

Greenbelt Reparations Commission Meeting Minutes
Greenbelt Municipal Building, 25 Crescent Road, City Council Room
Tuesday, November 14, 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
Rhema Bjorkland*
Gail Crichlow*
Frank DeBernardo*
Chiquita Jackson*
Mark Miller
Shabnam Mojtahedi
Bob Rand
Rene Sewell-Raysor
Lois Rosado
Jonathan Taylor
James Williams, Jr.
Mark Wilson
(*indicates virtual attendance)

Commissioners Not Present:

Chelsea Barnes
Denise Nadasen
Joseph Hamlin
London McCloud
Lorena Ferdinand
Sarah Wampler

Yashuah Ford

Staff Liaison Present

Megan Searing Young

Approval of Agenda: A quorum being present the facilitator called the meeting to order. Tom Adams offered a motion for the agenda to be approved, which was seconded by Lois Rosado. The nays and yeas were called by the chair, and the agenda was approved by unanimous consent.

Adoption of the Minutes: James Williams, Jr. made a motion for the approval of the October 17, 2023 minutes. The motion was seconded by Lois Rosado. The nays and yeas were called by the facilitator, and the minutes were approved by unanimous consent. The facilitator then asked for a motion to approve the November 1, 2023 minutes. James Williams, Jr. made a motion to approve the November 1, 2023 minutes which was seconded by Shabnam Mojtahedi. The nays and yeas were called by the chair, and the minutes were approved by unanimous consent.

Facilitation Subcommittee Report

The Facilitation Subcommittee reviewed the process for soliciting RFPs for a consultant and for interviewing and vetting the finalists. From three finalists, the Subcommittee and Commission agreed to recommend impACT Educational Consulting, LLC as the contractor for our facilitation services. Committee member Tom Adams reviewed the background of the organization, and reasons this firm was recommended. He also expressed appreciation for the cooperation of Tim George, Assistant City Manager.

At the November 14 meeting, the Reparations Commission voted to selected impACT Consulting as the facilitator. The base contract is for \$12,000 with an option of additional time if needed at a discounted rate. The Subcommittee with consultation with Mr. George recommended to the Commission that the contract include an up to \$4,000 if needed. Any use of the additional \$4,000 would require approval by the Commission and the City Manager.

PROCEDURAL MOTION

A motion was made to amend the previous contract's amount from \$12,000.00 to \$16,000.00, with the \$4,000.00 as a contingency to only be used by approval after a vote from the Commission and sign-off by the City Manager.

The motion was seconded by Lois Rosado. The yeas and nays were ordered by the chair, and with 12 Commissioners voting in the affirmative, with no ayes or abstentions, the motion passed.

Tom Adams expressed enthusiasm for getting started with the consultant through inviting the consultant to observe one of our meetings. A question was raised about the final contract and input into the process; a member expressed concern about the scope and level of work that will be involved. There was a desire to ensure the survival of the proposed speaker series among

other things. There was assurance that there are funds budgeted by the City and this contract uses only a portion of the current year's budget.

Education Subcommittee Report

The Education Subcommittee decided to do the speaker series with the Historic Committee. There was an agreement to postpone the speaker series until January 2024. Both entities will work together because we need to have community engagement. Experts should be able to answer questions, so we gain more input from the community.

Shabnam Mojtahedi drafted, and Lois Rosado edited the first article that will be published in the Greenbelt News Review about the work of the Commission. Tom Adams, Frank DeBernardo, Mark Miller, Denise Nadasen, Bob Rand, and Mark Wilson all provided edits to the article. Lois Rosado recorded the recommended edits and will make the necessary changes.

PROCEDURAL MOTION

A motion was offered to approve the article as amended and edited by the team. James Williams, Jr. seconded the motion. The yeas and nays were ordered by the chair, which was approved via voice vote by unanimous consent.

Shabnam reported that there will be a link to the article on the web page that has been created for the Commission on the city's web site.

A request was made to Bob Rand for more information about Ben Fischler, who knows the history of the site where enslaved people once lived in Greenbelt, MD, near the site of a future Royal Farms gas station. Bob said he would follow-up on this request.

