



CUYAHOGA COUNTY CITIZENS' ADVISORY COUNCIL ON EQUITY  
Wednesday, August 30, 2023  
1 PM – 3 PM

**I. Call to Order**

Chair Taylor called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone in attendance.

**II. Roll Call**

A quorum was present.

In Attendance- Eddie Taylor, Annette Blackwell, Stephen Caviness, Rev. Kenneth Chalker, Colleen Cotter, Habeebah Grimes, Dr. Heidi Gullett, Dr. Charles Modlin, LeVine Ross, and Glen Shumate.

Excused Absence- Jenice Contreras, Randell McShepard, Marsha Mockabee, Yanela Sims, and Sheila Wright.

**III. Moment of Silence and Reflection**

Clerk Byrd spoke briefly about the August 28, 1963 March on Washington, sharing the purpose of the March was to advocate for the civil and economic rights of African Americans. Clerk Byrd detailed the significance and lasting impacts of the March after nearly sixty years. Her comments were followed by a moment of silent reflection.

**IV. Message from County Executive**

Executive Ronayne thanked everyone for attending. He began by reflecting on the Urban League of Greater Cleveland's reenactment of the 1963 March on Washington held on Saturday, August 26<sup>th</sup>.



Executive Ronayne thanked Member Mockabee for her foresight in organizing the event and thanked those who participated in the March, including the Warrensville Heights High School Marching Band, Subcommittee Chair McShepard, and Clerk Byrd.

Executive Ronayne also mentioned the Cleveland Cultural Garden Federation's 77<sup>th</sup> Annual One World Day. Executive Ronayne shared there were 53 delegates, representing 53 nations at the Cleveland Cultural Gardens. During the event, 15 nations were represented by 25 people who were naturalized.

Executive Ronayne thanked William Tarter, Jr. and the Center for Community Solutions for hosting the August meeting of the Human Services Advocacy Network. Attendees included more than 50 non-profit organizations as well as Cuyahoga County staff. The Cuyahoga County \$1.6 billion budget for 2024-2025 was shared during the meeting. Executive Ronayne further explained how the County works hard to provide some of the budgeted funds to frontline partners who do the necessary work throughout the community.

Executive Ronayne thanked Chair Taylor and the CACE Subcommittee Chairs for meeting with him earlier that morning. He shared the meeting provided him with a better understanding of the work each subcommittee has done over the past few years. Specifically, Executive Ronayne detailed his thoughts about the next steps for the County Jail, which is an area of concern for the Criminal Justice Committee. He is working with County Council to develop a plan to minimize the number of days people are retained in the County Jail. He shared six (6) initiatives he would like the CACE to work with him toward implementing.

1. Furthering bail reform efforts by working closely with the Bail Project and others to significantly move the needle.
2. Furthering the conversation about hiring a jail expediter.
3. Researching pretrial detention options with Greater Cleveland Congregation (GCC) to minimize the number of days pretrial.
4. Exploring the implementation of the co-response model for law enforcement.
5. Looking into strengthening re-entry for youth/juvenile defendants and adults.



## 6. Expanding diversion options.

Member Modlin shared Metrohealth will help to facilitate mental health support.

Member Chalker asked what is the attitude of bail reform and how do Judges implement bail reform in their courtrooms?

Executive Ronayne shared he would like to have a conversation with Cuyahoga County Court of Common Pleas Administrative and Presiding Judge Brenden Sheehan regarding the implementation of comprehensive performance measures.

Member Cotter referenced the high volume of driver's license suspensions and the consequences/ repercussions.

Member Shumate shared his thoughts regarding how great the co-responder model is in Shaker Heights. He asked how the County will facilitate and take the lead on best practices around equity including the area of purchasing. Member Shumate added many communities do not have the bandwidth to take on a co-responder model.

Guest William Tarter, Jr. thanked County Councilwoman Yvonne Conwell and Executive Ronayne for their attendance at the "Approaching the 2024-2025 Cuyahoga County Budget" event hosted by the Center for Community Solutions. Mr. Tarter shared he would provide the event recording to the CACE and the Cuyahoga County Communications team.

## V. Public Comment

There were no public comments submitted via email to [equity@cuyahogacounty.us](mailto:equity@cuyahogacounty.us) since the March 2023 meeting.



