

Greenbelt Reparations Commission Meeting Minutes
Greenbelt Municipal Building, 25 Crescent Road, City Council Room
Tuesday, April 16, 2024, 7:00 p.m.

Agenda

Welcome
Agenda/Minutes Adoption
University of Maryland Report Summary
Goals and Pathways Update
Subcommittee Updates
 Historical Research
 Reparations Policy Research
 Community Education and Engagement
 Strategic Planning Working Group
Executive Committee Update and Announcements
Open Comments
Adjournment

Commissioners Present

Tom Adams
Rhema Bjorkland
Gail Crichlow*
Francis DeBernardo*
Konrad Herling (alternate)
London McCloud
Mark Miller
Shabnam Mojtahedi
Denise Nadasen
Robert Rand
Lois Rosado
Jonathan Taylor
Sarah Wampler*
Mark Wilson*
(*indicates virtual attendance)

Commissioners Not Present

Chelsea Barnes
Lorena Ferdinand
Yahshuah Ford
Joseph Hamlin
Adriane Harris
Chiquita Jackson
René Sewell-Raysor
James Williams, Jr.

Staff Liaison Present

Megan Searing Young

Facilitators Present

Cristina Easton

Peter Metsopoulos

Invited Guests (by Zoom)

University of Maryland Data Team members

Brandon Fung

Parker Leipzig

Larissa Musaga

Ilyas Nur

Agenda

Welcome

Agenda Adoption / Minutes Approval

University of Maryland Report Summary

Goals and Pathways Update

Subcommittee Updates

Historical Research

Reparations Policy Research

Community Education and Engagement

Strategic Planning Working Group

Executive Committee Update and Announcements

Open Comments

Adjournment

Once a quorum was present, Denise Nadasen, Acting Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:03 a.m., and welcomed all in attendance, in person or by Zoom.

Adoption of Agenda: Tom Adams moved to adopt the agenda; Lois Rosado seconded. Agenda was adopted unanimously.

Approval of the Minutes: Lois Rosado moved to approve the minutes of the meeting March 19, 2024. Tom Adams seconded. The March minutes were unanimously approved after changes (including adding Gail Crichlow's name to the list of members of the Community Engagement and Education committee; and correctly identifying the two state-recognized indigenous Piscataway groups who are to receive letters from the Commission: namely, the Piscataway Conoy Tribal Confederation and the Piscataway Indian Nation).

University of Maryland Data Team Summary Progress Report: Bob Rand introduced the University of Maryland team, who provided an update on the team's quantitative data analysis work for the Greenbelt Reparations Commission (GRC). The team has decided to use data drawn

from the U.S. Census Bureau. The team showed a “Sample Data Visualization” slide to serve as an example of a data display—the sample was based on data comparing educational attainment by race (“Education by Race”) in Greenbelt, using the two most recent data compilation points: 2016 and 2021. The team pointed out error margins and various anticipated issues with data quality. The team’s final presentation to the GRC (which will be by Zoom) is scheduled for Thursday, May 9, 2024, 7:00 p.m.

In response to questions from commissioners, the team said they intend to identify gaps in the data and problems with data sets; the team was also asked to suggest areas where qualitative data might be useful. The team is mindful of the potential for error when data gathering relies on self-reporting of ethnic or racial identity. The team thanked the Commission for the opportunity to work on this project, and the Commission thanked the team for their efforts.

Goals and Pathways Update (imPACT): Cristina Easton and Peter Metsopoulos presented the “Planning Tool” they have been developing, built on a scheme of goals and pathways incorporating their synthesis of four charts created at the retreat. Pathways are color-coded as blue “steps” leading to one or more green long-term outcome (such as “will have made recommendations”). The process is represented as iterative, cyclical, and systematic: the commission, having identified long-term objectives, identifies “preconditions” (steps) needed to achieve progress along the pathways toward those long-term objectives; then, the various subcommittees are charged with accomplishing those steps; after taking the steps the subcommittees report back to the full commission, which can then review the alignment of actions with the planning tool, and can identify a new cycle of steps. At certain points in the process, metrics are assigned. The ultimate planning tool will have a flexible and even dynamic dimension; that is, it can be altered as the situation changes or as new information arises.

Cristina and Peter noted that they had originally planned to conduct the retreat later but had adjusted the plan as they learned more about the Commission’s needs. Cristina said that there are only about three hours remaining in the City’s engagement agreement with imPACT; they will wrap up their work under the existing contract but will also develop a proposal for the Commission to consider extending the engagement, in order for imPACT to provide additional help, including support to the newly created strategic working group, regarding organization and governance issues. Tom Adams observed that the organization piece needs help. Cristina emphasized that imPACT will deliver a fully functioning Pathway Tool and will also provide a spreadsheet of each pathway.

Rhema suggested a mini-retreat of the strategic planning working group.

Denise offered a summary of the next step for the committees: each committee should clearly define its work, in writing, in terms of outcomes and steps, and share that written information. Does the Commission need processes for members of a given committee to have input into other committees? Cristina observed that the full Commission might need to spend more time than is available through the once-a-month meeting schedule, to make sure everyone is clear about where we are and where we are going. More than one commissioner said that if meetings are cumbersome to schedule, communication by email is possible.

Jonathan Taylor expressed concern that subcommittees might act independently, without knowledge or approval by the full Commission.

London McCloud discussed that concern and provided a brief update of what the Reparations Policy Research committee has been learning, especially about the City of Boston's Reparations Task Force.

