



City of Portland

Remote Racial Equity Steering Committee
February 18, 2021
5:00 PM

ZOOM INFORMATION:

The Racial Equity Steering Committee will hold a meeting on Thursday, February 18, 2021 at 5:00 PM. This meeting will take place remotely using Zoom.

Virtual meetings are allowed using emergency legislation approved by LD 2167; 1 M.R.S. §403A, that authorizes cities and towns to conduct meetings online.

Allow your computer to install the free Zoom app to get the best meeting experience. If you are not able to attend live, a recording will be uploaded to portlandmaine.gov/livestream the next day. For public comment, you will need to use the "raise your hand" feature. To raise your hand via the telephone, please hit *9. You will be unmuted by the host when it is time for public.

Please click the link below to join the webinar:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83062619858?pwd=Qk1jemhUbnlwNEtUWFhQT0dxZ3ZlQT09>

Passcode: 193527

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Webinar ID: 830 6261 9858

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International numbers available: <https://us02web.zoom.us/u/kd7xf4Uyx1>

- II. Approval of Meeting Minutes
 - a. February 4, 2021 Meeting Minutes
- III. RESC Interim Report Discussion
- IV. Discussion of proposal for Racial Equity assessment and training
 - a. Racial Equity assessment and training
- V. Discussion of City contracts proposal

a. Proposal for Charge # 2

VI. Adjourn

Date: February 4, 2021

Attending: Ali Abdul, Suheir Alaskari, Deb Ibonwa, Kate Knox, Lado Ladoka, Merita McKenzie, Peter O'Donnell, Jonathan Sahrbeck, Louis Pickens, Pious Ali (Co Chair), Lelia DeAndrade (Co-Chair); Samaa Abdurraqib (Facilitator)

Absent:

Approved minutes January 28

Goals:

- RESC interim report discussion
- Discussion of CAHOOTS research

Discussion: RESC Interim report

- Meeting for week of Feb.11 canceled to work on interim report
- Submit an executive summary and full report Thursday before the council meeting
- Approximately 5-10 mins presentation to City Council and questions

Content:

- Review of charges
- Recommendations
 - Charge #2
 - Create a Department of Racial Equity in the City Manager's office (some editing required in the tracking document)
 - Establish a permanent independent board for reviewing racial equity (needs description of members)
 - Track and annually publish racial demographics and implement an equitable COVID homelessness response
 - Charge #1
 - Alternative public safety response team not housed in police department
 - Development of structure to address public complaints about the police. This would be an alternative to the Police Citizen Review Subcommittee, that would provide more transparency, accountability and be more equitable- would include revisions of eligibility rules and implementation of conflict of interest policy to address the broadening of eligible participants.
- Remaining issues to discuss:
 - Review use and enforcement of Criminal Trespass orders
 - Proposal to reserve 10% of city contracts for minority owned businesses
 - Racial equity training for city staff

Discussion: Alternative Public Safety Response Program

- Review of CAHOOTS model of Oregon, based on research conducted by Dr. Medford (includes answer to questions and contract between the clinic and the city)
- Adopting the CAHOOTS model only addresses the incident but doesn't address aftercare. The city and/or state would need to address that there is a lack of services or supports for people in need. We need an option other than hospitals or jail. The lack of aftercare options should not be a barrier to implementing this model.

- We can consider an additional recommendation to the city about investing in supports and facilities. The city could issue an RFP for organizations that have the skills and capacity to provide services.
- We need clear language as to why we need an alternative public safety response model
 - Contract with service providers that have better understanding of available resources
 - Decrease the responsibilities of the police and reduce the scope of the work required of the police
 - Contact with police, especially for BIPOC people, no matter how gentle, can be traumatizing and we need to reduce unnecessary contact with law enforcement.
 - Create responses and results to these calls that are therapeutic and not punitive.
 - Increase likelihood of earlier interventions and reduce incarceration rates and criminalization of public health crises.

