

**Greenbelt Reparations Commission Meeting Minutes**  
**Greenbelt Municipal Building, 25 Crescent Road, City Council Room**  
**Tuesday, December 19, 2023, 7:00 PM**

**Agenda**

Welcome

Agenda/Minutes Review

Subcommittee Updates

- Facilitation Subcommittee
- Educational Subcommittee
- Historical Subcommittee

Administrative Items

- Joint Educational and Historical Exploration Subcommittee
- Commission Visioning Discussion
- Open Comments
- Adjourn

**Attendance**

**Commissioners Present:**

Tom Adams

Chelsea Barnes

Rhema Bjorkland

Gail Crichlow

Lorena Ferdinand

Yashuah Ford

Chiquita Jackson

London McCloud

Mark Miller

Shabnam Mojtahedi\*

Denise Nadasen

Robert Rand

Lois Rosado

Rene Sewell-Raysor

Jonathan Taylor

Sarah Wampler\*

James Williams, Jr.

Mark Wilson

(\*indicates virtual attendance)

**Commissioners Not Present:**

Adriane Harris

Konrad Herling

Pamella Taylor

**Staff Liaison Present**

Megan Searing Young

### **Invited Guests**

Cristina Easton, imPACT, Consultant

Peter Metsopoulos, imPACT, Consultant

**Approval of Agenda:** A quorum being present, Chair and Facilitator Chelsea Barnes called the meeting to order at 7:04 PM. A motion to approve the agenda was made by Dr. Lois Rosado and seconded by James Williams, Jr. The nays and yeas were called by Chair Barnes, and the agenda was approved by unanimous consent.

**Adoption of the Minutes:** Dr. Lois Rosado a motion for the approval of the November 23, 2023 minutes. The motion was seconded. The nays and yeas were called by Chair Barnes and the minutes were approved by unanimous consent.

### **Facilitation Subcommittee Report**

The City Council has approved the contract of Impact Facilitators. This organization has a deep relationship in restorative functions. The Commission is joined by Christina Easton and Peter Metsopoulos. Ms. Easton thanked the Facilitation Subcommittee and are glad to be here. They have 30years of work at the local and global level, and will help us figure out how and where we should be going. During today's meeting they will provide time for us to have questions and answers.

### **Educational Subcommittee Report**

No updates or report from the Educational Subcommittee for this meeting.

### **Historical Subcommittee Report**

Lois Rosado and Mark Wilson connected our organization to the Maryland Historical Archives, where we can get information relevant to our work. If anyone is so interested, January 3, 2024 at 4PM, the History committee will meet with Archives staff. In coordination with the Educational Subcommittee and the culture committee, they will work to organize a program in February. This does not give us much time to get anything on their calendar.

### **Motion to partner with the University of Maryland**

A motion was offered that the Reparations Commission enter into an agreement to partner with a University of Maryland student team from the College of Information Services to do a capstone project of collecting and analyzing data on equity and disparities in Greenbelt for consideration as one measure of the historical and current impact of racism. There would be a statement of work and details to be worked out in collaboration with the Historical Exploration Committee.

After floor debate, the motion was amended to ensure there would be no financial commitment and the final commitment would be reviewed by appropriate legal counsel. There is also no obligation to use the data. The motion was seconded by Denise Nadasen. **The nays and yeas were ordered by Chair Barnes and passed by voice vote with unanimous consent, so the motion carried.**

## **Motion to have a public outreach event**

A motion was clarified by Bob Rand that the GHES, in coordination with the Educational Committee and the Greenbelt Black History and Culture Committee, have a public outreach event during Black History Month. It would be a two-hours in length, with the goal to have it at the Greenbelt Cinema or Community Center. Once the speakers are identified, the structure of future sessions will be determined. **The nays and yeas were ordered by Chair Barnes and passed by voice vote with unanimous consent, so the motion carried.**

## **Joint Educational and Historical Exploration Subcommittee**

The Subcommittee reported no new news. Some Commissioners have inquired about Indigenous communities, and want to do a review of Indigenous histories.

## **Motion to plan a presentation on Indigenous People**

A motion was made by Sarah Wampler for approval to plan a presentation on Indigenous populations. This presentation would be an hour-long. The public would be invited, but the event would not be advertised widely and should take place by the end of February. The motion was seconded by Denise Nadasen. **The nays and yeas were ordered by Chair Barnes and passed by voice vote with unanimous consent, so the motion carried.**

## **Commission Visioning Exercise**

Commission members were asked to complete a visioning exercise prior to the December 19, 2023, meeting, which was completed electronically. Jonathan Taylor asked each individual to summarize their vision for the Commission. Each person's individual comments are attached in an addendum to the minutes. We have included written statements by each Commissioner on what their vision of the Commission work is to be. (See Addendum below.)