There was a question regarding the best way to market 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.

Historical Subcommittee Report

Mark Wilson commented that the Subcommittee met a few times and identified three major goals:

- A need to synthesize the gaps;
- Work more closely with the Education Subcommittee; and
- How do we move forward to create a synthesized document to help determine major areas of reparations?

The Historical committee will meet with members of the Maryland State Archives about how we can move forward with historical research. This might require some support from the City Council. Mark met with the Education Subcommittee to coordinate a public education effort.

We are still looking to do a town hall series and will decide once this is more fully discussed. There are two possible ways to step forward here. If there are any Commission members who are interested in helping in this vein, do not hesitate to contact Mark.

Tom Adams brought up how the issue of reparations may be related to the city's DEI research as another way to get individuals engaged. How do we get more people involved in our effort?

One option is to have four, six or eight two-hour speaking events with questions and answers to introduce the work of the Commission. This engages the public on what we are doing. The downside? It educates versus gaining feedback from the community.

The second option is to have a deeper dive and discussion with three half-day events. There will be questions and answers, maybe a lunch and people will have smaller, more structured group discussions. How should we move forward and how should the public become involved here will be key in either scenario. This is the way to get the conversation started as to whether we will educate the community versus public engagement. Commission members largely did not see this as an either-or situation but one that could actually be mutually complementary.

A general question from Mark Wilson and Lois Rosado is “what are the goals of the Commission?” The arc of moral justice regarding reparations has been mostly focused on the local, not state or federal levels. Our Commission needs to get to the point where we can actually have a sense of our vision.

Once our facilitator is officially on board, this is something we should discuss with that team. What is our foundation and what do we need to do? Will this be in small groups? How will we interact with the community? What are the things we need to have in place? What is our vision? What is our plan?

PROCEDURAL MOTION

Tom Adams made a motion that we dedicate an hour to our vision at the next meeting. Bob Rand seconded the motion. The nays and yeas were ordered by the chair, which passed by voice vote with unanimous consent (Mark Wilson was the only abstention), so the motion to dedicate an hour discussing our vision at the next meeting carried. Commissioners expressed hope that the Executive Committee would structure the discussion hour in advance so that individual Commissioners will be able to prepare thoughtful statements.

The symposium in Illinois [regarding reparations] is free. It will be held between November 30 – December 2, 2023 in Evanston, IL. A member mentioned they will be attending and paying for

their own housing and travel. Another member mentioned this should be compensated by the Commission which was not initially opposed. Jonathan Taylor expressed concern about Commission funds being appropriated without a formal vote or discussion.

PROCEDURAL MOTION

After more discussion, a motion was offered to pay from the budget a total of \$1,000.00 for all persons who want to travel to the conference in Evanston, IL. The motion was seconded. The nays and yeas were ordered by the chair, and the motion was approved by voice vote with two Members – Frank and Rhema – abstaining. Jonathan Taylor was opposed.

The California Reparations Task Force asked our Commission if we would support their work in California.

PROCEDURAL MOTION

The motion to support the work of the California Reparations Task Force was offered and withdrawn by Lois Rosado.

PUBLIC COMMENT

This Commission was created by the citizens of Greenbelt, MD. It has important work to do. They did commit to go beyond the current city council. The Commission should not be deferential to the city manager, and should press the council versus being subservient to the city manager.

The draft minutes of the Commission should have been made available before the meeting. Anything this Commission does should be publicly posted before they are formally approved. There is no real chance to comment about the minutes before they are formally approved.

Others [individuals not on the Commission] wanted to join the Historical Subcommittee. Other members of the public would like to participate in a subcommittee meeting and meetings should be as open as possible. We [the public] want as much weigh-in [on these decisions] as possible. There is hope meeting minutes will be available before any further announcements.

PROCEDURAL MOTION

The motion to adjourn was offered by Lois Rosado, which was seconded by James M. Williams, Jr. The nays and yeas were ordered by the chair, and the motion to adjourn was approved by voice vote at 8:37 PM.