

Minutes
Meeting of the Mayor's Equity Advisory Council
Monday December 7, 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.

Staff – Harry Glazer

Members of the public: Will Atwater, Allison Ward-Seidel, Peter Spool, Miriam Lefkowitz, Lucinda Holt, Randi Ostrove, Dan Battey, and Jessica Hunsdon.

Approval of minutes of prior meeting

Jeff made a motion to approve the minutes of the prior meeting, held on November 11th. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Establishing rotation of council members serving as secretary

Jeff raised the idea of instituting a rotation, wherein different members of the Mayor's Equity Advisory Council (MEAC) serve in the role of secretary for a three month period. Jeff made a formal motion to that effect, the motion was seconded, and approved unanimously. Norma Vargas volunteered to serve as the first Council member in the rotation.

Establishing a by-laws committee

Jeff reported that three members of MEAC volunteered to serve on the by-laws committee - Kevin, Franklin, and Antoinette. He proposed the following mission of the MEAC, which would be fleshed out by the by-laws committee - "to focus primarily on providing the Mayor with advice on policing in Highland Park and, in particular, with offering counsel on the creation of a CCRB and to participate in revising policies of the HPPD." This mission statement leaves open the possibility of the MEAC advising the Mayor and others on Council on other issues of equity, as needed.

The MEAC discussed the proposed mission statement and suggested that the by laws also include parameters for voting, what will constitute a quorum, concerns regarding the Open Public Meetings Act, and other concerns. Jeff then made a formal motion to constitute the committee, which was seconded and approved. Jeff asked the by-laws committee to prepare a draft in time for the next MEAC meeting.

Establishing a communications committee

Jeff reported that three members of the MEAC volunteered to serve on the communications committee - Jeff, Nathalie, Steve, and Franklin. He proposed that the main mission of the committee will be to create a robust web-presence for the MEAC. Jeff then made a formal motion to constitute the committee, which was seconded and approved.

Other MEAC concerns raised

The MEAC then discussed other concerns of the group, such as:

- > access to data and information from the HPPD
- > limits, if any, in access to that data
- > can the Borough Council grant access to the MEAC to sensitive data
- > why a CCRB was not established earlier, though it was suggested
- > access to specific incident reports of the HPPD
- > where do complaints about the HPPD go? Can the MEAC set up a channel to receive such complaints?

In response to many of these concerns, the Mayor suggested that the Borough attorney attend the next meeting of the MEAC and offer guidance. The Mayor or Harry will attempt to enlist him to participate in the next meeting.

Public comment

Lucinda shared information on a recent online panel discussion of interest to the group; she will share a link to a recording, which the MEAC can in turn share with the public.

Jessica asked that the public be granted access to the minutes and agenda of the MEAC; Jeff said that this would be addressed in the work of the communications committee.

Jessica also asked for the date of the next open public forum with the HPPD leaders and raised concerns with the format of the prior forum; the Mayor said that members of the public have already met the the Police Chief about this and the plan is to allow more time for questions from the public and less time devoted to slide shows in the next open public forum. Councilwoman Foster said that the HPPD is in the process of scheduling the next forum.

Jessica asked if the quarterly public forums can be scheduled a year in advance. Councilwoman Foster said the idea is a good one and she plans to share it with the HPPD leaders.

Nathalie asked if the MEAC members could play a role in the next open public forum with the HPPD leaders; the Mayor said they could, especially as it relates to issues discussed by the MEAC.

The Mayor asked if the MEAC would invite the Police Chief to attend meetings of the group; Antoinette said that the group should first finalize their by laws and communications plan, then invite the Chief. Jeff added that the group should also first consult with the Borough attorney, to confirm aspects of the MEAC's roles, and then meet with the Chief.

Scheduling next meeting

Jeff asked if there was a more reliable way to set meetings, which takes into account different members' schedules. Nathalie offered to conduct an online poll, to find the most opportune times. The MEAC held off on scheduling its next meeting, pending the results of this poll.

The meeting adjourned at 7:30 pm.

Minutes prepared by
Harry Glazer
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Aide to the Mayor
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