## **Discussion of the Visioning Exercise**

The facilitators looked at what they saw and how we can work on structure and support. The Commission did a visionary exercise with words.

What might a reparations commission report might look like? What will the Community see? The word that came up the most was Americans.

The facilitator will give us systems and structures to help us filter our information. Community and healing were also words that came up frequently.

How do we get something on the calendar for our City Council?

We also need to determine who is not in the room who should be. We will do some stakeholder engagement.

Commissioners gave different reasons why we are all here and who should be included: the disabled, Black Greenbelters from 1930s-1965. We should incorporate residents of the City into our regular meetings. We value and respect the need for community engagement and must be sure to include low-income people. We do not have many elders in the room and need to correct that. People from the past have been harmed; we must not leave out residents.

We must be sure to include Indigenous people and populations; we do not have any Indigenous people as part of the Commission.

How do we spread our information? Many people get their news from social media sites.

Inequality is the ugly step child of injustice. It is a challenge.

Another recommendation is to have the room filled with law students as policy and legislative work will help fulfill our mission.

The next steps will be to collect material to our mission.

Our facilitators are Cristina Easton and Peter Metsopoulos, who will help create structures for the Commission to use as we move forward.

### **Motion to adjourn**

A motion was made by Lois Rosado to adjourn. The motion was seconded. **The nays and yeas were ordered by Chair Barnes and passed by voice vote with unanimous consent, so the motion carried. The next meeting date was established for January 16, 2024.**

The minutes are respectfully submitted by James Williams, Jr.

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### **Addendum to the December 19, 2023 Minutes**

#### **Visioning exercise for Reparations Commission members**

For the December 2023 RC Meeting

Instructions: Please write a brief statement (1-5 sentences) to articulate your vision for the Reparations Commission in terms of outcomes and successes you hope to achieve.

**Could you elaborate on your specific vision for the reparations commission, particularly in terms of the measurable outcomes and successes you hope to achieve?**

#### **Tom Adams**

- My vision for outcomes and success of the Reparations Commission is for the Commission to unite around a shared purpose and defined outcomes which include:

- 1) A deeper and shared understanding that we can make available to the Greenbelt community of specifically how racism and colonization negatively impacted Black and indigenous peoples who lived here before us both in general and where known individuals and families;
- 2) A set of options for the community of Greenbelt and the City Council to consider which acknowledges the harms done and makes reparations for these harms; and
- 3) A written report on how structural and other forms of racism and colonization continue to oppress and do harm to any residents of Greenbelt and options for specific actions which will end or reduce this residual racial or ethnic inequity or injustice.

### **Chelsea Barnes**

- My vision for the Reparation Commission centers on delivering a well-written, evidence-based report to the city council, outlining clear, actionable recommendations for reparative justice. This report should emphasize measurable outcomes, such as policy reforms, resource allocation for affected communities, and educational initiatives. The success of the commission will be reflected in the thoroughness of our research, the inclusiveness of community engagement, and the practicality and impact of our recommendations. Ultimately, our aim is to provide a foundation for meaningful, long-lasting change that addresses historical injustices and promotes equity and healing within the community.

### **Rhema Bjorkland**

- To generate a report with proposals to City council that is informed by statements, data, and information from experts in diverse backgrounds (history, economics, sociology, etc., community leaders, and those who claim harm. I envision the hosting of Commission hearings that should be very widely publicized and expertly moderated and facilitated. An important role for the Commission is the development of questions on which the hearings would be based and careful documentation of the process of information gathering and retrieval by the Commission and its subcommittees. Include in the timeline a preliminary report for public comment. A significant investment in disseminating information and building public interest in, and along the way (hopefully), support for the Commission's work.

### **Gail Crichlow**

- To identify and present findings of harms inflicted upon Native American and persons of sub-Saharan African descent (residing in or around\* Greenbelt) as a result of policies by federal, state, and local government authorities and private interest groups in or associated with the birth and development of the city of Greenbelt, Maryland.

The Commission would present these findings to the City and through established existing research identify plans for restitution, cures and/or abatement of the harm to prevent further damage to or assist current generations.

\*Around – in the event they contributed but were denied the right to reside in Greenbelt

### **Francis DeBernardo**

- I think the Commission needs to answer three questions, and these should be done in a particular order:
  1. Should the City of Greenbelt develop a reparations program?
  2. If so, what should that program be?
  3. Whether or not the Commission recommends reparations, I think the group is also responsible for developing a communications plan to explain their decisions to the public, with the goal of unifying the citizenry.

