

Racial Equity Advisory Panel (REAP)
Via Microsoft Teams
Minutes
April 13, 2022

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

BUSINESS MEETING:

The meeting was called to order by Chair Brett at 6:12 p.m.

- A. Panel Introductions: No members of the public were present so no introductions were necessary.
- B. Agenda approval: Clarence Davis made a motion to amend the agenda by removing item D.1.b. related to the Budget Summary. This item will be added to the next agenda. The motion was seconded by Brett. Vote 3:0.
- C. Approval of the Minutes: Clarence Davis made a motion to amend the minutes of the 3/16/22 meeting to add insert the following language under the discussion of S.148:
The Conservation Law Foundation and other advocates submitted a draft budget that included a request for AOA/ORE staff to manage the community participation grant funding. Since then, EDRE Xusana Davis and Jay Greene have encouraged the stakeholders who are consulting on the bill to look to organizations with existing grantmaking capacity like the Natural Resources Conservation Council and its funding entity Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets for assistance with managing the community participation grant instead of AOA/ORE. This is an ongoing conversation between advocates and the Office of Racial Equity. were approved unanimously as written.

Richards seconded the motion. Vote: 3:0.

D. Ongoing Business

1.a. Legislative Updates:

H. 546: House Appropriations included funding for the bill in their budget. The bill creates a Division of Racial Justice that would include current REO staff, and three data analysts, whose primary focus would be on criminal justice disparities. The Senate is proposing to remove the advisory panel created by the House bill and place reporting by the analysts to the RDAP (Racial Disparities in the Juvenile and Criminal Justice Systems). This discussion is on-going.

IDEAL VT which would support equity projects at the municipal level. \$250,000 for two years has been included in the budget passed by the House. The bill is now in Senate Appropriations.

H. 320 is an employment discrimination bills which prevents employers from forcing employees who have made complaints to agree never to work for the entity or its subsidiaries again. It was passed by the House.

H. 329 would eliminate the severe and pervasive standard of proof. This was stalled due to educational entities who had concerns about its application to students and monitoring of out of school behavior and is now dead.

H. 96 is a bill related to creation of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Concerns were raised about how these have functioned in other states and countries where people are asked to relive their trauma and then nothing actually results from what can be years of discussion. Additional concerns were raised about how well these commissions actually listen to the affected people rather than adopt a top-down approach where commissioners make decisions the affected people may not agree with. The cost is also very high--\$4.5m.

Native-themed Mascot legislation will likely pass both houses with enforcement by the State Board of Education.

2.c. Projects

Language Access Plan: The ORE convened a group of 48 stakeholders for facilitated conversations about the creation of a statewide language access plan that would apply to all three branches of government. The initiative would require a large influx of money to pay for written materials, audio and visual enhancements, training for interpreters, creation of a licensure/certification process, etc. Legislation that would have created this just for the executive branch is not moving this year but the hope is to have something to introduce in the next biennium.

BIPOC Business Roundtable Initiative: Work has finally begun after a five-month delay, which was caused largely by problems outside of the ORE office. It is hoped that the discussions will produce data that the legislature can use to make needed changes/enhancements.

Conversation Series: ORE staff is working on a conversation series.

Cannabis Control Board: The EDRE continues to work with the board to ensure that equity issues are addressed as the board moves forward with criminal background checks for applicants, rulemaking, and enforcement.

E. New Business:

1. Panel Retreat

- a. Date selected is June 10, 2022 from 10:00-4:00.
- b. Location to be determined. Looking for a place with outdoor space.
- c. Agenda building: Chair Brett will work with the EDRE on the agenda. A Green Belt will facilitate. Lunch will be provided.

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

II. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:18.

Next Meetings: Tentatively: May 18, 2022. Retreat, June 10, 2022.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen L. Richards

Karen L. Richards, Panel Member