

City of Cleveland Heights

Racial Justice Task Force

June 24th, 2021

Virtual Public Meeting (via Zoom)

Members Present

Gary Benjamin
Nate Berkey
Kasia Bufford
Demetrius Cheeks
Mario Clopton Zymler
Laura Collier
Mandy Colvin
Rhonda Davis Lovejoy
Ashley Demyan
Reggie Evans
Angelique Gates
Lisa Hunt
Rosa Kovacevich
Robert Lampley
Akshai Singh
Calvin Singleton
Lisa Smith

Members Absent

Sherylynn Allen-Harris
Ron Register
Barbara Danforth
Kalia Johnson
Taylor Jones
Randall Walker
Michael Windom

Staff Present

Brian Iorio
Steve Barker

Council Members Present

Melody Joy Hart
Davida Russell
Kahil Seren
Craig Cobb

Call To Order

Chair Rhonda Davis Lovejoy called meeting to order. Brian Iorio called the roll; a quorum was present.

Welcome & Introductions

City Council Members began the meeting giving their remarks on why they have formed the Racial Justice Task Force. Next, Task Force members introduced themselves. Lastly, Mario Clopton Zymler announced that only one member of the Task Force volunteered to serve as the Task Force's Secretary. A motion by Mario Clopton Zymler to elect Demetrius Cheeks to serve as secretary was made. Seconded by Gary Benjamin, the motion passed unanimously.

Review of Goals & Objective: City Legislation

Staff member Brian Iorio reviewed the Racial Justice Task Force's enabling legislation. The legislation included the condemnation of the murder of George Floyd setting the stage for the Racial Justice Task Force, the forming of the Racial Justice Task Force and a description and clarification of the appointment process.

Open Discussion

Chairwoman Davis Lovejoy mentioned that she believes that Mai Moore is unable to serve as a full task force member but would like to contribute to the work in some capacity. Councilwoman Davida Russell

responded saying that once it has been confirmed with Council via email, Council will move forward with replacement. She added that there are spots for 5 people that live outside the city that can serve on this task force per the last meeting of city council by Bill Hanna, Law Director.

A question was raised on how Task Force decisions will be made. Chairwoman Davis Lovejoy said that there may be a bylaws subcommittee or an agenda item.

Chairwoman Davis Lovejoy spoke next on future meeting dates. She stated that Wednesday and Thursday would be the best day as suggested by city staff in order to have meeting rooms available. She said that a Doodle poll may go out.

Councilwoman Davida Russell raised the question whether it has been decided if and how groups will be split up and ran. Rhonda Davis Lovejoy responded by saying this matter is on the agenda and will be decided upon by the group on how to proceed forward.

Brian Iorio informed the group that meetings need to be able to be recorded and council chambers has the full capability for this. It's estimated that it would be \$600-\$900 to set up recording in another area of City Hall or another facility. In regard to scheduling there may be conflicts with other meetings in council chambers.

Lisa Hunt suggested in the chat to establish the foundation for work that the task force would be doing. Mario mentioned an email Rhonda sent out earlier about crisis intervention and suggested this would be a great starting point. Rhonda responded by stating there are several different areas of concerns and it wouldn't be possible to attack everything at once without a plan. Key areas of concern should focus on the reason behind the task force and should not be abandoned. There are other organizations where some work has been done similar to the work projected for this task force. She plans to clearly define each subcommittee to give direction and a head start to look at example resources in order to help start the process.

Mario added that delving into subcommittees may have the task force scattered. Focusing on mental health response and crisis intervention with the Police is a significant issue that addresses policing which speaks to partially why the task force was founded and would be a good starting point. This can lead to getting definitions and policies together for group discussion in July.

Calvin Singleton raised a question about the roles of the police department and their policies currently. He is interested in the idea of learning more about the approach of the Police Department in giving this task force a solid foundation to work on.

Lisa Smith said that she would like to break down the areas of what the legislation asks for.

Rhonda reviewed the proposed subcommittees, how they were suggested and stated that the names and roles can change. These subcommittees were suggested as a way so all members would have an area of interest to bury themselves in and focus their efforts as a way to attempt to keep things organized while focusing on multiple disparities throughout the city from the additional legislation added by Councilwoman Davida Russell.

Next, Rhonda spoke about how communication can be done within the task force. Brian Iorio informed the Task Force that this is an official Task Force of City Council and subject to all open meetings laws in

the state of Ohio. Subcommittee work can be done as long as there isn't a quorum. Communications should not be done through email but in open meetings so all can attend and have notice. Information can be sent out, but discussion of such cannot be done legally with more than 12 people at the same time on this task force.

Mario suggested a workplan for the first 90 days to be distributed to the group for feedback by 7/1/21.

Gary Benjamin stated that he could try drafting a first draft of the bylaws.

Rosa Kovacevich stated that two police officers will be involved with this task force. Davida and Rhonda met with the Police Department in regards to officers being liaisons to help provide this task force with the understanding how the police department does their job. These officers are not voting members of the task force.

A question was raised about candidates for city office participating on the task force. Rhonda responded by saying that no one is able to participate that isn't a voting member, but the task force is open to the public. This is to be addressed further in the bylaws.

Public Comments

There was no public comment.

Closing Remarks

Chairwoman Rhonda Davis Lovejoy closed the meeting by saying that she will distribute a workplan. She also said that she will schedule time with Gary Benjamin and anyone else that is interested in regards to group governance.

Lastly, she said that she will send out a Doodle poll about the best date for a July meeting. By state law, after July 1st, 2021, the meeting must be in person.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Rhonda Davis Lovejoy, Chair

Demetrius Cheeks, Secretary