

December 19, 2024

Subject: Racial Equity Commission September 18, 2024, Meeting Minutes
Reporting Period: September 2024-December 2024
Prepared By: Joyce Chiao, Consultant, Abundance
Reviewed By: Dr. Larissa Estes, Executive Director, Racial Equity Commission

Recommended Action

Approval of the September 18, 2024 Racial Equity Commission Meeting Minutes.

Racial Equity Commission September 18, 2024 - Meeting Minutes

Agenda Item #1: Welcome

A. CALL TO ORDER: Chair Wood called the meeting to order at 10:04 AM. Shared a reminder that the Commission condemns acts of hate and discrimination. Chair Wood shared the CA VS Hate resource line.

B. REVIEW OF THE AGENDA

C. REMARKS FROM DISTINGUISHED GUESTS

Chair Wood welcomed any distinguished guests in the room to address the Commission, and recognized distinguished guests present.

Distinguished Guests:

Gethsemane Moss, Ed.D., Field Representative, Office of Senator Bill Dodd, Senate District 3

D. ESTABLISHMENT OF QUORUM: Quorum Met; 9/11 Commissioners Present

Commissioners Present:

1. Commissioner Dr. Luke Wood, Chair
2. Commissioner Simboa Wright, Vice Chair
3. Commissioner Candis Bowles
4. Commissioner Virginia Hedrick
5. Commissioner John Kim
6. Commissioner Traco Matthews
7. Commissioner Jolie Onodera
8. Commissioner Yolanda R. Richardson
9. Commissioner Angelica Salas

Commissioners Absent:

1. Commissioner Gabriel Maldonado
2. Commissioner Dr. Manuel Pastor

F. PUBLIC COMMENT PROCESS

Public Comment

No public comment.

Agenda Item #2: Public Comment on matters not on the agenda

No public comment.

Agenda Item #3: Port Chicago 50 Exoneration Acknowledgement

Commissioner Dr. Luke Wood, Chair

Dr. Larissa Estes, Executive Director, Racial Equity Commission

Reverend Diana McDaniel, Board President, Friends of Port Chicago

David Salniker, Board Treasurer, Friends of Port Chicago

Yulie Padmore, Executive Director, Port Chicago Alliance

- Agenda item included showing of CBS video, [Navy exonerates Black sailors 80 years after Port Chicago disaster](#).

Commission Discussion

Matthews: Thanked speakers for sharing history. Expressed a desire to bring forward a formal recommendation from the Commission to support the creation of the Visitors Center at the Thurgood Marshall Regional Park – Home of the Port Chicago 50.

Estes: Noted that staff will check the legal feasibility of the Commission making a formal recommendation of this nature as a public body. Reiterated that individuals can offer their personal support. Noted that staff can also explore other options for the Commission to offer their support.

Bowles: Reflected on the conviction of the soldiers becoming a barrier to other opportunities, such as compensation. Encouraged the Commission to consider the layers of barriers facing those for whom the Commission does this work. Consider how institutional racism creates legal challenges that prevents us from moving forward in the ways that we should.

Kim: Thanked the speakers. Offered support for the recommendation brought forth by Commissioner Matthews. Connected this request for support to a similar request in Delano. Encouraged an exploration of how the Commission generally supports communities.

Public Comment

Kei Yamamoto of California Pan-Ethnic Health Network and Gigi Crowder of NAMI California.

Agenda Item #4: ACTION: Consent Agenda – Approval of July 17, 2024 Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Dr. Luke Wood, Chair

Dr. Larissa Estes, Executive Director, Racial Equity Commission

Public Comment

No public comment.

Commission Discussion

Onodera: Noted to update the date on page 1, update a reference from Racial Equity Commission to Racial Equity Coalition on page 2.

Motion to approve with the correction by Commissioner Onodera and seconded by Commissioner Wright.

Motion passes (9-0-2*). *Marks abstention or absence from vote.

Agenda Item #5: Executive Director's Report

Dr. Larissa Estes, Executive Director, Racial Equity Commission

Public Comment

No public comment.

