

**Racial Equity Advisory Panel (REAP)**  
**Human Rights Commission**  
**14-16 Baldwin Street**  
**Montpelier**  
**Minutes**  
**February 20, 2020**

PRESENT: Panel members: Stephanie Seguino, (Acting chair), Karen Richards (minutes); Clarence Davis, Nancy Waples (via phone). Absent: Chair, Andrea Brett. Guests: Xusana Davis, Executive Director of Racial Equity; Catherine Russell, Panel Assistant.

BUSINESS MEETING:

The meeting was called to order by Acting Chair Seguino at 5:08 p.m.

Minutes- Motion: C. Davis made a motion to accept the minutes of the December 5, 2019 meeting. The motion was seconded by Waples. Vote: 4-0.

Reports to House and Senate Government Operations Committee - Both the Panel and Ms. Davis, Executive Director of Racial Equity (ED) submitted reports to the Legislature as required by the authorizing statute. The reports were very basic due to the ED's late appointment. There were no questions about the ED's report.

State Equity Plan- ED Davis has developed an Equity Impact Assessment Tool (similar to an environmental impact assessment) for use whenever a new proposal is submitted within the executive branch. The purpose of the tool is to ensure that agencies use data-informed program design and carefully consider compounded historical racial inequity when crafting program proposals and budgets. A series of questions will assist agencies in making this important assessment.

Performance Measures- ED Davis has developed a set of performance measures which she hopes will form the basis for measuring progress across all branches of government. She is also working on updating and strengthening an Executive Order (E.O.) from former Governor Dean on Minority or Women-Owned Business Enterprises (M/WBE). This would strengthen support, in government contracting, for businesses that are 51% owned and substantially managed by people of color and/or people identifying as women.

2020 Public Engagement Strategy: The Panel is planning two public engagement sessions in 2020. The first, which will focus on the issues of housing and economic development, will be held on Thursday, March 26, 2020, from 5:00-7:00 p.m. at the Vermont Historical Society's Community Room at 60 Washington St., Barre, Vermont. The second will be held on Saturday, June 13, 2020 at a location to be determined in Brattleboro and will likely focus on education and employment. Richards and ED Davis will meet to plan the agenda and outreach for the March 26<sup>th</sup> forum. The Panel is also considering an Autumn conference or forum related to child trauma and foster care and the unique considerations necessary to serve minority populations in a culturally appropriate manner.

Budget: Our current REAP budget is approximately \$243k, which represents 3.3% of the Human Resources Service Fee, plus an additional appropriation of \$75k for FY'19 and again for FY'20. Beginning in the FY'21 budget, that \$75k drops off, which bumps our budget down from \$243k to \$168k. At the current spending rate, the budget is expected to be approximately \$125,000 under budget. This is due to the delay in hiring the ED. The Panel discussed ways to use some of this money. Ideas included hiring consultants to develop a set of indicators on the REAP website that could be tracked over time and another to provide technical assistance with regard to creation of a centralized database for equity-related indicators across state government.

## NEW BUSINESS

Report on Symposium of Racial Equity- On February 14, 2020, ED Davis convened a meeting of nine groups, whose charges include a focus on racial equity issues. The meeting was well attended. Discussion occurred regarding current initiatives of each, areas of overlapping work or jurisdiction, gaps (identified as health, youth, economic development and housing), and ways the groups could work together instead of within silos. It was agreed that quarterly meetings would be beneficial to these goals. Seguíno and Richards attended, representing the REAP.

The Governor will be issuing an E.O. creating a new racial equality task force, which will be chaired by ED Davis. It will have 13 members, with appointments from the Governor and the Legislature and others. Its mission will be threefold: 1) to strengthen laws concerning hate speech, 2) create systems of support for people of color and 3) encourage more people of color to run for local and statewide offices and to participate on boards, commissions, etc.

Workplan for 2020- The ED's workplan will focus on the M/WBE E.O. update, implementation of the Equity Impact Assessment, and the performance measures in addition to current initiatives.

Legislative Update: There are four bills that could impact the REAP or the ED. H-464 and S. 262- are similar and evolving but would add data reporting requirements regarding race; S. 120- would add public education ED of Racial Equity's charge. This will not be taken up by the committee; S. 338- Justice Reinvestment would assign both the Racial Disparities in the Criminal and Juvenile Justice Advisory Panel (RDAP) and the REAP a role in reviewing sentencing guidelines.

The latter topic led to a discussion about the role and scope of the REAP, which was set up to be an advisory panel, as was the RDAP and whether it is realistic to ask the panels to do substantive work. The ED of Racial Equity is already being spread too thin with what is already on her plate.

Next Meeting:

**Update added 3/13/20**

Community Engagement Forum POSTPONED-New date to be determined.

**Public Engagement Session re: Housing and Economic Development**

**~~Thursday, March 26, 2020, from 5:00-7:00 p.m.~~**

**~~Vermont Historical Society's Community Room~~**

**~~60 Washington St., Barre, Vermont~~**

Richards made a motion to adjourn which was seconded by Seguino.

Whereby the meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Karen L. Richards*

Karen L. Richards, Panel Member