



CUYAHOGA COUNTY CITIZENS' ADVISORY COUNCIL ON EQUITY
Wednesday, September 25, 2024
3:00 PM – 5:00 PM

I. Call to Order

Habeebah Grimes called the meeting to order at 3:10 PM.

II. Roll Call

A quorum was present.

In Attendance (In Person) CACE Chair Habeebah Grimes, Mayor Annette Blackwell, Ronnie Cannon, Stephen Caviness, LaRaun Clayton, Colleen Cotter, Heidi Gullett, Dr. Charles Modlin, Melaak Rashid, LeVine Ross, Yanela Sims, Eddie Taylor, and Sheila Wright.

Excused Absence-Members, Rev. Kenneth Chalker, Jenice Contreras, and Glen Shumate.

III. Moment of Silence and Reflection

Clerk Byrd shared her thoughts on the importance of voting and identifying those not registered to vote to encourage them to vote in this very important November election.

IV. Public Comment

There were no public comments submitted via email to equity@cuyahogacounty.us since the June 2024 meeting.



V. **Message from County Executive**

Cuyahoga County Executive Ronayne acknowledged the new members of the CACE, LaRaun Clayton and Melaak Rashid. He asked the CACE members and all in the room to introduce themselves to our new members. Executive Ronayne shared he is grateful to be a part of the CACE and appreciates the leadership team.

Executive Ronayne shared Cuyahoga County Clerk of Courts, Nailah K. Byrd, is being recognized by the Norman S. Minor Bar Association with their Trailblazer Award. He also shared he has a personal appreciation for CACE, and he takes very seriously the work of this organization as it is an extremely focused group. Additionally, Executive Ronayne shared he is grateful to have so many different eyes on issues relating to equity.

Executive Ronayne described his visit to Grafton Correctional Institute. He shared how an inmate suggested he not just think about programs, which will make a difference, but to think about systems, because we will have to change systems. He shared he thinks this is appropriate to the Central Services Campus. The hope is to build a campus of services that help residents heal.

Executive Ronayne shared he spoke with former CACE member, Randell McShephard who runs an Urban Farm program and South Euclid Councilwoman, Sara Contianza who runs a program called Food Strong. Executive Ronayne hopes to explore opportunities to partner with them on culinary, farming, gardening, etc. He shared Grafton transformed culture at that facility. Executive Ronayne shared he observed family reunification, family visitation, dads with their children and grandchildren. He furthered while it was heart wrenching, it was also heartwarming. He saw people on an open campus walking and working on the grounds freely. Additionally, he saw an incredible work center where persons were learning trades ranging from welding, studio music production, creating podcasts that broadcast, taking violin lessons, G.E.D., and college classes.

Executive Ronayne described his conversation with two inmates who helped create a Normalcy Center. He shared he would like to talk further with those two gentlemen



and have them consult with the County. According to Executive Ronayne, the most important thing we can do is work with those in our jail to change culture.

Executive Ronayne concluded by stating he needs some help. He wants to push the envelope and bring Grafton to Cuyahoga County.

Chair Grimes thanked Executive Ronayne for his comments and shared the CACE would continue to have further discussion.

VI. Update/Message from Chair

Chair Grimes shared comments regarding how the work of the CACE Subcommittees will align to the current priorities the Executive shared with the CACE.

Chair Grimes shared she is excited about the meeting with the subcommittee chairs and the County Executive. These meetings focused on strategizing as to how the CACE can help further the work planned with the Central Services campuses, the Wellness Center, the work around Women's Health, and this holistic work of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging, and ending racism and the disparities it creates at a systems level.

