Force



Meeting: Public Health and Environmental Policy Subgroup Meeting

Start Time: December 16, 2020 6:03pm

End Time: December 16, 2020 7:50pm

Task Force Member Attendees:

Yvonne Commodore-Mensah
Chiara D'Amore
Myiesha Padder
Nia Leak
Paula Goodwin
Jean Silver-Isenstadt

Yvette Oquendo
Delora Ifekauche
Michael Allen
Buffy Illum
TiQuoria Jackson (absent)

Council and Facilitator Attendees:

Karla Morrison-Brooks
Colette Gelwicks
Brenda Smith

Documents:

- [Agenda](#)
- [Health Equity and Environmental Justice Terms](#)
- [Horizon Foundation's The 2020 Vision for Health in Howard County Report](#)

Approved Minutes:

Dr. Yvonne Commodore-Mensah, Subgroup Chairperson, opened the meeting with a roll call and confirmed that a quorum of subgroup members was present. An opening discussion question was posed to attendees. Dr. Commodore-Mensah moved to approve the meeting minutes from the Public Health and Environmental Policy Subgroup Meeting on November 16, 2020. Dr. Yvette Oquendo, Task Force member, seconded the approval of the minutes. The minutes were unanimously approved.

Karla Morrison-Brooks, Groundwork Facilitator, reviewed the Task Force goals as outlined in CR142-2020, the legislation that formed the Racial Equity Task Force. She also asked members for feedback and outstanding questions from the Task Force Kickoff Meeting on November 19, 2020. Dr. Commodore-Mensah presented health equity and environmental justice terms to the subgroup members.

Ms. Morrison-Brooks led a discussion on proposed partnership agreements and asked members to provide feedback or additions. Two additions were suggested and agreed to. Dr. Commodore-Mensah also led a discussion on internal roles within the subgroup, including asking members who might be

willing to serve in different support roles. Dr. D'Amore volunteered to support the subgroup regarding environmental policy issues. Dr. Goodwin volunteered to serve as a co-captain for research. Dr. Commodore-Mensah and Buffy Illum, Task Force member, volunteered to take the Open Meetings Act training on behalf of the subgroup.

Dr. Commodore-Mensah introduced the discussion on subgroup issues by referencing the Horizon Foundation's "The 2020 Vision for Health in Howard County" report and asking subgroup members to share which topic areas they are interested in exploring. Subgroup members expressed an interest in learning more about how The Horizon Foundation developed the report and obtained the data. The subgroup agreed to invite someone from the Horizon Foundation, who developed the report to speak at the next subgroup meeting in January.

Subgroup members held a robust conversation around various issues related to public health and environmental policy. A broad spectrum of topics and issues were shared and discussed: leading causes of death and disease; food access and insecurity; social determinants; access to services, programs, etc.; partnerships with non-profits and other entities; racial and ethnic disparities related to COVID-19 outcomes; benefits and barriers to physical outdoor activities; domestic violence and child abuse; mental health; transportation and complete streets; demographics of those who live within the Green Infrastructure Network and those who do not; distribution of parks, sidewalks, bike lanes, etc. in the County; city planning and stormwater issues; distribution of resources by neighborhood; recent history of legislation related to health and environmental policy.

Dr. Commodore-Mensah asked subgroup members to consider which organizations or departments may have data that would be valuable to the group. Organizations mentioned include the Horizon Foundation, HopeWorks, the Howard County Health Department, and Howard County Government's Office of Community Sustainability and Department of Community Resources and Services.

Subgroup members reviewed the issues that had been discussed and volunteered to take ownership of the research for several. Dr. D'Amore offered to connect with the Office of Community Sustainability, and Dr. Jean Silver-Isenstadt, Task Force member, agreed to research environmental justice. Michael Allen, Task Force member, volunteered to research services and data related to mental health and domestic abuse and contact both HopeWorks and the Mental Health Advisory Council. Dr. Goodwin offered to share data sources she had identified. Dr. Commodore-Mensah and Dr. Nia Leak, Task Force member, volunteered to look at COVID-19 data. Dr. Leak agreed to research maternal health and Dr. Oquendo offered to contact the Horizon Foundation to obtain data related to this issue. Colette Gelwicks, Council staff, agreed to research recent legislation related to health and environmental policy.

Following the conversation on subgroup issues and pertinent data, the Task Force confirmed the upcoming meeting dates for their subgroup:

- January 20, 6-8pm
- February 17, 6-8pm
- March 17, 6-8pm

Dr. Commodore-Mensah thanked members of the subgroup for participating and adjourned the meeting at 7:50 PM.