Commission Discussion

Wood: Agreed with increasing the meeting cadence. Agreed with the roadshow returning to same communities who have provided input.

Onodera: Supported joint committee meetings, especially the Budget and Data Committees.

Agenda Item #6: CHAIR ACTION: 15 Minute Recess

Commissioner Dr. Luke Wood, Chair

Dr. Larissa Estes, Executive Director, Racial Equity Commission

Chair Wood called a recess at 11:05 AM.

Chair Wood called the meeting to order at 11:23 AM.

Agenda Item #7: ACTION: Committee Reports and Discussion

Commissioner Dr. Luke Wood, Executive Committee

Commissioner Traco Matthews, Data Committee

Commissioner Angelica Salas, Fundraising Committee

Commissioner Yolanda Richardson, Framework Development Committee

Commissioner Angelica Salas, Community Engagement Committee

A. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORT

Commission Discussion

No Commission discussion.

B. DATA COMMITTEE REPORT

Commission Discussion

No Commission discussion.

C. FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE REPORT

Commission Discussion

No Commission discussion.

D. FRAMEWORK DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE REPORT

Commission Discussion

No Commission discussion.

E. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE REPORT

Action item to elect Commissioner Salas to the office of Committee Lead for the Community Engagement Committee.

Commission Discussion

No Commission discussion.

Motion to elect Commissioner Salas to the office of Community Engagement Committee Lead by Commissioner Matthews and seconded by Commissioner Wright.

Motion passes (8-0-1*). *Marks abstention or absence from vote.

Public Comment

Kei Yamamoto of California Pan-Ethnic Health Network, Nia Johnson of Next100, Elena Santamaria of NextGen Policy.

Agenda Item #8: DISCUSSION: Fireside Chat – Advancing Equity in Local Government

Commissioner Dr. Luke Wood, Chair

Dr. Larissa Estes, Executive Director, Racial Equity Commission

Shireen Malekafzali Taidi, Chief Equity Officer, County of San Mateo (CA)

Panel Discussion

Estes: Can you share a bit about the history of our role and your “why” in doing this work?

Malekafzali Taidi: Passion comes from being an immigrant and firsthand experience of othering. Activated by environmental justice movement and learning that personal experiences were connected to broader systems of power. Moved from what we do not want to what we do want. Learned from books from authors like bell hooks and Angela Glover Blackwell. Was Chief Health Equity Officer. COVID-19 crisis played a critical role in the State requiring local government to track health equity data points. Racial reckoning in 2020 was about community

activism. Those two pushes led to recognizing a gap in government infrastructure and the need for a role to think about how to fill that gap. County decided to add a Chief Equity Officer. Wrote a memo describing what I thought the job was based on the job description. Building the ship as we are sailing it. Having leadership know what we do not know is critical.

Estes: Can you share more about how San Mateo County has engaged with community to advance racial equity?

Malekafzali Taidi: Complicated because communities do not experience government in siloes or they experience it in such a silo that they assume that is the case for every department of division. Health was the largest division. Used to working through layers to build infrastructure across different groups. Twenty-nine departments with their own culture and on their own journey. Respect where other parts of our institutions are. Developed a framework. More than 40 presentations to show definitions and theory of change. Integrated feedback. Presented to Board for feedback and approval. Created Core Equity Team comprised of representatives from each department. Role was to come with challenges, insights, opportunities, and needs from departments. Take back countywide strategies, tools, efforts, and information to departments. Tied to a Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) role and an Executive Sponsor. Core Equity Team representatives meet monthly. Executive Team members joined quarterly. Developed a county-wide Racial and Social Equity Action Plans. Each department submits their own action plans.

Estes: Can you talk about San Mateo County's community engagement efforts around racial equity?