Chair Grimes provided an introduction and a reintroduction to the CACE subcommittee chairs. She mentioned Member Shumate in his absence and the work he does gathering and thinking through services needed for the community. Chair Grimes mentioned the creation of the Community Survey and the efforts to gather information from community members on the impact of racism. She furthered we want to do this in a way that is not repetitive and redundant. Chair Grimes then introduced Dr. Valerie Wright from Cleveland State University. Dr. Wright is a member of the team leading the community survey work. She shared how impressed she was with all in the room. Dr. Wright provided a flyer containing an overview of the project. She also discussed conducting focus groups on health and healthcare, equitable opportunities, equitable quality of life, and criminal justice. She furthered the goal of the focus groups is to direct the surveys, i.e., what do we want to know from the community, how can we be most effective in designing the survey in a way that will



answer the questions we are most interested in answering. She furthered once the focus groups are conducted, there will be debriefing meetings. Dr. Wright shared one of the main things needed from the CACE is direction on how to involve our community partners and where the available spaces and venues are to hold special events to encourage people to complete the survey. Dr. Wright shared they are also looking for spaces and places to provide incentives to encourage residents to participate. She furthered the goal is for the survey to be administered to a broad range of Cuyahoga County residents.

Chair Grimes furthered the subcommittee chairs are determined to continue meeting and strategizing. She shared Dr. Gullett has agreed to host a time for the get-together and look at systems mapping as a way of setting the priorities for the CACE body, the priorities of the County Executive, and the service to the broader charge of CACE. The goal is to meet before the next Quarterly meeting in December to hopefully develop an alignment and agreement regarding the goals of the body, and the roles they'd like the CACE members to play, particularly in deepening their understanding around systems mapping and leveraging.

Chair Grimes shared that racism is still a Public Health Crisis and the CACE needs to inform people of their existence. She invited all the CACE members to sign up to take headshots noting as the leader, she would take her headshot first. Chair Grimes furthered the members of the CACE should also provide short bios.

Chair Grimes thanked Clerk Byrd for her comments on voting and furthered we must be sure our voter registrations are up to date. She shared October 7th is the last day for in-person and online registration, and if voting by mail, ballots must be postmarked by October 7th. Chair Grimes shared for those planning on voting by absentee ballots, all ballots must be requested by the Board of Elections by October 9th. Additionally, return ballots must be postmarked by November 4th. Chair Grimes shared ballots can be returned in person by November 5th and that early voting starts October 8th and lasts through November 3rd.

Chair Grimes also gave a shoutout to Cleveland Votes and shared how hard they are working in our communities to advance the votes. She furthered this is something the CACE deeply appreciates. The County Executive then shared some information about



ADA Cleveland, an event he attended regarding persons with disabilities. He shared he is also impressed with the high schools in getting students prepared to vote.

VII. New Business

a. Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Member Cotter and seconded by Member Cannon to approve the previously distributed minutes. There was no discussion. The motion carried without opposition and the minutes were approved.

b. Presentation from the Department of Public Works' Administrator Planning and Programs, Nichole English

Cuyahoga County Department of Public Works' Administrator Planning and Programs, Nichole English provided a brief update on the Cuyahoga County Central Services Campus. Laurel Diaz, Justice and Health Equity Officer, assisted her with the presentation. Ms. Diaz commented about a voter registration drive in the jail conducted in partnership with Nova, Ohio and the Board of Elections. She furthered they will also request absentee ballots for those who won't be released from jail in time to vote.

Ms. English shared the project history of the Central Services Campus, the Planning Study Recommendations, and population management regarding the Diversion Center, Central Booking, Bail Reform, Improved Information Management Systems, and the Jail Process Coordinator. She talked about relocating to the new jail site, program objectives, and enhancements to the physical environment for jail population and staff.

Ms. Diaz spoke about Community Engagement and focus groups targeting reentry and justice system reform advocates. She furthered they've been meeting with outside stakeholders. She finalized her comments by sharing the consensus is that the County is headed in the right direction.



Ms. English provided program highlights on the programming for the new jail such as In-Unit programs, resident programs, medical clinics, and staff support.

There was a robust Q&A discussion with the CACE members about the presentation provided by Ms. English.

c. Update from the Department of Human Resources

No update was provided by the Department of Human Resources. Chair Grimes stated an email update will be sent at a later date.

d. Update from Department of Equity and Inclusion

No update was provided by the Department of Equity and Inclusion. Chair Grimes stated an email update will be sent at a later date.

e. GARE Update

There were no GARE updates other than Clerk Byrd is attending the GARE Conference in St. Louis, MO in November.

VIII. Next meeting

The next meeting will be held on December 10th, from 3:00PM-5:00PM.

If you are unable to attend any meetings, please contact Clerk Byrd for purposes of ensuring a quorum.

IX. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:05 PM.