

African American Equity Restoration Task Force

Meeting minutes

Oct. 27, 2021

Beck Cultural Center

Charles Lomax, Director of the City's Office of Community Empowerment, brought the meeting to order at 5 p.m. and called roll. All members were in attendance except Dave Miller and Matthew Best.

Motion made by Deborah Porter to approve the minutes from the previous meeting; seconded by Regina Olum. Approved unanimously.

Lomax introduced City staff in attendance as requested by board members: Christina Magrans from Law; Susan Gennoe, Finance Director; and Boyce Evans, Purchasing Director. Also assisting: Ayauna Blair from Mayor's office and Emily Norris, Community Empowerment intern and UT College of Social Work student.

Evans and Gennoe can advise on the financial management piece of establishing this new group's foundation and governance.

General question by group: Where does the \$100 million come from over the next 10 years? How and where is it managed?

Evans: Any money brought in to the City is governed by the purchasing law/regulations of the City. The Task Force will have a special revenue fund, which will need to be approved by council in the 2023 budget cycle. The city is not a 501c3 nonprofit organization.

A non-profit can serve as the Task Force's fiscal agent to receive and manage grants and donations. Examples include United Way, Knoxville Area Urban League, Beck, East Tennessee Foundation, CONNECT Ministries

Vice Mayor Mackenzie asks if all categories of revenue go into fiscal agent?

Evans: City is most likely agent to receive Federal or State agency funds, as those already come to city departments. For non-gov grants and private donations, a fiscal agent would be more flexible in the ways it could spend those funds. Recommends that

Fitzgerald-Baker: Can the City give unrestricted funds to agencies, ie Empower Knox violence prevention grants?

Evans: Funds raised by Task Force aren't really like other City grants, like Community Agency Grants.

Porter: Can the Task Force receive federal ARPA funds coming to the City for distribution?

Evans: Task Force can submit request to City for ARPA dollars. Request must meet the specific use of ARPA funds. Some restrictions would apply.

El-Amin: Where would the funds come from?

Evans: Two main sources: Private donations from individuals and foundations. Also: Federal and state grants applied for with support from City to meet common goals.

Fitzgerald-Baker: Looking at projects and activities that would help move the Task Force's mission forward, like technology. Seek source of funds based on project. Benefits of Beck as fiscal agent – ties to equity and history.

El-Amin: Would the Task force have a City grant person to assist?

McKenzie: Proposes members bring suggestions for other potential non profit fiscal agents to the next meeting.

Taylor: Inquires about fees that would be incurred from fiscal agent.

Lomax: We can reach out to possible fiscal agencies and report back.

El-Amin: Desire to involve community in choice of fiscal agent.

Lomax: What counts toward the \$100M goal? For example, to projects that invest in East Knoxville infrastructure count?

Fitzgerald-Baker: Task Force-identified projects count. Not necessarily, say, projects like trees being planted in East Knoxville.

Hardin: Emphasis on new dollars (money from sources not previously engaged?), and lean in on programs identified by the Task Force.

Taylor: Is management and acquisition in the same bucket? That is a job in itself.

Lomax: It depends. For example, Engineering may file for a grant that gets funds for a Task Force project. Therefore, a grantwriter position on City staff may not be necessary. Role may live with fiscal agent. A likely possibility is for the Task Force to raise funds in two pools: City and other, depending on source of money and its indented use. Possibility: The Task Force would maintain the balance of funds in each pool. The Task Force could use some of its \$100K seed money to hire a grant writer dedicated to the task Force.

Fitzgerald-Baker: Start with what the Task Force wants done and see what funding is available. Operate as a guiding force.

El-Amin: Task Force members can't be responsible for raising funds. Possibility of asking council for annual funding.

Gennoe: Council would have to approve hiring of a person, use of \$100K.

McKenzie: Don't get caught up in dollars and their source. Identify the gaps and projects.

Lyons: Identify gaps and find dollars and look at dollars available to make process easier. Example: Federal Infrastructure bill – funds coming to cities hurt by COVID.

Underwood: How would a Task Force grant writer work on that?

Lyons: Task force wouldn't need one necessarily in that case. City is already asking for federal money; Task Force would ask for the City to ask for funds on their behalf.

Porter: Prioritize projects.

El-Amin: Both things will happen at the same time. A hired person could research these opportunities. Assistance will be necessary.

Hardin: Would like TF to lead with policy. No issue with fiscal agent but would City push back?

Evans: Nature of employee (full time, etc) would affect how/when the staff position is created.

