

Chestertown Equity Advisory Committee
Chestertown Unites Against Racism
December 8th 2020 Minutes

Present- Chris Cerino, John Queen, Tom Hayman, Baker, Vic Sensenig, Brandy Barrett, Ruth Shoge and Kate Livie

Absent- Bishop Ronald Fisher, Latoya Johnson and Brandi Barrett

Executive Action:

John Queen presided over the meeting. Members of the Equity advisory committee voted to approve the November minutes.

Kate Livie accepted the official role of secretary for the committee.

For the Chairman report, Chairman John Queen communicated the announcement of the Committee's formation on the Chestertown Spy. Chairman John Queen discussed the challenges of inter-committee communications, expressing his position that if committee members do not respond to inter-committee communication as an active part of the group, then the Town Councilperson who appointed that member will connect with them to reaffirm their commitment to the Committee. Mayor Cerino agreed to follow up with the Councilperson in question about the committee member who has been absent.

Committee Action:

Mayor Cerino checked with Bill Ingersoll for simple by-laws for governing meetings. The committee is only required to follow Robert's Rules. Mayor Cerino mentioned the need to announce scheduled public meetings so that if wanted, members of the public can attend via Zoom. Mayor Cerino suggested that dates of the Committee be added to the town website so that they are publicly accessible. Mayor Cerino explained that public members can view, but are not participants in the meeting. Kate suggested that Zoom may make this issue moot as participation can be controlled by moderators. Vic clarified that Zoom can work that way.

Discussion progressed about addressing the public interest in the committee given the tenor of the town, and agreed that publicly announcing the meetings and publicly sharing the minutes would be sufficient.

Chairman John Queen said that the shooting for the videos for the Black Churches videos on (Historic Videos) December 7th and 8th w/ Pick6Digital/ Gordon Wallace has commenced. This video, he stated, would be used as a pilot example to use as an example to replicate with future videos. Chris commented that it might also be good to include some that are uplifting and explore the success stories and ways to celebrate the Black community.

Kate discussed the need to have a website to house any materials developed for the committee like the videos, the need to have a main hub for the minutes, logos, etc. Mayor Cerino said that Francoise Sullivan could be contacted about creating a subpage for the committee with its own domain (chestertownunitesgainstracism.com was suggested by Jen Baker). John Queen talked about the need for a separate website for the committee, and Jen Baker offered to create a gmail account and help to manage it for the committee.

John Queen said that the website was imperative, ideally by January at the latest. Chris Cerino said he would send an email to John and Kate the following day.

Plan Information

John is scheduled to meet with BOE Francoise Sullivan to discuss how the Committee's work can align with the school system. Jen said this might be an opportunity, as the school is a major employer in the county, to encourage hiring equity. John expressed that this might be perceived as an attack, so being diplomatic is important and seeing what Francoise suggests about the direction that the Board is interested in pursuing. Kate discussed the possibilities for trainings within the scope of our mission for the school system. Ruth talked about the need to keep focus on a broader level, but hopes that some of the solutions developed by the committee might have a positive impact on the school.

Kate discussed the challenge of offering training during the coronavirus and ensuring that the communities that need them most know about them and are able to participate. Mayor Cerino explained that the first priority is for the council to take a course on diversity. Jen Baker talked about her experience with virtual learning and felt that virtual training could be successful, and that part of our approach for promoting them might need to be different to reach new or diverse

audiences. She expressed that having Reverends in the committee might be helpful for connecting to a broad audience.

Ruth commented that currently the definition of training outlined by the committee is very broad, and that we need to better outline and define what kinds of training they are for, who they are for, and who will run them.

John suggested that Ruth's insight might be helpful when planning the training because of her involvement with the College. He then followed up by asking Vic whether it might be possible for joint training, especially for town leadership, if Washington College would be open to it. Chris commented that he especially felt that he would benefit from understanding how systemic racism had become entrenched in government to address systemic problems, if that were also possible. John suggested that these two areas (WAC partnership, governmental systemic racism) might guide the committee in how to focus the efforts of their trainings.

High resolution images for Banners in Downtown Art District are in production according to Chris and John, and Mayor Cerino will have provided high-resolution images of the logo symbols to Kay MacIntosh/Gordon Wallace, who will work to produce banners that will be displayed throughout the Downtown Chestertown's commercial district.

Plan Implementation

Merchandise order (pre-order)

John discussed the broad outreach of the committee to different audiences via the media communication with the Media run via WCTR and Kent County News, but felt that we might better be able to control the reach once we have our own channels and a website, and help to create materials that could be shared in community circles on social media.

John talked about progress on the Book Club with Sherrilyn Ifills "On the Courthouse Lawn" that has a February 2021 start date, and how the book club might inform or connect to the video exploring the lynching in Chestertown developed by the committee. Ruth asked who the audience might be for the book club. John responded that it might be community groups like Sumner Hall, and possibly African American youth groups. Kate suggested that we might follow the public library model, where a book is suggested with a series of discussion questions. John said that it might be possible for the Kent aCounty Library to assist in running the Book Club as a regular part of their offerings.

Brandy and John worked with DK in Photography on Monday, December 7th to capture Images of the Black Community.

New business

Discussion continued about the idea of connecting to a younger audience within the Black community and how these videos or other outreach may or may not be effective in reaching them. John confirmed that the workings of the town is not on the radar of most of the young members of the HOYAS. The committee explored the difference between Washington College students and young residents that grew up in Chestertown, and how they are two different groups fundamentally. Vic discussed working with particular staff or faculty at the college on scheduling possible outreach.

Plan Update Unification: John brought up Juneteenth, and Jen suggested that Andy Goddard might be a good fit for starting to plan some elements of the event. Jen offered to help get the ball rolling with some elements of the planning as her schedule would permit.

Plan Update Education:

Start- Video series, Diversity/Cultural trainings, community dialogue and Historic Signage

In progress- James Taylor Lynching

Complete- n/a

Plan Update Legislation:

Start- Zone Ordinance and Taxation Policy Review

In progress- Police reform and Ward Redistricting

Complete- Equity Advisory Committee

Plan Update Unification:

Start Logo/Banner and Port of Entry

In progress- Juneteenth planning and Legacy Day

Complete- Street Murals