Malekafzali Taidi: Many different communities. Not just geographies and demographics. Also staff and cities. Convene cities and other government jurisdictions quarterly for the Equity in Government Community of Practice. Theory of change is that we cannot do it alone. Shared language and resources. Learn from each other. Relationships and regular engagement with community organizers is critical. Used to bring together Executive Directors of community organizers monthly. Hold community forums. Need to be careful about engaging community in ways that are not harmful. Different departments tapping into the same communities for input can be harmful. Need clarity on how to engage community. Currently do not have database on how community has been engaged. Will be doing analysis of community engagement across twenty-nine departments and developing parameters to shore up infrastructure. Will conduct a community engagement survey during off-year of budget cycle to inform resource allocation. First need to understand who will be doing it, when, and how to do it.

Estes: Community is tired. So much of this work does feel extractive of community. Imagining one place for information to feed in that everyone can touch sounds incredibly impactful.

Malekafzali Taidi: Do a lot of community outreach engagement to build foundation. Be accountable back. Be systematic and thoughtful with how we do community engagement.

Estes: How does the County of San Mateo build racial equity into budget decisions?

Malekafzali Taidi: Money comes from state and federal government. Need to do more capacity-building to address the perception of large budget and local discretion over budget. Need to find a way for responsible engagement. First year of exploring sales tax measure. Did a community engagement process to identify priorities for sales tax measures and how dollars are allocated around priorities. Also integrated equity performance measures as part of budgeting process. Approach is to measure outcomes, and allocate funds towards outcomes. Must have equity metrics and outcomes as part of budget process.

Estes: How have you trained your departments and agencies to think about equity impacting the budget process?

Malekafzali Taidi: Need to understand where they are in their journey. Sometimes need to provide more technical assistance and support. Provide guidance to disaggregate data. Responsive government is not always equitable. Need to build up and trust expertise of departments because they know the relevant workflows and challenges. Developed departmental Equity Team. Departments cannot lead something that they do not believe in, so let departments lead from where they are.

Estes: How does the County of San Mateo use data aggregation, such as the pay equity dashboard, to advance racial equity within its workforce?

Malekafzali Taidi: Cannot be equitable externally without being equitable internally. Developed a pay equity dashboard. Break down classification levels, demographics, and many different cuts. Departments often want to move that work forward once the data shows the gaps. To backtrack to the community engagement piece, being equitable internally is relevant. Boards and Commissions are formal infrastructure for community decision-making. Many are not demographically representative. Did a demographic analysis of Boards and Commissions. Woefully underrepresented. No stipend. Barriers in funding. Thinking about community engagement outside of Boards and Commission is a problem.

Estes: What are the first two steps government (including departments, offices, etc) should take to jump start their racial equity journey? What is the role that the Commission could have in supporting those steps?

Malekafzali Taidi: Commission could convene Chief Equity Officers and leads from across the state to share resources, learn from one another, and build collective momentum. Limited funding and staff for equity work. Hard to spend budget with limited staff. Procurement process requires staff infrastructure. Need to fund this new government function so that we are not scraping from other departments. Other departments are much more willing to partner if they do not feel like we are taking from their finite piece of the budget. Community engagement support and opportunities. Hard to use general fund money to take risks. State could offer support that encourages innovation. Change systems back to allow Zoom participation on Boards and Commissions. Article 34 of the California constitution still requires

going to voters to build low-income housing and often becomes a barrier to the development of low-income housing.

Committee Discussion

Wood: Thanked Shireen Malekafzali Taidi. Invited Commissioners to participate in discussion.

Hedrick: Can you share any barriers between local and state government that perpetuate systemic racism in the work you do at the local level?

Malekafzali Taidi: Barriers to virtual engagement of Boards and Commissioners is a provision of State law. Article 34. Our inability to provide stipends. CalEnviroScreen can direct funding to low-income communities for the development of affordable housing, which can be good in some ways but also can concentrate poverty. Consider other indices to collect that would ensure more amenities are available to low-income residents and that would help California continue to desegregate. The Othering and Belonging Institute has a map on it.

Salas: What are you learning about durability? Are people aware of the changes that have removed immigrant status as barriers to Board and Commissions?

