

Racial Equity Advisory Panel (REAP)
Via Microsoft Teams
Minutes
April 21, 2021

PRESENT: Panel members: Andrea Brett, Chair, Karen Richards (minutes), Stephanie Seguino, Nancy Waples, Clarence Davis. Guests: Xusana Davis, Executive Director of Racial Equity (EDRE); Catherine Russell, Panel Assistant; Christopher Louras- member 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: No changes were made to the agenda.

C. Approval of the Minutes:

Waples moved to approve the minutes of March 22, 2021 as written. Richards suggested that they be amended to add that it was an emergency meeting. Waples amended her motion to accept the proposed amendment. The amended motion was seconded by C. Davis. Vote: 5:0

Seguino moved to approve the minutes of March 17, 2021 as written. The motion was seconded by Brett. Vote 5:0.

D. On-going Business

1. Legislative updates:

The EDRE has testified on the following bills:

H. 128 This bill, which passed the House and is now in the Senate limits criminal defenses based on victim gender identity.

H. 265 This bill would establish an Office of the Child Advocate, independent from State government, to provide transparent and impartial oversight of Vermont's justice-involved youth and child welfare systems. It passed the House and is now under consideration in the Senate. The House version would place the office in the AoA; the Senate is considering placing it at Vermont Legal Aid.

H. 210 This bill addresses disparities and promoting equity in the health care. The bill calls for creation of an office of health equity in the Health Department (VDH). Due to COVID, VDH is unable to commit to doing this now, though it is supportive of the concept. The current recommendation would be for the EDRE to set up an advisory commission to make suggestions to VDH as to how to set up the office. The Legislature will only move this responsibility to the Racial Equity Office if the two new positions are added (which appears to be happening).

H. 145 This bill would amend the standards for law enforcement use of force. It is substantially the same bill as last session but has added language about the officer taking into

consideration whether the subject's conduct is the result of a medical condition, mental impairment, developmental disability, physical limitation, language barrier, drug or alcohol impairment, or other factor beyond the subject's control, in determining the amount of force appropriate to use on the subject.

H. 245 This bill relates to the Ethnic and Social Equity Standards Advisory Working Group. The Panel wrote a letter to the Governor, with copies to the Education Chairs and Secretary French, supporting funding for this group. While it appears that they will add additional members, the House is not inclined to add the funding requested.

H. 159 This bill is related to community and economic development and workforce revitalization. It originally proposed development of a support structure to support women and minority-owned businesses but has been changed to seek input from those groups as to what would be most helpful, rather than imposing a structure.

H. 430 This bill would expand Dr. Dynasaur coverage for children regardless of immigration status. There appears to be support for this proposal in both houses.

Seguino asked about H. 273 and H. 232 which relate to promoting racial and social equity in land access and property ownership and promoting land and home ownership and economic opportunity, respectively. Neither bill appears to be moving this year.

2. Other Equity Initiatives/EDRE in progress:

VDH will be receiving a two-year grant of \$28m for reducing disparities in health equity. The grant does not have a lot of strings attached so the state can be creative in how to use it. Suggestions were made re: data collection, licensure of qualified New Americans (including payment for tuition for any needed courses); migrant outreach (as well as outreach to other undocumented people in the service industries) re: vaccination.

E. New Business

1. Discussion of Bright Futures- Chair Brett and the EDRE attended a meeting with this group which is seeking to reach more people not in their orbit/reach and to fill board memberships with diverse candidates. They asked the Panel to make any recommendations that might be helpful.
2. Equity Office Staff Recruitment- H. 196 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 still appears to be on track to pass. The EDRE is working with Human Resources to expedite the recruitment process. We could move quickly once funding is approved and have new positions on board by September 1. or sooner. The EDRE has provided the Panel with proposed job descriptions and incorporated Panel input.
3. Next Meetings:
May 19, 2021 (or earlier via an emergency meeting if the EDRE needs input re: legislation).
June 23, 2021

F. Public Comment: Mr. Louras thanked the Panel and the EDRE for our work and indicated that he believes it is making a difference in our communities. He also said that as a member of the Crime Research Group, he feels it is important to keep in mind that disparate contacts with the criminal justice system are affected by the inequities in other all areas (housing, employment, etc.), making integration of our work with theirs crucial to addressing those disparities.

II. Adjournment

C. Davis made a motion to adjourn. Whereby the meeting adjourned at 7:03 p.m.

III. Next Meetings:

May 19, 2021 (via Microsoft Teams)

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

June 23, 2021 (site to be determined.)

Respectfully submitted,

Karen L. Richards

Karen L. Richards, Panel Member