

MINUTES

Meeting of the

Mayor's Equity Advisory Council

Wednesday November 11, 2020 6:00 pm

Via Zoom

Attendance

Council members: Steve Allard, Mayor Gayle Brill Mittler, Kevin Dougherty, Councilwoman Elsie Foster, Rivka Greenberg, Nathalie Levine, Franklin More, Pastor Antoinette Gaboton-Moss, Kermit Moss Jr., Carolyn Timmons, Jeff Vardaro, John Wenz.

Staff – Harry Glazer

Members of the public: Dan Battey, Sonya Headlam.

Discussion – Leadership of the MEAC

Antoinette and Jeff affirmed their interest in serving as co-chairs of the group. MEAC members unanimously approved their appointment to these roles. The co-chairs and the Mayor reiterated a call for a volunteer to serve as secretary for the group but no one stepped up to take this role: Harry will continue to serve in this capacity in the interim.

Mission of the MEAC

Antoinette and Jeff initiated a discussion of the mission of the group and this conversation took up the bulk of the meeting. Jeff suggested that a major focus of the group be on policing and the HPPD, yet the group would also be open to other issues as identified by group members or residents.

On Antoinette's request, the Mayor shared her vision that the group would help advise her as the State Legislators work to address CCRBs and Borough leaders seek to create a variation of a Civilian Review Board (CRB) or other Community-Police Organization to work with the HPPD. The Mayor mentioned that Newark created a CRB that their PBA challenged successfully in court, while Maplewood created a Committee on Policing that appears to be working well. The NJ State Assembly introduced a bill to support the creation of CRBs yet the Mayor suspects it may take awhile to become law. The Mayor would like the MEAC to work with her to identify the best options for Highland Park.

Carolyn and Elsie advocated that the MEAC's mission must also include responding to bias incidents in town, as they arise. This work would compliment the activities of the Human Relations Commission.

Following more discussion, group members agreed that the MEAC would embrace two primary missions:

- to advise the Mayor & Council on matters relating to policing, including the creation of a CRB;
- to advise the Mayor and Council on responses to bias incidents in town.

Ancillary issues raised in this discussion included:

1. Whether or not the MEAC has a budget in 2021 (Rivka, Nathalie)
2. The creation of a website where MEAC members can share documents with each other & the public (Jeff)
3. The need for transparency vs. the need for internal discussion before an unofficial draft is appropriate to share with the public (Antoinette, Carolyn)
4. Whether or not to invite HP PD Chief Rick Abrams to meetings of the MEAC (Mayor, Carolyn)
5. Defining the parameters of 'advisory'; what forms of advice, and suggested policy, may the group offer (Steve, Carolyn)

Subcommittees

Jeff asked that all MEAC members volunteer for at least one of four committees:

- a. agenda
- b. by-laws
- c. communications
- d. policy

To allow MEAC members time to consider the committee assignment(s) for which each is best suited, Harry suggested that MEAC members send an email to him before the next meeting identifying the committee(s) they'd prefer. Carolyn advised that the deadline for these emails be set for Nov. 25th and the MEAC accepted this recommendation.

Scheduling the next meeting

The group looked at a few dates and times and decided to hold the next meeting on Monday December 7th

At 7:00 pm

Via Zoom.

Public Comment

There were no comments from the public at this meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 7:30 pm.

Minutes prepared by
Harry Glazer
Aide to the Mayor
November 18, 2020