Note: We should investigate how calls are vetted to be tracked to the police vs. the alternative

Committee adjourned 6:15

February 4, 2021

Portland Racial Equity Steering Committee

Proposal DRAFT: Racial Equity Assessment and Training for PPD, City employees, and City Council

We propose that all Portland Police Department Employees (and all City Employees) undergo extensive Racial Equity Training provided by qualified prestigious consultants such as the Mid Atlantic Equity Consortium out of Bethesda, MD.

Through the equity training, participants will better understand bias, racism, microaggressions, systemic racism, structural racism, institutional racism, race and power, and race and injustice, and more. This training shall be on-going work, where participants receive training throughout each year of employment. As a result of this training, looking at data, there will be a reduction in cases of aggression, micro aggression, and racial injustices.

[INCLUDE ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE ABOUT GARE RACIAL EQUITY ASSESSMENT]

RESC Proposals for charge #2:

- Establish a commission to investigate the ways in which the City interacts with area agencies, organizations, and non-profits in the name of public safety. This commission will make recommendations for how these partnerships can best work to enhance public safety in racially equitable ways.
- Create and establish a Department of Racial Equity and a Director or Commissioner of Racial Equity as a permanent position within the City Manager's office (see full proposal on page 6 of this document)
- ~~Create and establish a permanent position within the City's Health and Human Services department or the City Manager's office to regularly and daily monitor available resources (beds, treatment options, etc) to provide updates to service providers who are working within communities in need.~~
- Public safety is:
 - Protecting the wellbeing of people of all races & ethnicities, communities, and organizations.
 - Safeguarding people from crimes, disaster, and other potential dangers and threats, and reducing fear
 - Ensuring that all people get a fair and equitable chance to lead a high quality of life that is not predicted by race.
- Proposals to Address Racial Disparities Amongst Homeless Population in Portland as well as Among Those that Are Able to Access Health and Human Services Programs (see full proposal on page 3 of this document)

- Proposal to have the Council declare racism as a public health crisis. (see full proposal on page 7 of this document)
- Proposal to develop an equity plan to address racial inequities (see full proposal on page 8 of this document)
- Proposal to reserve 10% of all city contracts for social and economical disadvantage minority owned businesses. (see full proposal on page 9 of this document)

Proposals to Address Racial Disparities in Access Health and Human Services Programs (from Deb)

- **Require GA office and all social service departments run by the city's Department of Health and Human Services to track and annually publish racial demographics for applications, denials, and approvals, and make the data publicly accessible. This data shall be reported to the following: the City's Racial Equity Commission, City Council, and the statewide Permanent Commission XXXXX. This data will also be publicly promoted on an annual basis.**
- Create a Racial Equity Task Force, composed of staff, community members, social services providers, and policy and data analysis experts to examine racial demographics in Health and Human Services programs to:
 - analyze data, policies and practices, with the objective of eliminating race-based disparities
 - hear complaints and mediate conflicts between clients and departments
 - publish a public report on activities and data analysis at least annually.
 - Implement [Equity Based Decision Making Framework for Homeless Service Systems](#)
- Increase access to social services by:
 - Providing 24/7 access to emergency services
 - increasing distribution of information about available services broadly and publicly
 - conducting outreach and assistance to communities, especially communities of color.
- Develop and implement [The Framework for an Equitable Covid-19 Homelessness Response](#) to address current and future public health crises, including:
 - Unsheltered People
 - Shelters
 - Housing
 - Diversion and Prevention; and

- Strengthening the system for the future.
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~~Proposal for Racial Equity Director position~~

~~The Director of the Office of Racial Equity for the City of Portland, Maine will work in the Office of The City Manager and will be responsible for advancing a framework that will improve internal policies, practices and systems to eradicate structural and or institutional racism that may exist in City government. The Director will achieve this goal by working with the Racial Equity Committee established by the City Council, and through community engagement, analysis of policy, data collection, and training and recommend more comprehensive accountability measures for City of Portland departments. The Director will oversee the development of department action plans to eradicate racial inequality, and wil also issue a biennial “Racial Equity Status Report” to the Racial Equity Committee and the City Council.~~

