

Racial Equity Advisory Panel (REAP)
Via Microsoft Teams
Minutes
May 18, 2022

PRESENT: Panel members: Andrea Brett, Chair, Karen Richards (minutes), Clarence Davis, Nancy Waples. Guests: Catherine Russell, Panel Assistant, Xusana Davis, Executive Director of Racial Equity (EDRE), Jay Greene, Racial Equity Data and Policy Analyst.

BUSINESS MEETING:

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

- A. Panel Introductions: No members of the public were present so no introductions were necessary.
- B. Agenda approval: Agenda was approved as presented.
- C. Approval of the Minutes: Clarence Davis made a motion to amend the minutes of the 4/13/22 to clarify that H. 320 had passed only the House, not both houses. The motion was seconded by Brett. Vote: 4:0
- D. Ongoing Business

1.a. Legislative Updates:

Unless otherwise indicated, the following bills passed and are awaiting action by the governor.

H. 546: Creates a Division of Racial Justice that would include current Office of Racial Equity (ORE) staff, and three data analysts, whose primary focus would be on criminal justice disparities.

IDEAL VT: The ORE is in the process of rolling out a website and setting up workshops, etc.

H. 96 created a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It will gather information and issue a report. ORE staff is committed to ensuring that whatever recommendations are made are followed through on to avoid re-traumatizing people with no action afterward.

S. 139: Native-themed Mascot- AOE will create a model policy.

H. 461: Excludes asylum petitioners and refugees from the definition of household for purposes of taxation.

S. 140: Prevents civil arrests in courthouses. This has been an issue with ICE apprehending undocumented workers and was having a chilling effect on migrant workers' exercise of their legal rights.

H. 635: Commissioners of DMV and Public Safety will study traffic stops and make recommendations for removing those that are not necessary for public safety.

H. 729: Establishes a six-year statute of limitations for discrimination claims in employment, housing and public accommodations.

H. 461: Continuing education requirements for mental health professional will include one or more units in the area of systematic oppression and anti-oppressive practice, or in related topic areas to improve cultural competency, cultural humility, and antiracism in Vermont's healthcare systems.

S. 148: Requires state agencies to promote environmental justice by ensuring that projects do not have an adverse effect, initially or cumulatively, on BIPOC populations.

P.R. 2: Would change the Vermont Constitution to specifically outlaw slavery. It is heading for a statewide referendum in November.

S. 226: Sets aside grant funding for first generation homebuyers and outreach to BIPOC populations to ensure they are aware of the program.

Bills that did not pass but will be on the ORE's radar in the 2023-24 session:

H. 401: This bill proposes to promote racial and social equity in Vermont through multiple provisions relating to education, employment, housing, law enforcement, and judicial practice and procedure.

H. 703: Workforce development bill. Passed the House but did not make it out of the Senate committee due to its complexity.

S. 147: This bill would have required creation of a language access plan (LAP) for all executive branch agencies. The ORE is continuing this as a project covering all three branches of government, without the legislation. It will have a hefty price tag.

H. 320: Prevented employers from forcing employees who have made complaints to agree never to work for the entity or its subsidiaries again. It passed House but did not make it out of the Senate.

2.c. Projects

- IDEAL-VT: See above.
- Access to federal infrastructure funds to create a HUB for women and minority owned businesses.
- LAP- Discussions continue on best practices and budget issues.
- Continued additions to the REAP website
- Assessment of Cultural Competency to be administered to Panel and other state employees
- Informal interagency workgroup that also includes outside entities looking at discrimination claims related to vaccine and COVID treatment disparities for BIPOC.

E. New Business:

1. Panel Retreat

- a. Date selected is June 10, 2022 from 10:00-4:00. Currently scheduled for in-person in Cherry B at the AHS complex in Waterbury.
- b. Strategic planning will be facilitated by Green Belts
- c. Agenda building: Suggestions for discussion topics included:
Role of the Panel- push/pull of advising the governor; how the Panel fits in as the work of the ORE expands, how the Panel can best work with staff to meet goals.
- d. The agenda for the retreat was approved as is.

2. Future Meetings: The Panel decided not to meet in July and August. Regular meetings will resume in September keeping with the third Wednesday of the month from 6:00-8:00 PM.

F. Public Comment: No members of the public were present.

II. Adjournment

Waples moved to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 6:42.

Next Meetings: Retreat: June 10, 2022; September 21, 2022.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen L. Richards, Panel Member