

Greenbelt Reparations Commission Meeting Minutes
Greenbelt Municipal Building, 25 Crescent Road, City Council Room
Tuesday, October 17, 2023, 7:00 PM

Agenda

- Welcome
- Agenda/Minutes Review
- Subcommittee Updates
 - Facilitation Subcommittee
 - Educational Subcommittee
 - Historical Subcommittee
- Administrative Items
 - Executive Subcommittee Update
- Open Comments
- Adjourn

Attendance

Commissioners Present:

Tom Adams
Chelsea Barnes
Rhema Bjorkland
Gail Crichlow
Joseph Hamlin*
Chiquita Jackson*
Mark Miller
London McCloud*
Shabnam Mojtahedi*
Denise Nadasen
Bob Rand
Rene Sewell-Raysor*
Lois Rosado
Jonathan Taylor
Sarah Wampler*
Mark Wilson
James Williams, Jr.
(*indicates virtual attendance)

Commissioners Not Present:

Frank DeBernardo
Lorena Ferdinand
Yashuah Ford
Adriane Harris
(Note: Former Commissioner Konrad Herling stepped down because he is temporarily serving on the Greenbelt City Council)

Approval of Minutes: A quorum being present and facilitator Chelsea Barnes called the meeting to order. Before the minutes were approved, discussion was held regarding the inclusion of public comments. The comments that were deleted during the last meeting will now be included. Tom Adams offered a motion to approve the minutes, which was seconded by Lois

Rosado;. Upon hearing no objection, the minutes were unanimously approved, and public comments will be included as part of the minutes.

Adoption of the Agenda: Mark Miller moved to adopt the agenda. Mark Wilson seconded the motion. Upon hearing no objection, the agenda was unanimously approved.

Facilitation Subcommittee Report

Two candidates who responded to the RFP will be interviewed on Thursday, October 19. There was a question as to how will the Commission will select a finalist. This might be determined at our next meeting on November 14, 2023. There is also the option of having a special meeting. We do not need a quorum to interview the candidates, but we do need a quorum to vote on whom the final candidate will be. There was concern as to how we can get this process moving along. If the Commission were to take the vote approving the facilitator during the November meeting, does that work for the schedule the Facilitation Subcommittee intended? There is the real challenge of selecting a facilitator and getting a contract signed and realistically we are now looking at January 2024 before anyone gets started. We do have an education meeting on November 1. The decision was made to have a meeting and take a vote on November 1, 2023, after our speaker is done with her presentation on November 1.

The question was asked whether the Facilitation Subcommittee would select the finalist for the position. The response is the Subcommittee selected the two best candidates in its collective opinion. However, the finalist would be decided by the Full Commission.

Education Subcommittee Report

The Education Subcommittee is putting together a speaker series. Megan Young has agreed to give the initial talk at the end of the month of November 2023 regarding the basics of Greenbelt's history and how we got here. That would queue up a series of speakers to follow after the holidays. The Education Subcommittee will work hand-in-hand with the Historical Research Committee to put together a series of topics from research gleaned. The Education Subcommittee has been in limbo since a facilitator has not been appointed but has still pushed forward.

Speakers will not attend regular meetings of the Commission, and to the degree it is possible, it is requested the speaking events are virtual. Lois Rosado is making inroads with speakers from the Indigenous Community, specifically with Chief Swann who is from the Piscataway tribe. Lois Rosado will be speaking to them the next day at 9:00 AM. London McCloud reiterated that Howard University Law School is also interested in providing history and understanding regarding the work of the Commission. Howard University Law School has been instrumental in reparations work with Evanston, IL.

There was a question regarding the best way to have the most impact from the speaking and educational events. Will it be Facebook, Instagram, Tik Tok, billboards? Sarah responded by saying the speaker series will not be the only time the Commission will reach out to the community.

The Commission will take testimony from those factions who have been harmed by the laws of Greenbelt, MD. We must have a holistic approach. The Commission will introduce Greenbelters to Reparations 101. Lois Rosado stated we will invite experts with a deep knowledge of these issues; of course Indigenous populations will be included.

We hope to start our speaker series in November 2023 and March 2024, have Indigenous people testify before the Commission, combined with the testimony of other individuals who are experts. The analysis of tribal law and treaties is a different situation but will be included. Denise Nadasen recommended calling some of these a conversation versus a series.

PROCEDURAL MOTION Sarah offered a motion that the Commission approves of the Education Committee and the Historical Research Committee to begin the research and planning of a series of speakers to engage with the Greenbelt Community.