## **VII. New Business**

### **a. Approval of the Minutes**

The meeting minutes for the March 27, 2023 meeting were distributed on April 13, 2023 for review. A motion was made by Member Shumate and seconded by Subcommittee Chair Grimes to approve the previously distributed minutes.

There was no discussion. The motion carried without opposition and the minutes were approved.

### **b. Presentation from Tania Meneese- Cleveland Neighborhood Progress**

Ms. Tania Meneese, President and Chief Executive Officer of Cleveland Neighborhood Progress (CNP), delivered a powerpoint presentation. She shared an overview of the recent work of CNP, their 2022-2027 Strategic Plan, their Advancement and Resilience initiative, and their neighborhood platform which includes neighborhood funding and property tax relief.

Ms. Meneese also discussed Mayor Justin Bibb's focus on the equitable revitalization of Cleveland's neighborhoods. She also provided a brief overview of the Cleveland Tax Abatement Study which reveals a large number of people are being priced out of their homes. According to Ms. Meneese, the City of Cleveland recognized the issue and began to look at ways to keep long term homeowners and renters in their homes, instead of adjusting the tax abatement program. Ms. Meneese shared during a recent roundtable, commercial developers and lenders recommended the City of Cleveland engage the development industry in Cleveland to help move state policy around property tax relief programming. She further explained, the State of Ohio does not have enabling legislation regarding Tax Abatement, and passing legislation would allow local jurisdictions to make assessments and determinations regarding disproportionate tax rate increases due to appreciation, and to make modifications according to what is appropriate in their specific community.



Ms. Menesse also discussed the CNP's work to bring state dollars to the City of Cleveland. CNP recently raised \$3 million dollars for middle neighborhoods, where investment is typically not needed. Middle neighborhoods include Old Brooklyn, Lee-Harvard, Collinwood and West Park which all have a high number of homeowners. According to Ms. Menesse, if we do not begin investing in the housing and financial corridors of these neighborhoods, we are going to continue to lose residents and ultimately lose state funding and see decreased state funding potential.

Councilwoman Yvonne Conwell asked Ms. Menesse if the \$3 million dollars was funded through a pilot?

Ms. Menesse confirmed the \$3 million dollars is a part of the State of Ohio's operating budget.

Member Blackwell asked if there was any update on the Homestead exemption adjustment?

Ms. Menesse shared the Homestead Exemption has not kept up with inflation and it is difficult to apply.

Executive Ronayne shared the current administration is interested in learning more about the Circuit Breaker program. He asked how much involvement CNP has with the County Landbank?

Ms. Menesse shared she believes CNP will eventually need stronger support from the County, but they are not there yet. Ms. Menesse also appreciates working with valuable partners like the Landbank, Enterprise, Cleveland Housing Network, and the various Center's for Disease Control. CNP is very interested in modular houses, however new builds are a fortune. The current focus is on rehabbing and rehabilitating homes.

Member Blackwell shared the City of Maple Heights has 2 modular homes, and both sold quickly.



Member Shumate asked about the tax abatement study.

Ms. Menesse believes broader housing and investments are needed. She congratulated the County on advancing these efforts by starting the new Department of Housing and Community Development and the promotion of Director Sarah Parks Jackson. Ms. Menesse shared the City of Cleveland is moving in the right direction by evaluating the need for tax abatement in all areas.

Ms. Menesse thanked the CACE for inviting her to present.

**c. Presentation from Department of Equity and Inclusion**

Director Lenora Lockett shared a powerpoint presentation regarding the recent work and future plans for the Department of Equity and Inclusion.

Chair Taylor asked Director Lockett to share the details of a typical day for the Contract Compliance Officers on her staff.

Director Lockett shared there are six (6) Contract Compliance Officers who work on supplier diversity. Their duties include completing pre-proposal and pre-bid meetings, evaluating participation compliance for Request for Proposals or Requests for Quotes, calling vendors listed to access good faith efforts in the contracting process and researching best practices. Director Lockett also shared their workday also includes coordinating events and preparing for internal and external presentations. External events include the Construction Project meeting at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and the Hispanic Business Chambers Program. In addition, Director Lockett mentioned the department hosts internal events.