Malekafzali Taidi: We could improve our work to maintain our innovations and learnings from the pandemic. Need virtual engagement on Boards and Commissions. Need to address State emergency response structure and how we embed equity, such as in the allocation of resources. Challenge is that we want to revert to what we are comfortable doing. Durability is difficult because there is not a regular source of funding for equity that it becomes a nice-to-have. Still a question of whether it is still necessary. Not a permanent part of infrastructure. Durability requires us to consider how to create a permanent infrastructure for equity in government. Durability requires progress and continually building foundational elements in how government works. For the second question, we do not ask those questions, so I do not know how widely understood that is. Will do more work to learn and stay on top of that.

Kim: How do we move, incentivize, or create frameworks so that all departments are engaged in this work?

Malekafzali Taidi: Work happens in departments. People are experiencing government through departments. Trying to shepherd departments. A large part of the role as a central office is to bring those who are lagging behind others without impeding the frontrunners. Create expectations that cannot be lowered. Set minimum requirements to create a racial equity plan, assess staff perceptions about equity, include equity impact statements and fiscal impact statements for items brought to supervisors, and include equity in performance for budgeting. Set standards if we say that good government is equitable government.

Matthews: Raised consideration to require that people with lived experiences fill seats on Commissions and Boards.

Wright: Do you have any data on staff who live within the County?

Malekafzali Taidi: Worked with the Board to declare the County as an anchor institution. The County is an economic engine in the community as one of the largest employers with large procurement spend. Need to embed equity across our business, which is a long-term equity

strategy for our communities as well as service and programmatic provisions. We have an Inclusive Staffing and Inclusive Procurement Committee. Working on local procurement preference policy exploring those opportunities. Recently conducted a supplier diversity study to see where our spend is going, what markets we do business in, and where our opportunities and challenges are. As for staff, we explored horizontal movement and promotional opportunities. Workforce dashboard indicates demographic representation across the entire workforce. That representation does not necessarily translate to higher levels. We have good paying jobs that look at benefits. Pain points are in credentialed areas. County may not have enough volume to justify local workforce development programming, but if they are regional pain points and the program could lead to good paying jobs with opportunities to partner with local colleges, we may have enough volume to justify developing one at a regional level. Retention is huge. Local folks not only do they do their jobs better, but they also stay longer.

Public Comment

Julia Caplan of State of Equity and Cynthia Gomez of The Coalition for Human Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA).

Agenda Item #9: DISCUSSION: Next Steps for Staff Action

Commissioner Dr. Luke Wood, Chair

Dr. Larissa Estes, Executive Director, Racial Equity Commission

Committee Discussion

Wood: Highlighted next steps from earlier in the Commission Meeting to consider legality and appropriateness of endorsing Port Chicago 50 Visitors Center. Invited Commissioner Matthews to expand on next step.

Matthews: Discussed the necessity of leveraging seats of power that already exist for their intended purpose of community engagement. Provided a recommendation for the Commission to formalize or investigate the possibility of ensuring that representatives on those public bodies have lived experience.

Wood: Asked Dr. Estes to clarify if this recommendation would be appropriate for Framework Development Committee.

Estes: Suggested that this notion is relevant for the Framework Development and Community Engagement Committees to explore as a recommendation for the framework. Consider how that work might exist within the structure of state government.

Salas: Discussed the importance of resourcing to move work forward. Requested exploration of innovative funding and examples of these kinds of funds to advance racial equity.

Matthews: Emphasized that Racial Equity Commission as a body or concept must be developed into state infrastructure, such as established as an office or established in perpetuity.

Estes: Suggested that concept for the Framework Development Committee. Also noted the need to explore legal guidance on what can and cannot be done in State Government to provide the Committee with guidance on what that recommendation could be. Included the

possibility of exploring how jurisdictions across the country have made that shift to institutionalize. Highlighted another staff action item to research constitutional barriers around engagement and other structural barriers that could be hindering state and local government capacity to engage communities and advance racial equity work.

Wood: Asked Dr. Estes for feedback on feasibility of next steps.

Estes: Noted that these items will be added to the list of items to do. Recognized their importance in the work of the Commission.

Agenda Item #10: Meeting Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 1:01 PM.

DRAFT