Lois Rosado said that in practice there have not been subcommittee silos, and she cited the example of the Black History Month event February 24, 2024, the planning details for which were repeatedly brought by subcommittee members to the full Commission, which participated in every step, so our committees are not really operating as silos.

Bob Rand noted that the work is ramping up; he advised that each committee should keep careful minutes of its meetings and put the minutes—together with all important documents—on the Commission's google drive, so that all commissioners are able to access key documents. Sarah Wampler echoed this, urging migration of all committee documents to the central Commission google drive.

Rhema suggested that the Commission maintain a "Master List" of local agencies, churches, social justice organizations, and others to whom the Commission needs to reach out. We also need to build action lists, strategic lists, and calendars.

Members of the Commission posed several questions seeking clarification about the Planning Tool. One commissioner suggested that the planning tool is rather "process-heavy."

ACTION ITEM: Drawing on the summary Denise had outlined earlier, Sarah Wampler said that an action item for each subcommittee is to look at the Planning Tool pathways and make an action list of steps that accord with the pathways approach. As explained by another commissioner, each subcommittee should send its written action list (in alignment with the pathways) to the Executive Committee, for the EC to distribute to all commissioners.

Subcommittee Updates

Bob Rand (Historical Research) proposed that, because the meeting was short on time and because it was especially important to hear from the new Strategic Planning Working Group (SPWG), he requested to amend the order and have the SPWG report come first. Jonathan Taylor lodged a timely objection. Frank DeBernardo expressed that the SPWG report was important and should be discussed when we have more time. The acting chair called for a vote to allow the SPWG report first, where all commissioners voted in favor, while two (Jonathan and Frank) opposed. After discussion, the question was called; the acting chair ruled that the group will hear the SPWG report first.

Strategic Planning Working Group

Shabnam Mojtahedi noted that her presentation would not be a full report but would simply make a few observations about the survey regarding scope and the need for discussions about definitions. At the time she was developing the survey questions she had a hypothesis that there would be divergent views. Compiling the responses, she felt that her hypothesis was borne out. Several members of the Commission expressed gratitude to Shabnam for her work on the survey. Shabnam said she will add additional responses that have come in more recently; she will share the results.

There followed some discussion on the notion of consensus-seeking. Several commissioners felt that efforts should be made to harmonize divergent views, if possible. Several commissioners said it would not be desirable for important decisions about the direction of the Reparations Commission to be made by a narrow majority vote.

Mark Wilson referenced the idea of communication across subcommittees and suggested possibly using the “fist-to-five” consensus-building technique.

Historical Research

Bob Rand noted that the University of Maryland team will give its final presentation Thursday, May 9, 2024, at 7:00 p.m.

Bob Rand, Rhema Bjorkland, and Megan Searing Young met with Tribesy (as part of Tribesy’s contract with the City, it is conducting a series of interviews with all City entities). The Commission’s work was discussed, as were four public forum events Tribesy will be conducting a few months from now. It might be possible for us to work with Tribesy to help develop some of the questions that will be explored at those events. Bob noted that Tribesy has demonstrated content expertise in reparations. Specifically, Bob shared some advice from Tribesy: any recommendations without a full understanding of reparations could risk doing harm. Bob would like to bring to the Executive Committee the possibility of inviting Tribesy to pitch to the full Commission what Tribesy might offer as a reparations consultant. (The hope is to engage Tribesy’s under their existing contract with the City without going through a separate RFP process).

Bob noted that the historical research committee’s Draft Notes document has been broken into a few separate files to make working in the document easier. Bob noted research being done in Resettlement Administration records of the National Archives documenting the history of Greenbelt and further noted a suggestion that research into the history of local codes might be useful.

Rhema pointed out that the letters from the Commission to the two Piscataway groups have not yet been sent but should be sent out soon.

Reparations Policy Research

London McCloud indicated that her earlier brief update about the Reparations Policy Research committee was sufficient for the evening. Sarah Wampler encouraged other members of the Commission to participate in the Reparations Policy Research committee, which needs more people.

Community Education and Engagement

Gail Crichlow raised a question about the scheduling of the next Education and Engagement committee meeting.

Executive Committee Update and Announcements

Denise noted that Chelsea Barnes and Adriane Harris will be stepping down as Co-Chairs.

Tom Adams announced that the annual “Breaking Barriers, Building Bridges” event will be held at Springhill Lake on Sunday, May 19, 2024, from 2:00-4:00 p.m. A reminder will be sent out closer to the event. Lois Rosado pointed out that May 19 will be the ninety-ninth birthday of Malcolm X.

Open Comments

A member of the public mentioned that someone involved in the “Sacred Ground” film-based discussion series had expressed a desire to communicate with the Greenbelt Reparations Commission. Has there been any follow-up with this? Is there a process for community members and organizations to invite Reparations Commission participation? Conversely, what processes has the Commission developed to invite public participation in the work of the Commission? This member of the public found it very frustrating that, despite being appointed by City Council in 2022, and after a vote nearly 30 months ago in 2021 to establish the Reparations Commission, the Commission in April 2024 is still heavily engaged in internal process issues. He said he was very much looking forward to seeing the Commission finally get to work on how to repair injuries. He went on to emphasize that the Commission should be much more open, and that if its work is being done in subcommittees, that work should not be hidden from the public. If the Commission is truly hoping for community engagement and community support, public involvement and public access will be essential.

Adjournment

Upon motion by Lois Rosado, the meeting was adjourned at 9:18 p.m.

Draft minutes submitted by Mark Miller 17 April 2024. Minutes were amended by Denise Nadasen May 17, 2024.