

February 20, 2025

Subject: Racial Equity Commission Budget Equity Committee May 9, 2024, Meeting Minutes
Reporting Period: May 2024-February 2025
Staff Lead: Alex C. Walker, Executive Fellow, California Strategic Growth Council
Reviewed by: Ashley Gerrity, Senior Program Analyst, Racial Equity Commission

Recommended Action

Approval of the May 9, 2024, Racial Equity Commission Budget Equity Committee Meeting Minutes.

Racial Equity Commission Budget Equity Committee May 9, 2024 - Meeting Minutes

Agenda Item #1: Welcome

A. CALL TO ORDER: Per the bylaws of the Racial Equity Commission, Commissioner Candis Bowles called the meeting to order at 1:04 PM.

B. LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

C. REVIEW OF THE AGENDA

D. REMARKS FROM DISTINGUISHED GUESTS

Distinguished Guests:

Ann Burroughs, President and CEO, Japanese American National Museum

Nancy Yap, Executive Director, Center for Asian Americans United for Self Empowerment (CAUSE)

Caroline Torosis, Senior Deputy, Workforce Development & Economic Opportunity, The Office of Supervisor Holly Mitchell, Los Angeles County, 2nd District

Supervisor Hilda Solis, Los Angeles County, 1st District

E. ESTABLISHMENT OF QUORUM: Quorum Met; 4/4 Committee Members Present

Commissioners Present:

1. Commissioner Candis Bowles
2. Commissioner John Kim
3. Commissioner Gabriel Maldonado
4. Commissioner Jolie Onodera (Virtually)

F. HOUSEKEEPING AND PUBLIC COMMENT PROCESS

Committee Discussion

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No Commission discussion on this agenda item.

Public Comment

No public comment on this agenda item.

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

Xilonin Cruz-Gonzalez of Californians Together and Jacky Guerrero of Catalyst California.

Agenda Item #3: ACTION: Selection of Committee Lead and Committee Overview

Commissioner Candis Bowles, Acting Committee Lead

Dr. Larissa Estes, Executive Director, Racial Equity Commission

Motion to appoint Commissioner Maldonado as Committee Lead

Motioned by Commissioner Maldonado and seconded by Commissioner Bowles.

Motion passes (3-0-1*). *Marks abstention or absence from vote.

*Commissioner Maldonado abstained.

Committee Discussion

Bowles: Welcomed and congratulated Commissioner Maldonado as the inaugural lead. Per the bylaws, returned the meeting to Lead Maldonado.

Maldonado: Expressed appreciation to committee. Provided an overview of the Committee's charge as outlined in Bylaws. Invited committee to ask questions about Charter.

Kim: Proposed amendment language, to insert, "...and strategies to advance budget equity and address structural racism in budgeting."

Onodera: Supportive of Commissioner Kim's proposed amendment.

Bowles: Supportive of proposed amendment.

Maldonado: Supportive of proposed amendment.

Estes: Requested Commissioner Kim share the proposed language text with staff to take to full Commission.

Public Comment

No public comment on this agenda item.

Motion to bring Commissioner Kim's proposed Charter language amendment to the full Commission.

Motioned by Commissioner Kim and seconded by Commissioner Bowles.

Motion passes (4-0-0*). *Marks abstention or absence from vote.

Agenda Item #4: 15 Minute Recess

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Commissioner Gabriel Maldonado, Committee Lead

Dr. Larissa Estes, Executive Director, Racial Equity Commission

Lead Maldonado called a recess at 1:38 PM.

Lead Maldonado called the meeting to order at 2:03 PM.

Agenda Item #5: DISCUSSION: Advancing Budget Equity Strategies – Panel Discussion and Committee Discussion

Commissioner Gabriel Maldonado, Committee Lead

Dr. Larissa Estes, Executive Director, Racial Equity Commission

Skyla Fuentes, Youth Leader, InnerCity Struggle

Dr. D’Artagnan Scorza, Executive Director of Racial Equity, Los Angeles County

Kim Desmond, Chief of Race and Equity, City of San Diego

Maria Barakat, Program Manager for Transformative Racial Equity, The Greenlining Institute

Pannel Discussion

Estes: Can you share the context around the County’s determination to allocate ARPA funds with a racial equity framework?

Scorza: Prioritize equity in distribution of ARPA. Ensure that dollars reach those most in need from pandemic, essential workers, older adults, people with comorbidities, unique needs of immigrants unhoused, etc. Developed a methodology to carry our programmatic responsibility, but to apply a consistent equity formula. What made it possible was the support of the Federal Treasury. Relationship between guidance, political leadership, infrastructure, formula, technical assistance.