Executive Ronayne also shared some County positions do not accurately reflect the work required. He said another County Department with a number of compliance staff is the Economic Development Department.



Executive Ronayne said he may be able to do some work on this issue to ensure employee titles speak to the work.

Member Caviness asked how much of Director Lockett's staff time is community facing?

Director Lockett defined community as non-county employee/ internal policy and confirmed her staff spends approximately 50% of their time in community facing efforts, including time spent assisting vendors, and companies seeking certification, and working on outreach initiatives. She also added her department does not work with grassroots organizations as much as they would like.

Member Shumate asked when the next Disparity Study would be completed.

Director Lockett shared the process for the next Disparity Study would begin in 2024 (12-18 month process).

Member Shumate also asked if Director Lockett could evaluate how new policies have impacted the results of the study?

Director Lockett shared payment is required for a mid-cycle study to provide an update on the results.

Member Shumate also asked if there were any metrics around equity and inclusion Director Lockett could share.

Director Lockett shared the Annual Equity Report provides some metrics.

Member Ross asked if there was any feedback from the Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) training sessions.

Director Lockett shared employees asked if the training was a one-time event or would future trainings build upon what was learned. She also believes the low hanging fruit issues have been tackled, and we need to dig deeper.



Member Ross also asked if Director Lockett could provide a report of findings from the DEI study.

Director Lockett shared a summary of all the DEI training feedback Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C) received is available on the County Intranet.

Chair Taylor commended Director Lockett for compiling the data. He also asked Director Lockett to share the data, key themes, findings and analytics with the CACE going forward.

Director Lockett shared the County Leadership Academy is a workforce equity initiative being created and implemented to develop an internal diverse pool of employees for leadership roles and positions in Cuyahoga County. Additionally, Director Lockett shared a list of County departments currently in the process of implementing departmental equity commitments.

Member Caviness asked about the progress of the equity zone work.

Director Lockett shared the same departments who initially utilized the Equity Zones are continuing to do so. She stated those departments include the Planning Commission, Public Works and Consumer Affairs. Director Lockett confirmed there was a significant impact when including the equity zone categories.

Director Lockett confirmed her department is also conducting “DEI Drop in’s” which are opportunities for DEI staff to meet with various County departments to explore applicable DEI programs.

Member Modlin asked if there was a way for the CACE to work with Director Lockett’s department to develop programming with respect to the overall health equity in the County.

Director Lockett responded yes.





Executive Ronayne shared he recently met with Jack Marchbanks who serves as Director of the Ohio Department of Transportation. According to Executive Ronayne, Director Marchbanks' diversity work in identifying students at historically Black colleges and university's (HBCU) to serve as fellows across the State of Ohio is noteworthy. As those fellows are completing their fellowships and staying in Ohio after graduation.

**d. Update from the Department of Human Resources**

Cuyahoga County Human Resources Director Sarah Nemastil introduced herself and thanked the CACE for inviting her to the meeting.

Director Nemastil discussed the Human Resource Department's Diversity Equity and Inclusion Committee, hosting a panel discussion series titled, "Can we Talk, Conversations that matter". In June 2023 the committee hosted its second discussion, and the theme was "your vote, your voice" focusing on the August 8<sup>th</sup> special election. The event highlighted the importance of voting and featured Cuyahoga County Councilwoman Meredith Turner of District Nine, President of the Northeastern Ohio Voter Advocates Meredith Helmer, and Board of Elections Manager of Community Outreach Mike West. Director Nemastil also noted the DEI Committee will attend a DEI Conference on October 25<sup>th</sup> at the Cleveland Museum of Art.

Director Nemastil shared the department hired Dr. Alida Moonen as the new Director of Organizational and Employee Development.

Director Nemastil and Dr. Moonen are working with Clerk Byrd, Director Lockett and Tri-C on coordinating the DEI training for County employees.

Director Nemastil also shared an overview of a new job posting initiative which includes her department working collaboratively with the Personnel Review Commission (PRC) to revise job postings and include equivalencies. Director Nemastil, Director Lockett and PRC Director Rebecca Kopchinski are working together in an effort to secure text analyzer software which can be used to



review job postings and descriptions to have inclusive, unbiased, and gender-neutral language.

