



**RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, February 21, 2024 (6:30 P.M.)**

MEETING MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:37 pm by Dr. Pat Grant.

ATTENDEES:

Community Members:

- Dr. Pat Grant (Chair), Shane Lloyd, Dr. Tasnuva Khan, Gustavo Torres
- Selena Mendy Singleton (Parliamentarian), Dr. Anthony R Alston, Shawn Bartley,
- Betty Lam, Dr. James Stowe (Vice Chair), Aisha Williams

Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice Staff:

- Tiffany Ward (Director)

Guests: Jennifer Prillman (Community Advocate), LaTanya Johnson

AGENDA ITEM #1 APPROVED THE AGENDA

- The meeting agenda was adopted with minor modifications, notably with Kenneth Welch from HHS scheduled to speak and other minor adjustments to the order of the proposed issue statements.

AGENDA ITEM #2 - MINUTES

- The minutes from the January 17th, 2024, meeting was approved as presented, with no changes or additions. However, a new member was unable to vote as they were not present at the meeting.

AGENDA ITEM #3 UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- Dr. Grant reminded us of the responsibilities of notetakers and expressed gratitude to everyone.

AGENDA ITEM #4: STATUS OF PALM CARD

- Next month, Sonia Canzater will provide an update on the progress of designing the Palm Card. The card will feature the template used by the County Council and will provide essential information about the committee's objectives, purpose, website details, and general mandate.

AGENDA ITEM #5: Status of RESJAC Retreat

- Although a date has not been finalized yet. It's crucial that everyone responds to the poll to ensure we can find a suitable match for the retreat. Your participation is essential in shaping this important event.

AGENDA ITEM #6: Gender-Inclusive Restrooms

- Selena Mendy Singleton and Director James Stowe jointly addressed concerns regarding Bill 4-22, Human Rights and Civil Liberties - Public Accommodations - Gender Inclusive Restrooms, centered on gender-inclusive restroom availability in places of public accommodations and County-owned buildings. Selena has worked with Councilmember Katz's office and the Department of Government Services to retrofit existing restrooms and provide appropriate signage on the 1st and 7th floors of the County Office Building to better accommodate gender-nonconforming persons.

Director Stone invited Kenneth Welch from HHS, who oversees the enforcement of this policy, to discuss how to inform the public and ensure compliance. With approximately 6,000 to 8,000 facilities affected, the challenge lies in effectively communicating the new restroom policy to owners and educating them on compliance expectations. Despite a few complaints, enforcement has been lenient due to a lack of personnel, with emphasis placed on communication and education rather than more stringent tactics. There are concerns regarding standardization of signage, response to complaints, and the lack of an educational plan. Plans were discussed by RESJAC to submit recommendations to the County Executive and DHHS Director to address these issues, including a communication plan, standardization efforts, and addressing staff shortages for effective implementation.

AGENDA ITEM #8: Presentations of Suggested Issue Statements

- The following RESJAC members presented recommendations for issues that RESJAC should address in this operating year: We will vote next month. The three (3) issues with the most votes will be selected next month as issues to work on during the operating year.

Betty Lam - Issue 1: Finding alignment and adding the voice of RESJAC with the Anti-Hate Task Force -

- This issue, which was presented by Betty Lam, highlights how aligning RESJAC's voice with the Anti-Hate Task Force could be a pivotal step toward combating injustice. Through focused discussions on issues like sexual harassment, this alignment could be primed for recommending policies to address hate crimes. By finding common ground and leveraging our collective insights, Betty suggested that RESJAC could facilitate better navigation of policy recommendations with purpose and clarity. Betty suggested that through this alignment, RESJAC would be better poised to enact transformative change, which would foster a society built on respect, inclusivity, and unity.

Gustavo Torres – Issue 2: Advancing access to healthcare for all, including immigrants.

- This issue, which was presented by Gustavo Torres, addressed how ensuring healthcare access for all, including immigrants, is crucial for a just and equitable society. By removing barriers and offering inclusive healthcare services regardless of immigration status, Gustavo discussed how addressing this issue could help with upholding fundamental human rights and enhancing public health outcomes. He also stressed how prioritizing policies, such as

supporting legislation in Annapolis that allows immigrants to purchase health insurance through the Maryland Exchange, would be vital for fostering a healthier and more inclusive community.

Sonia Canzater – Issue 3: Men's Mental Health (often ignored and under-resourced) –

- This issue, which was presented by Sonia Canzater, addressed how the mental health of minority and Black men is a pressing issue often sidelined and under-resourced. Sonia stressed the importance of targeted campaigns that are needed to promote awareness and accessibility to healthcare resources tailored to their unique needs. She also shared how addressing the disparities in healthcare outcomes and creating safe, culturally sensitive spaces for open dialogue are crucial steps in dismantling barriers and fostering a supportive environment for the mental well-being of minority and Black men. Sonia also pinpointed how this issue shined the light on the need to prioritize Black men's mental health and ensure they receive the care and support they deserve.

Sonia Canzater – Issue 4: Minority youth need more financial and informational support to engage in politics.

- Sonia Canzater also recommended an issue that stressed the importance of empowering minority youth in politics, which would require both financial and informational support. She recommended that RESJAC members vote on ways to prioritize internships, scholarships, and resources to cultivate their engagement at all levels of government. Sonia shared that by investing in their civic education, RESJAC would not just be ensuring diversity but also strengthening the foundation of our democracy for generations to come.

Shane Lloyd – Issue 5: Tighter coordination with the RESJ leads –

- Shane Lloyd presented an issue that stressed how strengthening collaboration with RESJ leaders would be key to advancing racial equity and justice. By sharing best practices and uniting stakeholders, Shane suggested that RESJAC could empower individuals to champion RESJ initiatives across departments and divisions, igniting transformative change throughout our communities.

Dr. Isaac Cudjoe – Issue 6: Growing national movements against Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives. –

Dr. Cudjoe was not at the meeting. He will present next month.

AGENDA ITEM #9: NEW BUSINESS

Formation of Nominating Committee

- Dr. Grant reported that the committee has been established and is poised to kickstart the nomination process. The RESJAC Chair will elaborate on the plans, outlining the steps to commence interviews with applicants for the annual RESJAC vacancies. The aim is to furnish the County Executive with a comprehensive list of recommended candidates to fill these vacancies. With the selection of a Nominating Committee in place, the process is set to begin imminently.

International Mother Language Day

- Dr. Tasnuva Khan's presentation on International Mother Language Day was an enlightening journey through its history and significance. With precision and passion, Dr. Khan highlighted the pivotal role of the Language Movement in our pursuit of liberation and justice. Her words resonated deeply, underscoring the importance of linguistic diversity in shaping our identities and fostering unity. It was a presentation that left an indelible mark on all who attended, inspiring a renewed commitment to honoring and preserving our mother languages.

Black History Month Recognition

- Director Jim Stowe offered insight into the essence of Black History Month, illuminating the journey of perseverance and resilience through epochs of reconstruction in Alabama and Mississippi. From the shackles of oppression to the boundless horizon of freedom, he highlighted how people are reminded of the insidious nature of hatred and division, transcending boundaries in our pursuit of unity. Director Stowe uplifted how all can honor the invaluable contributions of Black individuals and commit to collective action for racial equity and social justice. He also shared how all can navigate the currents of history, staying vigilant against its repetition, and forging a path towards a brighter future for Montgomery County and beyond.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 PM.