Estes: What were some of the first opportunities to integrate racial equity into budget decisions and how did you get this work started?

Desmond: Tale of two cities, beauty and poverty. What are ways to intentionally decision racial equity in budget and policy decisions. Formula and methodology. Met with lots of people to understand what it is people are asking the government to provide. Made a list of departments, systems mapping, what service they provide. City budgets are not built to dismantle inequity, most of it is operations, which creates challenge. Add disparities to plan, implement monitor and as funds are available.

Estes: Can you share a little bit more about your advocacy efforts as part of students deserve and redirecting funds to resources like the black student achievement plan?

Fuentes: Main focus is getting student intel on what is it they really need in schools. What it is our schools do and do not have. Nurses, counselors, no funding available. Index funding for students, reallocate formula. Look at schools with more black and brown students, they are the schools’ lacking resources. Black student achievement comes with counselors. Being a part of

work done, going to board of LAUSD telling them our stories, you're the reason, telling them what we deserve. Focused on big budget of school police officers, police free campaign, \$52 million for school police, reallocate portion into schools, a victory of \$25 million, Black Student Achievement Program, bring in counselors and more needs of students. Your voice as a student does matter and makes a change.

Estes: What are best practices to advance budget equity?

Barakat: Budgets reflect values and priorities. Budget tools most common ways to operationalize racial equity in government. Leaders in this work are cities and counties, such as San Diego, Marin, Oakland, and LA. Transparency and accountability, resourcing and capacity, and permanency and consistency. These three things. First, permanency and consistency are critical. A lot of work in the state is a pilot program or done in ad hoc basis. Directives and mandates are important. Tools must be the requirement of standards of use. Budget tool being explicit. It's not just a tool, it's a whole process and wholistic approach. Racial equity and budget tool must be transparent.

Estes: How did you go from budget equity as a concept to an effective practice, and lessons learned moving from an idea to implementation and action?

Scorza: People talk about fair share, important to know incremental budget is used as a strategy. Priority budgeting. It is really hard to build equity into any budgeting model. Equity often seen as taking away from someone, problematic narrative. Equity accounts for different starting places. Equity is making sure you have shoes that fit. People are scared it is taking away from others. County makes sure in approach to work, looked at equity as a starting place, looked at entire picture. Track money according to an outcome and goal, not inherently built into system, had to build new systems to do so. Community inform and shape the outcomes.

Estes: Thoughts on how to go from equity as a concept to an actual action?

Desmond: Designed to be intentionally racist, designed to produce inequity. First year as mayor, optimist. Need to be clear about system you are playing in and what it means to apply an equity lens. Is not linear, you will move all over the place, this work is generational, people have died for this. I do not care if you believe what you believe, you can believe what you want, I am not here to change your beliefs, I am here to change outcomes. We need to redesign the systems in a way we have not seen before. This country has not seen before a system that produces equity and one that does not produce inequities. I know what is killing me, I need a prescription.

Estes: Can you talk about your experiences with mistrust and engagement and its importance around budget equity?

Fuentas: There was a backlash, new superintendent, wants to reconstruct the whole system the way he sees it, taking back money, not listening to students. Can make you want to give up. Do not give up. Go back to the boards, rallies, etc., and tell your story again. That's where the change happens. That's where the change starts. Our trauma means something. Our stories and experience are being told because they mean something and are powerful. Next generation deserves to not go through trauma we went through.

Estes: Will you share the importance of ongoing engagement and how it fits into the bigger picture of budget equity?

Barakat: Community are tired and feel betrayed. Not coming back in resolved ways. Felt impact must be considered. Building actual relationships for communities.

Estes: What is the biggest takeaway for the Commission should know about developing and advocating for budget equity?

Fuentes: Who is deserving of certain budgeting and how can that budgeting be put into place. Focus on who is this for, who are you trying to include. How are you making them feel included.

Barakat: Decisions must be dependent on equitable outcomes, being designed into proposal and ask. We need to make equity important to be included. Equity should be a weighted criterion, understanding baseline and measurable goal, and how to implement as required pieces. Bring in budget staff to identify spaces and design the tool.

Desmond: Local level, need a clear bucket of funds dedicated to equity. This state is one of the fastest growing for equity offices in the nation. Mayors are having to cut equity. Needs to be an allocation to be partners to address clear racial disparities. Budgets are not currently designed to address totality of experiences.