~~In addition to the above the office will also provide analysis for any proposed legislation as to whether the proposed ordinance would promote Racial Equity by helping to close opportunity gaps for communities of color, or impede Racial Equity by furthering Racial Disparities.~~

~~The Director shall have experience in the following areas:~~

- ~~A experienced visionary and practitioner in dismantling institutional racism and experience in recreating systems of belonging.~~
- ~~Proven ability in managing changes in complex organizations.~~

- ~~Experience in developing, implementing, and leading inclusion programs with demonstrable outcomes.~~
- ~~Identifying equity concerns related to public policies.~~
- ~~Is trusted local leader and a bridge builder of racial equity~~
- ~~Proven ability to foster a progressive and diverse workforce and promote a diverse workplace.~~
- ~~Be a data driven decision maker and propose policies and administrative changes that positively impact equity in City government and in the delivery of services to the community.~~

Director of the Department of Racial Equity

Proposal: To create a new Department of Racial Equity for the City of Portland, Maine that will be led by the Director of the Department of Racial Equity.

We propose that the goals of this position will be to work with the City's permanent Racial Equity Commission, the community, and internal departments to analyze city policies, programs and practices with the goal to "eradicate any structural or institutional racism" within the city government structure and to work with the city's police department to review all policies and to reimagine the definition of "community safety,"

We believe this office should work to reimagine and reinvent and reform the systems that have traditionally inhibited the progress of Black and Brown and Indigenous people. We also suggest that the Director consider how other factors such as gender, sexual orientation and disability fit into the discussion and recommendations for reform as well.

Proposal #1: (From Jerome)

The RESC works together to create a brief for the Mayor and City Council declaring why Racism is a public health crisis. Race being a social determinant of health is a public safety issue and falls within one of our understandings of the definition of public safety “ensuring that all people get a fair and equitable chance to lead a high quality of life that is not predicted by race”. Therefore, I propose we recommend that the mayor ***“sign an executive order declaring racism a public health crisis in the City of Portland”***.

Possible language (with a contextual preamble that isn’t included here):

Now Therefore Be It Resolve That I Mayor Kate Merchant Snyder and the Portland City Council do hereby declare racism to be a public health crisis in the city of Portland, establish a working group to address these issues and to, seek solutions to reshape the discourse and actively engage all citizens in racial justice work; continue to work to build alliances with organizations that are confronting racism and encourage partners to recognize racism as a public health crisis; continue to promote racially equitable economic and workforce development in Portland ; continue to promote racially equitable hiring of City employees; and conduct a racial equity impact assessment of the city’s budget, policies and practices;

Proposal: #2: (from Jerome)

Proposal #2- To establish a racial equity plan with regards to public safety and community prevention that includes the following priority areas:

- Support for Children & Families
- Black employment
- Black wealth & Financial stability
- Housing and Neighborhoods
- Health
- Voting

Proposal to reserve 10% of all city contracts for social and economical disadvantage minority owned businesses. (from Lado)

Any contract around 5 million and above should require a minority subcontractor before a contract can be awarded.

City workforce should reflect the population it serves. City should require 15% of its employees to be historically disadvantaged minorities.

