

Racial Equity Advisory Panel (REAP)
Via Microsoft Teams
Minutes
March 17, 2021

PRESENT: Panel members: Andrea Brett, Chair, Karen Richards (minutes), Stephanie Seguino. Guests: Xusana Davis, Executive Director of Racial Equity (EDRE); Catherine Russell, Panel Assistant; Amanda Garces, Mia Schultz, Liz Curry- members of the public.

I. BUSINESS MEETING:

The meeting was called to order by Chair Brett at 6:03 p.m.

- A. Panel Introductions: Panel members and guests introduced themselves.
- B. Agenda changes: Richards made a motion to move agenda item E.1, related to Public School Curricula Violence, to item D on the Agenda to accommodate the schedules of Ms. Garces and Ms. Schultz. The motion was seconded by Seguino. Vote 3:0.
- C. Approval of the February 17, 2021 Minutes: Sequino moved to approve the minutes as written. The motion was seconded by Brett. Vote: 3:0
- D. New Business

1. Discussion- Public School Curricula Trauma

Amanda Garces, Chair of the Act I, Ethnic and Social Equity Standards Advisory Working Group and Mia Schultz, chair of the Rutland area NAACP, both also members of Education Justice Coalition of Vermont, told the Panel about a recent incident in the Southwest Vermont Supervisory Union (SVSU). The issue involved a deportation role play, and immigration and terrorism assignment, being taught in a social studies class, that was a direct example of curriculum violence. They also shared information about their recent request to the General Assembly for funding for the Working Group.¹ They asked that the Panel support the funding request in H. 245 (the bill did not make cross over, so funding would have to be placed in the Miscellaneous Bill). They also asked that the Panel sign onto the letter to the SVSU.

The Panel, by consensus of the attending members, agreed to send a letter regarding the funding and to consider signing onto the letter to SVSU. Richards agreed to draft the letter for the consideration of other Panel members.

E. On-going Business

- 1. COVID Relief Funds Project Updates: EDRE Davis indicated that there were no updates on the projects.
- 2. Legislative Matters: There are twelve bills pending that are relevant to the Panel and EDRE's work, as well as a Joint Resolution. Three bills directly affect our work:

¹ Their detailed request is outlined in their January 4, 2021 Report to the General Assembly <https://education.vermont.gov/sites/aoe/files/documents/Act%201%20Working%20Group.Second%20Report%20to%20the%20Vermont%20Legislature.Final%2020201215.pdf>

H. 159 This bill proposes to create a Better Places Program to support projects that create, activate, or revitalize communities and public spaces. It includes \$100,000 for the convening of entities to make recommendations for a BIPOC business organization. The Panel would have a role in the selection of the vendor to convene the group.

H. 317 This bill proposes to establish the Bureau of Racial Justice Statistics and the Bureau of Racial Justice Statistics Advisory Panel to collect and analyze criminal justice data in order to identify and address racial bias in the criminal justice system. So far, the discussion has been primarily around where the entity would be housed. The bill proposes to add four positions and has an appropriation of over \$202,000.

H. 196 This bill includes \$250,000 in funding for two additional positions in the Equity Office—one policy and research analyst and one outreach and education coordinator. The bill appears to be on track to pass.

- F. Public Comments/Questions: Liz Curry brought to the attention of the Panel an article published in the Vermont Political Observer about a recent appointment to the Fish & Wildlife Board. <https://thevpo.org/2021/03/09/is-phil-scott-okay-with-appointing-a-conspiracy-minded-trumpist/?fbclid=IwAR2W1X9Y1PMS2JvH-cHM0ggbIspJ5MPt6Eggt-w4jQt0xAuFx6kfDnk2p3s> The appointee's social media account contains numerous racist, misogynistic and conspiracy promoting posts. This raised two questions: whether the vetting process currently being used to determine appointments is adequate, and whether appointees should be required to have formal training in the equity policies the state promotes for all employees. The EDRE pointed out that, in order to have more participation by BIPOC people on boards and commissions, we need to create a safe environment where people will want to serve.

II. Adjournment

Richards made a motion to adjourn. Whereby the meeting adjourned at 7:23 p.m.

III. Next Meetings:

April 21, 2021 (via Microsoft Teams)

May 19, 2021 (via Microsoft Teams)

The agenda and information re: call-in for public access will be displayed on the REAP website.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen L. Richards

Karen L. Richards, Panel Member