



City of Portland

Racial Equity Steering Committee March 18, 2021 5:00 PM

I. ZOOM Information:

The Racial Equity Steering Committee will hold a meeting on Thursday March 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 comment.

Please click the link below to join the webinar:

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

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II. Approval of Meeting Minutes

- a. March 11, 2021 Meeting Minutes

III. Discussion of Proposal -Page 11 and 12

- a. Proposal Charge 2

IV. Planning future meetings

V. Adjourn

Date: March 11

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

Absent: Suheir Alaskari, Louis Pickens,

Minutes from March 4 approved

Meeting Overview

- Update on Mid-Atlantic Consulting Group
- Review Proposal from Ali and Alaskari

Discussion:

- Confirmation that Mid-Atlantic Consulting Group does work in organizations other than schools.
- Discussion of proposals from Ali and Alaskari
 1. Committee agreed with the recommendation that the RESC review the Black Power demands
 2. Recommendation that the city eliminate bail and court fines for individuals from marginalized communities
 - a. The committee discussed the potential role of the committee to address this issue. This is not likely within the city's power but rather related to state law We considered recommending that the city support pending legislation about cash bail. The committee recommends that the City of Portland invest in or create diversion and restorative justice programs that could be prioritize BIPOLC people and marginalized people
 3. The committee agreed that the recommendations in this document reflect our values or issues that we think are problematic in police policies, legal practices and relations with the community, especially BIPOC and other marginalized people. The committee agreed that we need to identify concrete asks or recommendations from within these ideas to propose to the City Council. Ali and Knox will work on the revisions and the committee will review next week.

Adjourned 6:35

RESC Proposals for charge #2:

- I. 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.
- II. 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)
- ~~III. 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.~~
- IV. Public safety is:
 - A. Protecting the wellbeing of people of all races & ethnicities, communities, and organizations.
 - B. Safeguarding people from crimes, disaster, and other potential dangers and threats, and reducing fear
 - C. Ensuring that all people get a fair and equitable chance to lead a high quality of life that is not predicted by race.
- V. 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)
- VI. Proposal to have the Council declare racism as a public health crisis. (see full proposal on page 7 of this document)
- VII. Proposal to develop an equity plan to address racial inequities (see full proposal on page 8 of this document)

- VIII. 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)

1. **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.**

2. 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:
 - a. analyze data, policies and practices, with the objective of eliminating race-based disparities
 - b. hear complaints and mediate conflicts between clients and departments
 - c. publish a public report on activities and data analysis at least annually.
 - d. Implement [Equity Based Decision Making Framework for Homeless Service Systems](#)

3. Increase access to social services by:
 - a. Providing 24/7 access to emergency services
 - b. increasing distribution of information about available services broadly and publicly
 - c. conducting outreach and assistance to communities, especially communities of color.

4. Develop and implement [The Framework for an Equitable Covid-19 Homelessness Response](#) to address current and future public health crises, including:
 - a. Unsheltered People
 - b. Shelters
 - c. Housing
 - d. Diversion and Prevention; and
 - e. Strengthening the system for the future.

- 5.

~~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 1: 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.

Proposal 2:

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

Proposal 3:

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 (Federal Housing Administration)
- 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 Private Mortgage Insurance/PMI (\$150/mo) to be waive by the mortgage company
- 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

General information about the different vouchers:

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 ASSISTED
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 and Charge #3 proposals

1. 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.
2. Portland City to work with the Zoning Administration to change and adapt some of Portland City's street names to represent Portland diverse communities.
3. Economic Improvement towards social empowerment:
 - Collect reliable data about businesses owned by BIPOC 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 be able to provide any bank with this data so the matching will happen between capital resources and the business entity.
4. In regard to Gainesville's program I mentioned. This proposal to be attached to Cahoot. The City of Gainesville in FL adapted a program called "Co-Responder" which is basically the same as Cahoot as a first step then,
 - They adapted a Diversion and Deflection program to further equity by reducing arrests.
 - Non-profit mental health organizations + the city+ the PD are building a central receiving facility where people with all types of crises will not be arrested or fall under the restrictions of emergency rooms as a third option after the jail and hospital.
 - In order to make this is happen in Portland and given the housing and the sheltering crises, ***here is my proposal:***
 - Instead of building facilities (which is needed especially to reduce incarceration between young people of color), Portland City could put a call to rent such facilities or work closely with health NGOs and mental health

NGOs to use their services before connecting the candidate in the "third option" to rehab centers or better permanent solutions.

- Portland city put an invite for local people to help in this, during the refugees's crisis in Portland almost \$500,000 was collected and local families donated

5. Open a call for the community (from its residents) in Portland to form a scholarship or a grant for BIPOC people with criminal records to help them start up their own business or endeavor the costs of higher education. This will encourage the youth population to settle down in Portland. Eligibility will be based on socioeconomic background, criminal records, those who drop their studies, and women of color.
6. 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.
7. 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.
- 8.