I think that for questions 1 and 2, the Commission is also responsible for inviting the public's participation in formulating answers to these questions by providing ample public forums for education and discussion in a civil and respectful manner.

### **Lorena Ferdinand**

- To provide City Council with evidence-based recommendations that will, over a short period of time, heal the historical disparities of African American and Native American citizens of Greenbelt.
- Examples: formal apologies, public acknowledgment, housing policy changes, land for african american & native american to be built on by african/native american businesses and lived on by african/native americans, free/city sponsored mental health counseling, bridge program between africans and african americans, grants reserved for african/native american businesses, etc.

### **Yahshuah Akhenaton Ford**

- 1) To decide the extent of damages/losses incurred by African & Native Americans as a result of housing and employment discrimination (and historically social exclusion) in Greenbelt and its surrounding environs.
- 2) To recommend economic repair/redress for said damages/losses incurred by African & Native Americans.
- 3) To assess racial healing & social cohesion as a result of addressing losses as it relates to Greenbelt's history of racism and discrimination. Serve as a model for Maryland and the Nation.

### **Josh Hamlin**

To independently examine the history (and prehistory, where appropriate) of Greenbelt and consult with stakeholders, subject-matter experts, and the public, to identify instances where African-Americans and/or Native Americans with some connection to Greenbelt suffered harm as a group,

To consider whether there is a way the City to in some part redress these harms and, if so, recommend actions to do so. If the Commission recommends that the City engage in a program of \*reparations\* (as opposed to taking steps toward more equitable distribution of City resources or working to generally improve educational, economic, and health outcomes for historically disadvantaged populations) such recommendation should identify or address:

- the identifiable harm for which reparations are to be made;
- the constituency to whom reparations are owed;
- by whom are reparations owed ([the current demographic makeup of Greenbelt](#) is relevant to this question);
- the form of any reparations;
- the funding source for any reparations, if one can be identified;
- the anticipated timeline for any reparations program; and
- expected outcomes from any reparations program.

Beyond the scope of a \*reparations\* program, per se, the Commission may wish to:

- recommend actions related to the other pillars of transitional justice over which the City of Greenbelt has some degree of control or influence:
  - Truth;
  - Memorialization; and
  - Guarantees of non-recurrence (*i.e.*, institutional change); and
- advise the Council on actions related to a more equitable distribution of City resources or to generally improve educational, economic, and health outcomes for historically disadvantaged populations.

### Adriane Harris

- To provide a report, informed by quantitative and qualitative research, to the City Council that outlines the past harm created by public and private entities in the City of Greenbelt's history to Indigenous and Black people and provides a set of evidence-based solutions/recommendations that will spark healing and remediation for past, existing and future Indigenous and Black Greenbelters. I hope this report and the work of the Commission will serve as a model for local, state, and national reparations work and serve as a call to action for the federal government to acknowledge past harm by creating a planned community with discriminatory/exclusionary practices. I would love it if the information we collect is available for the community and we incorporate ways to engage the wider community on the work and creation of action steps.

### Chiquita Jackson

- I want to explore generational growth opportunities for African Americans in the City of Greenbelt to have equitable resources and support for economic stability. I see the Reparations Commission as more than a group that reports to the City Government but more of a multifaceted community advocacy partnership for the Black Community. I believe this committee can be the pillar of racial equity and generational changes for the betterment of the Black Community.

### London McCloud

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### Mark Miller

- 1) To improve our community, to heal injury, and to help make Greenbelt fairer and more just (and, aspirationally, to consider that our work in Greenbelt might contribute to similar efforts beyond Greenbelt); and, as a corollary, To avoid doing harm to our community (or harm beyond our local community);
- 2) Through careful research, analysis, and education, To develop a shared understanding of historical truth regarding inequities and injustices against African Americans and American Indians; and To commemorate / memorialize history;
- 3) To identify ongoing injustices, inequities, and disparities, and to recommend the establishment of institutions or programs designed to prevent or minimize future injustices;
- 4) To study and discuss a range of restitution, compensation, and other possible forms of reparations for unjust harms and disparities traceable to historical injustice, including detailed evaluation of programs elsewhere now under study or already being implemented; and to make recommendations after a review of approaches to fairness, timing, administrative mechanisms, eligibility criteria, funding, etc., and a study of the legality, feasibility, likelihood of beneficial effectiveness, and ways to avoid possible unintended consequences, of various proposals; and
- 5) To practice respect among Commission members and To respect the public,\* whom we serve.

\* We're required to comply with Open Meeting laws, but we should also focus on encouraging public participation and public engagement. Success depends on listening to the public.