City of Portland shall promote this program to social and economically disadvantaged communities

The city will collect data on this program and report it to the city council on annual bases

The city covers the down payment for historically racial disadvantaged residents of Portland who have housing choice voucher and qualify to purchase home

- City pay 3.5% down payment for section 8 qualifiers
- Required 10 years residence in the property
- Take secondary lien on the property incase of foreclosure
- Limit participation to 10 qualifying families a year
- Asked for the PMI to be waive by the mortgage company

Housing Choice Voucher

- Shelter Plus for individuals who have experienced homelessness
- Bridging rental assistant program(BRAP) for people who are struggling with mental illness
- Step Voucher two year housing voucher for farmerly unhoused population
- Project based section 8 program(building specific)
- Section 8 voucher

Waiting list is from three years to ten years(section 8 and project based section 8)

Housing Choice Voucher priority

- Long term homeless
- Disable
- Veteran

Section 8 Homeownership program requirement:

- Family qualify for home ownership program
- Housing is eligible for purchase under the voucher
- Family completed first time home ownership training
- Family satisfied the minimum income and work requirement
- Family have not defaulted on mortgage securing debt to purchase home

TABLE 2: The chart below illustrates the direct federal assistance in helping Maine families as of 2018.

FEDERAL RENTAL ASSISTANCE	FAMILIES
House Choice Voucher	11,700
Section 8 Project Based	7,800
USDA Rental Assistance	5,900
Public Housing	3,800
Supportive Disable and Elderly	900

Source: Center on Budget and Policy Priority, 2018

From Suheir Alaskari

Charge # 2 proposals

Suheir Alaskari

- Create a voluntary Cultural Alliance under Portland City's supervision where NGOs, Portland public schools, universities, researchers, and advocates can share resources about diversity, inclusion, equity, and cultural competencies. These resources should be available for the public to raise awareness about best practices in dismantling racism and the historical timeline.
- A partnership between Portland City and the regional Chamber of Commerce to have a pledge of hiring a certain number of black, immigrants, native, and minority candidates by the end of 2023. A specific acknowledgment should be awarded for any employer who reached a higher number of job opportunities and hired such candidates by the city. A certificate of the most diverse employer should be made, for example, and awarded. (besides Thrive 2027)
- Form a collective power against social injustice and racism between cities in Maine and Portland town to partner with other cities initiatives against racism; for example, South Portland City established a permanent Human Rights Commission.
- Portland City to negotiate with Portland Schools and universities to discuss systematic racism in classrooms, edit curriculum to have enough representation

- for minorities in Maine. Those who will join this journey should be honored and acknowledged by local media and Portland City.
- Create leadership programs, especially for students of color and other minorities, in partnership with researchers and Schools in Portland. This training should touch base on the identity crisis, the historical timeline of racism, leadership, career opportunities, and networking.
 - Religious, cultural competency:
 - Many Muslim Mainers feel the pressure of not celebrating their religious holidays to avoid social stress. Jewish and Chinese communities are facing the same. Other religious holidays should be celebrated the same way we honor Christmas in Portland. Portland City could host the first local market where people can buy multicultural religious decorations. This will offer income opportunities for many minorities, especially women who used to prepare such decorations themselves as a tradition.
 - **"Halal food is not a shame"**: Portland Schools adopt this slogan and start offering halal meals for the minority students. Many young generations face bullying just because they follow their religious traditions, which causes identity crises and unsolved anger
 - Economic Improvement towards social empowerment:
 - Collect reliable data about a business owned by black and other minorities in Portland City as a start.
 - In partnership with the Portland City office of Economic Opportunity and local community banks start offering intensive training for these business owners about how to survive the market during COVID and available resources, many small businesses struggled with getting access to the PPP program.
 - Portland city to invite media and local newspapers to have free of charge promotion camping for these businesses around the year.

- Support BLM and dedicate a week for it in the City official calendar
- Engage local Artists in creating a wall with all racist's crime victims in modern history as a reminder for all of us and people visiting Portland city.
- Open a call for community in Portland to form a scholarship for black young people with criminal records to help them start up their own business or endeavor the costs of higher education
- Portland City to work with the Zoning Administration to change and adapt some of Portland City's street names to represent Portland minorities.
- Homeless clients to be given reflective strips or vests to protect them from car accidents Portland city with Purple Street and other city's shelters for example!