

Champaign County Racial Justice Task Force (RJTF)
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, August 25, 2016
6:30 pm

I. Call to Order

Facilitator Byndom called the meeting to order at 6:35pm.

II. Roll Call

Members Present:

M. Ar-Raheem, S. Balgoyen, L. Branham, S. Byndom, E. Dee, A. Evans, A. Felty, D. Harber, R. Hughes, E. Patt, C. Randolph, K. Schneider, S. Silver, G. Walter, S. Lerner.

Members Absent:

B. Butts, R. Byrd, A. James, H. Ross, D. Turner, A. Shelton.

III. Approval of Agenda

Gerry Walter moved to approve agenda. Sara Balgoyen seconded. The motion carried.

IV. Approval of Minutes

Esther Patt moved to approve the minutes. Kevin Schneider seconded the motion. The motion carried.

V. Public Participation

James Kilgore – He encouraged the task force to consider carefully the referendum being proposed by the County and to oppose it. He said that the jail should not be on the facilities referendum. He said that he supports the need for overdue maintenance and to maintain the nursing home, but that there are other ways to do that. He stated that the cost of building the jail will likely increase and listed other ways that this referendum should not be passed.

Kevin asked Dr. Kilgore if the behavioral health center would include detox. Dr. Kilgore said that it would. Kevin asked if there are clear differences between group A (on the County Board referendum) and Group B. He responded yes there are.

Lynn Branham asked how we can address systemic issues while also tackling issues like the state of the Urbana jail. He responded that a community discussion about how the criminal justice system functions needs to happen. She asked if having the criminal justice coordination council first to discuss the issues and then deciding how to fix the facility needs was what he was saying. He said yes although it may not be a coordinating council but a political process is needed.

Esther asked about where the groups A, B, and C from the referendum plan came from – was it passed by the County Board? He responded that the Board voted on the specific language to place on the ballot. He also said that the proposal which listed the groups also recommended a

sales tax to fund the proposal. The County Board has not passed a resolution to specify how the money will be spent; the next County Board would decide how to spend the money. Esther asked if he is saying that the County Board should pass something saying they will not fund a new jail until they accept the recommendations of the Racial Justice Task Force. He replied that they need to use resources to try to keep people out of jail.

Sara asked what the approach of the organizations he is involved in to oppose the referendum. He responded that Build Programs Not Jails is working on a plan now.

Alex asked how the task force can address the County Board which is tone deaf to the issues that the task force is trying to address. James responded that the task force needs to ask what the racial implications of spending money on a new jail are. He suggested considering the school to prison pipeline metaphor as it relates to proposed taxes to fund schools and the proposed taxes to fund County facilities and the jail.

Sara asked if there is any research that shows the cost of increasing jail space on the African American community. James noted that technically this is not an increase in space. He also said that it is difficult to project what the racial disparities will be without considering all of the policy issues and changes that could affect it.

VI. Presentation

Sara introduced the speaker.

Dr. Bev Wilson

Dr. Wilson introduced himself and his new Urban Planning class. He described the class goals which include learning database development and data science in general. The class is at the task force to identify ways that collaboration could occur. He shared examples of kinds of things students could do:

- Putting together a SQL database to integrate data about the criminal justice system
- Building tools to help visualize data
- Conducting longitudinal analysis after a database is built

He noted that they know that data alone cannot solve the issues of racial justice but that they do recognize the power of data and technology.

Esther asked a clarification about what they class could do with data. Dr. Wilson explained further some of the things that may be possible.

Lynn commented that she is grateful for the class. She noted the difference of the systemic data needs of the criminal justice system and the specific data needs of the task force.

Carolyn asked about the capacity of collecting and organizing oral history data. She asked about the racial influences of different technologies. Dr. Wilson said that data ethics is important and they will be having discussions about it. He said they are not coming to preconceived notions of what is needed which is why they are beginning the conversation with the task force.

Susan asked about process for the class. He responded that he originally wanted to have one group but with such a large class, it may be possible to split into small groups that align with the subcommittees of the task force.

Kevin asked about expanding the data reach to include other cities. Dr. Wilson said that he is not sure and that the class could talk about it. The class will be scoping over the next two weeks.

Lynn stated that Build Programs Not Jails has a lot of helpful information on data gaps locally. She asked if data models would be considered. Dr. Wilson replied that the products of the class will be documented.

Alex asked if Dr. Wilson would meet with another professor who does crime mapping.

Sara asked about the long term maintenance of the database after the course ends. Dr. Wilson said that the database would be an open database that could be hosted anywhere. Tools will also use open source software, and everything will be documented. She also asked if there are any specific questions or needs that he might have for us. He responded that the most helpful thing for them would be expectations of collaboration and contact.

VII. New Business

Sam noted that New Business should include creating formal subcommittees.

Lynn requested that the legal process group has 7 members and should become a subcommittee. She also pointed out that we have three weeks until our next meeting. Sara asked if anyone else was interested in forming a Juvenile Justice subcommittee. Amy said that they are continuing to meet for Education and Employment. Alex noted that he is interested in working with Sara for Juvenile Justice. Maryam also affirmed her interest in joining. A discussion about the Juvenile Justice group followed.

A discussion regarding the logistics of different subcommittees including location, agenda, minutes, etc. Amy and Maryam also discussed what should be included in the police practices subcommittee.

Sara moved to approve groups:

- 1) Juvenile Justice
- 2) Legal Process
- 3) Police Practices
- 4) Community Engagement
- 5) Structural – Education, Employment, and Housing

Kevin seconded the motion. Lynn asked for a friendly motion to include a group for restorative justice/practices. A discussion regarding the subcommittees followed.

The rules of the meeting were suspended to allow the County Board chair to explain more details about the Open Meetings Act. The facilitator called the meeting back to order at 8:21 pm.

The motion carried with the amendment from Lynn.

Sara moved to appoint the noted individuals to six subcommittees. Kevin seconded. The motion carried.

VIII. Task Force Member Comments

Sara noted that we should consider as a body making a formal statement on our stance about the County Board referendum. She asked for an agenda item. She also noted that subcommittees must work with the U of I class before the next RJTF meeting. Esther noted that we have an issue of meeting spaces forthcoming.

Carolyn said we should make a statement of support regarding the recent law passed regarding prison phone calls.

IX. Adjournment

Kevin moved to adjourn.

The subcommittees as approved:

- Juvenile Justice – Sara*, Alex, Maryam
- Legal Process – Susan, Demario, Esther, Kevin*, Lynn
- Police Practices – Kevin, Carolyn, Ellen, Maryam, Ryan*
- Community Engagement – Ryan, David, Sara, Carolyn*, Gerry
- Structural: Education, Employment, and Housing – Amy*
- Restorative Justice/Practices – Sara, Lynn*

* indicates point of contact for the subcommittee