Gennoe: Don't need Council approval of funds but would need to approve the creation of a position.

Task force discussed term limits:

Resolution currently says that TF members would serve for 10 years. Lomax notes that most committees have term limits – two-year terms with options of renewing for two more. Staggered terms across TF. Considerations include: maintaining institutional knowledge; process if someone leaves; council approval of new members as they roll on; process of nominating new members; time to establish the foundation of the TF and then operate it. Task Force decided to establish terms for inaugural members as beginning July 2022. Process to decide which members serve which terms tabled for now.

Discussion of meeting schedule:

Lomax: Can we find a standing day to establish a regular schedule and publicize it? 5-7pm was earlier identified as a good time frame for meeting.

Hardin suggests establishing the last week of the month as a standing timeframe and using a doodle poll to finalize the date.

Discussion of members voting. Possibilities include Roberts Rules of Order and using straw poll (like Recode Knoxville)

Lyons proposes that a quorum be 50 percent of the Task Force. Decisions passed by majority of attendees. Tie is a fail.

El-Amin: Big decisions need votes of all members. Allow voting by proxy or email or absentee?

Underwood: Does the sunshine law allow that?

Magrans: I can look into that.

El-Amin: Are there virtual options?

Magrans: Gov. Lee didn't extend the virtual meeting allowance for COVID-19, so all members must be present in person to vote.

Lyons: We can work together to identify which conversations will be had at which meetings and when votes will take place when members will be present.

McKenzie: Can a member vote in absentia, on bigger items?

Magrans: Will talk to Law Director Charles Swanson about potential voting for record in absentia.

Hardin: As a body, we can take members' ability to attend into account and table some agenda items to the next meeting if members can't attend or if conversation needs to happen.

Taylor: Consistency of meeting day leads to more and easier public notice and public engagement and ability to schedule space.

Lomax: Will get with Renee Kesler of Beck to get on the books for Nov and Dec. Specific day or flexibility?

Hardin asked about voting mechanism, resources to advise Task Force

Magrans: Link to Roberts Rules and trainings for boards. Along with Recode as model to possibly emulate.

Subcommittees: The Executive committee was established at the first meeting. Disparities conversation will inform the creation of subcommittees.

Community TV: Members want CTV to record meetings for on-demand viewing.

Public forum opportunities: How does the TF want to hear from the public? City Council for example allows a certain number of people/minutes signed up in advance; first come first served. School board provides public forum at separate meetings.

Fitzgerald-Baker: What is the mechanism for people to submit questions and comments for task force? On the City's website?

Magrans: Suggests something comparable to Planning Commission mechanism – questions get submitted and attached to agenda items on Task Force premeeting notes.

What about general feedback and questions?

Lomax: Shared experience as MPC member. At one point each individual member was contactable via contact information posted on the website. Would receive multiple identical emails and letters from concerned residents. Packet mechanism mentioned earlier was better and more concise.

Porter: limited public forum.

El-Amin: Public forum = real-time response. Important that voices of the community are here.

Value of online forum? Members scroll through feedback.

Lyons: Value of online portion and in-person. Advocates for 3-minute limit, using screen with timer, per Council.

McKenzie: Sign up in advance. 3 minutes per speaker. Maximum number of speakers?

Hardin suggests 5 maximum speakers.

Public forum: Five people, signed up in advance, 3 minutes each. Option for TF to amend.

Ayauna Blair presented research on iniquities, referred to packet sent to TF members in advance. Evanston, Illinois, is a model city for citizen reparations restorative housing program. 1919-1969. Took funds for the legalization of marijuana and applications from residents who were direct descendants of residents who lost housing. Takeaway: important to get feedback from residents as part of reparations/equalization program process.

Moving forward: Identifying areas purchased by the City and value of purchases, etc.

Hardin: Is there a breakdown of representatives from last census – demographics of neighborhoods, census tracts, etc?

Lyons: the 2020 Census results will be very important and helpful to determining the current demographics of Knoxville

Local disparities:

Fitzgerald-Baker: That's a whole meeting! Proposes that members bring information to the table.

McKenzie: Proposes to ask Zimbabwe Matavou to present on the breadth of disparities he's experienced as a Knoxville resident and presented to Council and others over the years re: restoration and rescue. Vice Mayor can send out packet in advance. 20-30 minutes.

Heat Equity project: Emily Norris hands out project sheet on Knoxville Heat Equity Coalition and general interest meeting being held in late Nov.

Motion to adjourn. So moved and seconded.