Note: No timeline for completing our work has yet been established (or even discussed). Before we have opened such discussions, it might be premature to try to define measurable objectives tied to a specific calendar.

### Shabnam Mojtahedi

- To write a report with strong, well-researched justifications that call on the Greenbelt City Council and the wider Greenbelt community to advance legal, institutional, economic, and social reforms and measures that provide material and symbolic redress for any government action or inaction that harmed or is continuing to harm Native-Americans and African-Americans in what is now the Greenbelt municipal boundaries.

### **Denise Nadasen**

- To research the injustices to African Americans and Native Americans; to develop and deliver a set of recommendations to the City Council with the intention of making reparations to the families of people who were harmed and to remove practices that supported these injustices; and to educate and heal the community.

### **Robert Rand**

- To offer an ongoing personal and institutional path for Greenbelt to heal, grow, and create a just and fair community through facing and taking responsibility for its role in fostering current and historical harms from racism.

### **Lois Rosado**

- To research, discuss, and make recommendations that incorporate the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights for restitution and redress if physical, mental, and economic harms against Native and African Americans are found based upon qualitative and consistent historical facts and data. To inform and educate the residents of Greenbelt about how the impact of system racism led to discriminatory practices in the city and to suggest appropriate actions that can be taken by the city council to remediate the divides and help with community healing.

### **Rene' Sewell-Raysor**

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### **Jonathan Taylor**

- To review, discuss, and make recommendations related to local reparations for African American and Native American residents of Greenbelt

### **Sarah Wampler**

- To present to council a concrete, *actionable* plan for the creation and maintenance of a group empowered and appropriately funded to adequately explore the best avenues by which to redress the historical and ongoing inequities in the Greenbelt community **and** implement appropriate reparative compensation. These harms cannot be addressed adequately with any single action as the harms, communities/populations affected and their subsequent needs are diverse. Any response that seeks to be more than a gesture will necessarily be a longterm, ongoing effort.
- In support of this plan embark on a public communication project with the Greenbelt community building support for reparative work so that when this plan is presented to council it is more likely to be implemented.

### **James Williams, Jr.**

- First is to establish among the citizens of Greenbelt, MD via town hall meetings/public forums or our regular meetings the need for reparations, how reparations is not a radical nor revolutionary idea, and how reparations is an opportunity of hope for America, especially Indigenous and African Americans. The closest African Americans came to reparations was during Reconstruction after the end of the Civil War; America's response to Indigenous people has been abysmal. How to quantify – On one hand, the measure got the majority of the vote of the people of Greenbelt. On another hand, we have not begun the difficult discussions of allocating resources.
- Second is to determine who is eligible for reparations among Indigenous and African Americans in Greenbelt, MD. Potential questions – could be are Indigenous people who no longer live in the area eligible for reparations? What about African Americans who cannot trace their lineage to someone who was previously enslaved?
- Third is to proffer proposals to eliminate -- in Greenbelt, MD -- the racial wealth, housing, education, justice and health gap that exists between Indigenous/African Americans.



- Fourth is to make direct cash payments, health care benefits, housing assistance, education programs and justice reforms targeting Indigenous/African Americans.
- Fifth is to seek a formal apology from the City of Greenbelt for the economic, housing, health care, justice and academic short fall that resulted in the wake of these policies.

Although the question of reparations is ultimately a federal issue, it will be cities like Greenbelt, MD that ultimately sets the template and course for any federal fiscal remuneration of reparations for Indigenous or African Americans. I am 63 years old, and I have gotten all of the reparations I am ever going to get in my lifetime (which is zero). I am not doing this out of any selfish or self-oriented purpose. I am, and I am sure the majority of my colleagues, are doing this for the grandchildren, great-grandchildren and others in this journey for justice.

#### **Mark Wilson**

- **To provide a report to the Greenbelt City Council by the spring of 2025 that lays out the following:**
  - *a historical summary of the inequities experienced by African Americans/People of African descent and Indigenous Peoples/American Indians on the land that is presently Greenbelt during the following time periods: 1500-1900, 1900-1935, 1935-present. Inequities would be bucketed by possible areas of redress (education, housing, health, financial opportunities). Some of this would be gathered through organized research and some would be gathered through qualitative interviewing and testimonials.*
  - *a summary of Greenbelt citizen perspectives on local reparations (e.g. what should be done, proposals, concerns, alignment and mis-alignment) as gathered through public engagement and testimonials.*
  - *a proposed list of strategies and actions to move the reparations process forward within Greenbelt informed by history, public engagement, and documented reparations processes in other U.S. cities.*