

Champaign County Racial Justice Task Force (RJTF)
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, March 9, 2017
6:30 pm
IBEW Local 601, 3301 Boardwalk Dr., Champaign

I. Call to Order

Sara Balgoyen called the meeting order at 6:46pm.

II. Roll Call

Members Present: S. Balgoyen, L. Branham, A. Felty, D. Harber, R. Hughes, A. James, S. Lerner, E. Patt, C. Randolph, H. Ross.

Members Absent: M. Ar-Raheem, S. Byndom, E. Dee, A. Evans, A. Shelton, S. Silver, D. Turner, G. Walter.

III. Approval of Agenda

Esther moved to approve agenda. Artice seconded the motion. The motion carried.

IV. Approval of Minutes

Sara moved to approve the minutes. Carolyn seconded the motion. The motion carried.

V. Presentations

There were no presentations at this meeting.

VI. New Business

Deadline for Report

Sara asked when the original resolution creating the task force lists the end of the task force. The group discussed when the task force was supposed to end.

Sara then asked what people's thoughts were for extending beyond the original resolution to complete the work. Esther felt that more time would be helpful to create a report that is useful. The group shared whether or not they would be able to continue on. Lynn discussed the fact that the data that we would like on many issues is not actually available for the local area. She suggested using quantitative data when it is available but supplementing that with qualitative data and stories when quantitative data is not available. This would be used to profile a problem, and then national best practices for recommendations could be identified, including the collection of data. Artice suggested setting July as the deadline for the work and then using August for writing the report; he agrees that we need to expedite the process. Sara noted that we need to decide how long to continue on, what type of budget would be needed, what structure would we use, what schedule would we use, etc. Artice suggested reaching out to individuals who have resigned for their recommendations.

The next meeting in March will be at the Urbana public library. Then after that, the meetings will return to the Brookens Meeting Center.

Esther asked about the format of the report and specifics regarding the 3 pages. Lynn explained that the three pages was guidance given to the Legal Processes Subcommittee from the task force.

Esther asked about the validity of using snapshot data from a few single day observations versus using qualitative data and whether or not that should be in the report. The group discussed this issue. Members of the task force agreed that this would still be accepted in the report, especially if it included recommendations for data to fill the holes, references to other data and reports, and qualitative data to support the quantitative data. David highlighted that the County Board did not charge the task force with validating the existence of racial disparities in the jail. There was a discussion regarding sentencing for driving with a suspended license.

David suggested that each subcommittee recommend the amount of time and resources needed, and any questions the subcommittee has for the task force, by the next meeting. This was agreed upon by the subcommittee.

VII. Task Force Member Comments/Member Updates

Henry would like to see recommendations that the County Board can do something about. He discussed his lawsuit regarding discrimination in employment. He discussed living in the north end of Champaign since the 1980's. He is frustrated by the lack of support for employment struggles and discrimination from local organizations and the community. He also discussed the overrepresentation of African Americans in the News-Gazette. Henry would recommend increasing aid and support for legal representation for those that cannot afford it. The group discussed the issues of legal support and representation of African Americans in the News-Gazette.

A member of the public, Dottie Vura-Weis, shared her opinion and experience with the News-Gazette website and the County Sheriff's website. A discussion regarding the use of Sheriff's jail data by the News-Gazette occurred. Sara will put this item on the next agenda for discussion.

Henry requested that task force members send him lists of organizations in Champaign that should be able to help with legal support in employment discrimination cases.

VIII. Public Participation

Dottie Vura-Weis

Dottie shared information about a public meeting, Challenging State Violence, this Sunday 4-7pm at the IMC which will include discussions on how groups can work together. The RJTF will share a list of meeting times and locations. She also said that BPNJ is advocating that individuals support keeping the nursing home in the County. She discussed the number of individuals who have been in the jail on average during 2016. She updated the group on the Crisis Response Committee which is looking at the possibility of an implementation grant which would require them to have a plan for a pretrial services program. She discussed multiple risk assessment tools.

This group also needs to have a justice and mental health council in the community which would be involved in planning. Lynn asked about data for people in the jail with mental illnesses.

Sara said that there is a joint town hall on Monday from 5-6:30pm with Scott Bennett and Carol Ammons at 402 S. Duncan.

IX. Subcommittee Meetings

This item was tabled.

X. Adjournment

Carolyn moved to adjourn.