According to Director Nemastil, since the implementation of the tuition reimbursement program in 2022, 52 employees have participated. Director Nemastil shared the mission of the Department of Human Resources is to drive a diverse, equitable and inclusive work environment where employees feel valued, have a voice, and an opportunity to succeed and grow.

Director Nemastil stated she is committed to continue partnering with Clerk Byrd and Director Lockett to enhance DEI in Cuyahoga County government. She shared research shows there is a link between organizations with diverse workforces and improved financial performance and employee engagement. Director Nemastil believes an important role of Human Resources is to ensure employment appointments exhibit a diverse population.

Member Shumate asked about the diversity of the Cuyahoga County Executive cabinet.

Executive Ronayne shared he has a forty (40) member cabinet which includes Health and Human Services Director Jackie Fletcher, Sheriff Harold Patel, who is Columbian, Housing and Community Development Director Sarah Parks Jackson, Communications Director Kelly Woodard, and Regional Collaboration Director of Chris Alvarado, who is diverse.

Member Shumate asked if there was anywhere CACE could be helpful.

Executive Ronayne stated there are over 50 boards and Commissions needing appointments. He asked if CACE knows people who could fill board seats and if they would share those names.

Chair Taylor asked Executive Ronayne to share the Cuyahoga County Boards and Commissions roster and vacancies for the CACE to review.



Councilwoman Yvonne Conwell stated having culturally diverse individuals appointed or hired to fill employment vacancies is good. She also shared Director Lockett previously worked with the former Interim Chief Human Resources Officer Sheba Marshall on pay equity. Councilwoman Conwell said she would speak offline to Director Nemastil regarding pay equity efforts. Councilwoman Conwell stated, she and Councilwoman Turner are both interested in pay equity work.

**e. Ohio Bill Updates**

Petition Summary on Redistricting

Clerk Byrd reported this month the Ohio Attorney General's Office rejected the petition summary on redistricting because the language submitted did not fairly and truthfully summarize the proposed constitutional amendment.

Ohio Redistricting Commission

Clerk Byrd shared the Ohio Redistricting Commission is scheduled to meet on September 13, 2023 at the Ohio Statehouse to begin drawing new state legislative district boundaries for the 2024 election.

Issue 1

Clerk Byrd discussed the special election held in the State of Ohio on August 8, 2023. Over 3 million ballots were cast to defeat Issue 1 by a margin of 57% or 1,744,094 "no" votes to 43% or 1,315,346 "yes" votes. All 8 urban counties voted against Issue 1. In Cuyahoga County, almost 76.5 % no votes were cast.

Clerk Byrd reiterated her promise to keep the CACE informed of pertinent legislative matters.



**f. Subcommittee Chair Reports**

Subcommittee Chair Habeebah Grimes provided a brief update on the work of the Communications Subcommittee. She shared the subcommittee is working to finalize the Youth and Adult toolkits in addition to working to secure a vendor for the Community Survey.

**g. Update/ Message form Chair**

Chair Taylor provided an update regarding the discretionary funding allocated to CACE. The Subcommittee Chairs believe it would be beneficial to consider hiring a facilitator to create a strategy and to assist in guiding the work of the CACE. Additionally, the facilitator would lead conversations to begin writing an updated CACE Status Report.

Chair Taylor also discussed the expired terms for four (4) CACE members. These members are Jenice Contreras, Dr. Heidi Gullett, Randell McShepard and Chair Eddie Taylor. Chair Taylor will renew his CACE membership, but will not renew his tenure as Chair.

Chair Taylor also shared there are currently 2 CACE member vacancies; there is someone being considered to fill one of the vacancies.

**h. CACE Leadership Appeal**

Chair Taylor described how the formality of County appointments does not apply to CACE electing a Chair. Chair Taylor shared he was glad CACE Subcommittee Chair Grimes is open to the opportunity to serve as the next CACE Chair.

Subcommittee Chair Grimes left the room for a brief period while the CACE members discussed the role of the Chair. Member Habeebah Grimes was affirmatively voted as the next Chair of CACE.



Executive Ronayne congratulated Chair Grimes and thanked former Member Taylor for his leadership.

**i. GARE Update**

Due to time constraints Clerk Byrd emailed the GARE update to the CACE members.

**j. Adjournment**

The CACE meeting adjourned at 3:33 pm.