The Commission began debate on the motion. Jonathan Taylor was fine with the motion but felt speakers should do so without compensation. The individuals who should receive reparations should be the first in line for any monetary reparations. Sarah said she understood but few people are willing to make such a commitment for free. The Commission operates from the budget provided by the City of Greenbelt, so any funds for speakers comes from our budget. Are speakers expected to provide information or be engaged with the community who may be opposed to reparations?

After debate, Renee made a call for the question (that ends debate and brings the resolution to a vote). The call was seconded. **The call for the question resulted in NINE Commissioners voting AYE, SIX Commissioners voting NAY and ONE Commissioner abstaining. So the motion to call the question was NOT APPROVED (because it needed a two-thirds voting majority).**

The discussion continued on the motion regarding honorariums, which are not considered compensation. Whatever form reparations ultimately takes, compensation are for harms that were done by the people in Greenbelt, MD, living in Greenbelt or not being permitted to live in Greenbelt, or whose land was taken from them. We also must be careful of comparing ourselves to other places.

PROCEDURAL MOTION The motion on the floor is the Commission approves of the Education Subcommittee to begin the research and planning of a series of speakers to engage the Greenbelt Community. The motion was seconded by Tom Adams. **Hearing no objections, the motion was APPROVED by unanimous consent.**

PROCEDURAL MOTION The motion on the floor is the Commission do not offer speakers compensation. The motion was seconded. The call for the motion by Jonathan Taylor that speakers to the Commission do so without compensation resulted in FOUR Commissioners voting AYE, 11 voting NAY and ONE Commissioner abstaining. **So the motion that speakers to the Commission do so without compensation FAILED (as all it needed was a simple majority).**

Historical Subcommittee Report

Mark Wilson commented that Bob sent a great email that documented a great deal on the history of African Americans and Indigenous people for resources. The goal is to get the history of inequalities in the history of Greenbelt. The major questions we are sitting with are how do we frame history? Is it from the first stages of Greenbelt? And this is particularly sensitive as we discuss Indigenous people – what is that historical role or framing that will help the Commission as we inform reparations?

Our discussions are going to involve enslavement. There are records of enslaved people who worked on the land prior to the official founding of Greenbelt. We hope to come up with a true line between the injustice of enslavement and the current injustice of racism. Part of the historical context has its bearing on what’s happening in our city today. The Subcommittee is going to explore the history of Greenbelt prior to 1935, what relevance it has to our ultimate recommendations. We do not know what impact this history will have on our recommendations but that’s what we are going to have to learn.

Administrative Items

We submitted a report to the City Council which was accepted. At some point the City Council will want to talk with us as a group. Our two alternates were voted on and approved by the Greenbelt City Council. Konrad Herling, who stepped down to serve on the City Council, will rejoin the group as an alternate once his term is complete with the City Council.

Lois Rosado let the Commission know we had two requests for interviews. One was a student from the University of Maryland and the other was from Jack Wynn.

There was clarification in the attendance policy. It states if we miss twenty-five percent of the meetings in a year, or three consecutive meetings in a row, without letting the Commission know, we will notify the City Council and the City Council will determine what action will be taken.

The question arose regarding if we can have a retreat or if such a retreat would be considered an open meeting. The City’s lawyers suggested it would be considered an open meeting. However, our subcommittee meetings are not considered open meetings because they are not a quorum and the subcommittees do not do business on behalf of the full Commission. Additionally, the

recordings of the meetings do not need to be placed on a public website as long as the minutes are taken and published.

Bob distributed a handout. He is working with Peggy Higgins to start an equity data board group. The point is to consider current racial disparities in Greenbelt as practical measures of the historical and on-going impact of racism in our city. Bob would like to do this in partnership with the community, not necessarily a subcommittee of the Commission.

Lois Rosado said there was nothing new from the Evanston Commission as it is still a work in progress. Nkechi Taifa will do a presentation to the Commission Thursday, November 1, 2023. It will be recorded. The meeting is open to the public via Zoom.

Public Comments

One virtual public attendee asked about a motion that was being voted upon and it was repeated several times. She asked for clearer communication on procedural votes. She also asked for a list of the attendees and why the names of the people speaking were not on the screen. The name plates of the attendees are before them but the “owl” device cannot capture all the names while individuals are speaking.

Another public attendee congratulated the work of the historical exploration subcommittee. He said it is valuable and thanked the Commission for that. He indicated that the draft meeting minutes were not available to the public. Megan responded they are not available until they are approved. He said that minutes should be available to for all to see. He asked about subcommittees being open meetings. Denise responded that the decision to keep those meetings closed was reviewed and approved by the City Solicitor. He then said he will pursue this with the City Manager.

PROCEDURAL MOTION Lois Rosado made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded and approved by unanimous consent. The meeting adjourned at 8:44 PM.