

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

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

I. BUSINESS MEETING:

The meeting was called to order by Acting Chair Davis at 6:10 p.m.

- A. Panel Introductions: As there were no members of the public present, the Panel members waived introductions.
- B. Agenda changes: The Panel added an agenda item, D(4)- Discussion of the State Employee Engagement Survey. Waples moved to accept the agenda as amended. The motion was seconded by Brett. Vote: 4:0.
- C. Approval of the January 13, 2021 Minutes: Waples moved to approve the minutes as written. The motion was seconded by Brett. Vote: 4:0
- D. On-Going Business
 1. COVID Relief Funds Project Updates:
 - a. Equity Dashboard: The EDRE has determined that due to issues with on-going maintenance of a dashboard, the \$100,000 should be repurposed. She is actively working with the administration to identify a new project. Brett suggested that perhaps the money could be used to do outreach and conduct COVID-19 vaccine clinics in public and other subsidized housing around the state, in an effort to reach the BIPOC community and low-income residents. The panel agreed this would be a good potential use of the funds (or some of them). Waples agreed to work with Brett and the EDRE to explore this further.
 - b. Economic Stimulus Equity Fund- The Vermont Community Foundation (VCF) has been contracted to distribute general funds to individuals who were residents of Vermont on April 1, 2020 but who were unable to participate in the federal COVID relief programs due to immigration status. So far, about 1500 of the 5000 estimated eligible people have applied. VCF is in the process of conducting a second round of outreach in places where people are likely to see the information (schools, laundromats, etc.) The Agencies of Education and Agriculture are also helping, as are social service agencies. Once checks start going out, more people may trust the process enough to apply. Now that the federal government has released a second round of stimulus funds, and is looking at a third, the question is whether the state will appropriate additional funding, in the interests of maintaining equity.

(There is also a question of whether more people are or will be eligible in these second rounds of federal funding, eliminating some of the need).

- c. *Racial Equity Training*: The Legislature allocated \$50,000 in CRF funding for equity-related training. The RFP for hiring a vendor to revise the unconscious bias (UB) training has been released and we are awaiting bids.
2. Budget: The Governor's proposed budget includes \$250,000 in funding for two additional positions in the Equity Office—one policy and research analyst and one outreach and education coordinator. Rep. Christie has introduced a bill, H. 196 <https://legislature.vermont.gov/Documents/2022/Docs/BILLS/H-0196/H-0196%20As%20Introduced.pdf> that would add these position and appropriate the funding for them. The EDRE remarked that this pledge to equity, at a time of economic uncertainty, is a solid testament to the State's commitment to this work.
3. Legislative hearings/proposals: In addition to the above, the EDRE has testified on the REAP and Task Force reports, health equity, school discipline. Bills being watched include:
 - H. 273 Economic; housing; social equity
<https://legislature.vermont.gov/Documents/2022/Docs/BILLS/H-0273/H-0273%20As%20Introduced.pdf>
 - Any bills related to health equity
 - Any bills on policing reforms (use of force, expungement, etc.)
 - Any bills on school discipline (school resource officers, etc.)
 - Any others related to equity issues as determined by the EDRE
4. Employee Engagement Survey: Committee assistant, Russell indicated that the next DHR survey will be coming out in March 2021 and that if the REAP would like to propose additional questions for the survey, now is the time to do it. She will keep us posted on timing.

E. New Business

1. *SOV Equity Liaison Training*: The group includes people in leadership positions in state agencies. They had their first meeting, which the EDRE reported went very well. Members see it as an opportunity to raise equity within their organizations and implement recommendations from the task force. They will be meeting formally every other month and informal check-ins will occur in the other months.
2. *Discussion of Volunteers*: Due to the greater media attention to equity issues in the past year and highlighting of the EDRE's work, Chair Brett has been getting inquiries from members of the public, who would like to volunteer with the REAP. Because the Panel is advisory to the Governor, it is not in a position to take on volunteers. The Chair has been referring people to local equity groups in their communities. The EDRE indicated that at some point she'd like to figure out how to harness this energy. This is perhaps a good job for the new education and outreach coordinator, if the position is added.

3. *Public Comments/Questions*: No public members were present.

II. Adjournment

Waples made a motion to adjourn. Vote: 4:0. Whereby the meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

III. Next Meeting:

March 17, 2021 from 6-8 p.m. (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