Scorza: Encouraged public to visit La County to see the resources available. Cannot just go to community and ask them to keep telling us what we know. Build relationship of trust and consistent engagement. People want to be involved throughout. Leverage this process for other spaces. If we can get it done here, hopefully we can get it done elsewhere. Learn from mistakes and successes, learn from this work to normalize and professionalize this work.

Commission Discussion

Onodera: Thanked the panelists. Dr. Scorza mentioned success they had with ARPA funds through federal partnerships, would appreciate an expansion on their experience.

Scorza: Responding to federal and congressional requirements, they have own priorities and requirements, restrictions, all which shape how state and local governments carry out their work. Making sure federal requirements are not in conflict with state and local requirements. Flexibility to do work on the ground.

Bowles: Expressed appreciation for panelists. Particularly concerned with other policies. Wondering if in your own programs you were able to measure impact?

Desmond: Equity work is very tangible; you can feel it and touch it. Expanding on policy to identify indicators.

Scorza: My office is providing technical assistance, goals and objective for metrics. Logic models to get design completed. Seeing early results from data, stand by until June 2025 is when we will release a report to understand impact. Early signs on differences made, such as in housing, tenants, and evictions, food security, digital divide, libraries. Seeing utilization in laptop distribution program.

Kim: Thanked the panelists for coming in today and for doing this work. What is consistently required and important is people coming in with energy and perspective, such as Skyla.

Maldonado: Echoed everything fellow Commissioners shared. What baseline training is needed to begin implementing operational equity plans. What did you do initially when developing these plans?

Desmond: We had prior training in San Diego, 101 what is equity, equality, and racism. Provide training on technical equity plans and other processes.

Scorza: Put together roll out plan, included two workshops, overview of process, and individual department support. Spent time understanding. Level of work it takes to get this done. Detail and attention to get this done.

Maldonado: Kim mentioned that racial equity work is often where budgets get cut. How do you roll out subtraction in an equitable way?

Desmond: We have a deficit right now, cuts with outcomes are clear, such as technology access. Mayors must make decisions to balance budget, and false choice decisions. Current construction of budget does not include disparities. Lots to be done in the construction of budgets, with a clear bucket for disparities. Should not have to make a choice between tutoring and Wi-Fi.

Barakat: This is the critical point and piece; equity is not by accident. When we are not targeting money based on need, we are hemorrhaging money.

Maldonado: Expressed appreciation, asked how we go about subtracting in an equitable way?

Barakat: Developing budget. Critically at the legislative level, equity assessments. We have different levels on where we can intervene.

Maldonado: Thanked and excused panelists. Thanked members of the public for their comments.

Public Comment

Alejandra Ponce de Leon of Catalyst California, Abigail Hewins of Public Health Advocates, Vince Leus of Prevention Institute, Liza Davis of the Children's Partnership, Xilonin Cruz-Gonzalez of Californians Together, Benjamin Tran of Asian Americans Advancing Justice Southern California, Lianne Dillon of State of Equity, A'Mari Truby-Mckay of NextGen CA, Cynthia Chockalingam of South Asian Network, Chynell Freeman, Cynthia Gomez of The Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights, and Reiney Lin.

Agenda Item #6: DISCUSSION: Next Steps for Staff Action

Commissioner Gabriel Maldonado, Committee Lead

Dr. Larissa Estes, Executive Director, Racial Equity Commission

Committee Discussion

Maldonado: Noted two items: to integrate the bylaw amendment for consideration by the full Commission and to produce the Committee report for the full Commission.

Kim: Express that it would be helpful to invite leaders of state department who oversee budgeting and see ones doing a good job implementing equity and those facing challenges. First, to hear from County budget leaders and what kinds of guidance needed from state would be helpful as well. Second, for us to identify what are the largest racial disparities the state is facing and where state investment can make an impact.

Maldonado: Following up on Commissioner Kim's remarks, would appreciate hearing from Department of Finance and State Controller as well.

Bowles: Call for innovation, worry when we seek people involved in problem, it does not solve it. Remarkd, "where do we go to?" Does not want to perpetuate models, rather, wants to identify where to look to.

Maldonado: Foundational understanding granular, role of federal government, state, etc. Basic mechanics of where we are.

Bowles: Kim Desmond mentioned a program in San Diego that may be a good resource. Start getting models and resource data to inform how we look at budget equity.

Onodera: Would appreciation compilation of resources and data to look to.

Estes: Staff will proceed with actions.

Agenda Item #7: Meeting Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 4:19 PM.