**Health Equity Advisory Commission Meeting Notes**

Date: February 1, 2023

In attendance:

Rev Mark Hughes, Chair (Rev. MH)

Kheya Ganguly, Vice-Chair (KG)

Sarah Launderville

Xusana Davis (XD)

Jay Greene, note-taker (JG)

Lehana Guyette (Lehana)

Ginger Irish

Kirsten Murphy (KM)

HB Lozito (HB)

Justin Kenney

Vermont Racial Justice Alliance: Isaac, Miha

Important points or action items highlighted in yellow

LEG = legislature  
GOV = governor  
JUD = judiciary  
HEAC = Health Equity Advisory Commission  
LAOB = Land Access Opportunity Board  
ORE = Office of Racial Equity  
AOA = Agency of Administration

I. Welcome Grounding (5 mins)

12:36PM-start of meeting

II. Governance – (10 mins)

1. Question from Chair Rev. Mark Hughes-is this going well?

· Scheduling for 2023 (skipping it for now)

· Attendance and Participation

· Administrative and Legal Support (Q from Rev. MH to XD and JG: how to get the appropriate support where we're getting scheduling, minutes/notes, and creation of agendas all on track?)

○ XD: 1st, need to define appropriate level of support

○ 2nd: need to decide if group members will be contributing or if State staff will be doing it all

○ 3rd: revisit purpose, size, nature of all seats on the Commission

○ Exec Assist of AOA Melissa M-P does not have capacity to support HEAC

· Rev MH: as we're putting together agendas, taking notes, etc…these are bare bones minimum, as we move into operational mode, think we could hold space on the agenda to have future discussions in terms of coordinating with other State agencies re: policy and data collection. Currently looking at assistance with basic admin functions. Based on lack of capacity at ORE/AOA, very little capacity to lend to HEAC. As was brought to my attention last week, maybe could pull from other resources across State gov't. We have a budget, could do something with it.

· KM: Rev. MH and XD serve on both HEAC and LAOB, LAOB has had a lot of statutorily mandated subcontracted help from Vermont Housing and Conservation Board and hiring someone to write reports. Writing reports is a heavy lift for board members-having help with that would be huge and what the budget is for. Not a lot of slack elsewhere in State government.

· Rev MH: not a one-time discussion, will come back to it. Report is a priority but wanted to broach at this meeting.

· HB Lozito, Out in the Open: Set up for success by having a budget, but not supported for success by lack of capacity @ ORE/AOA. All being asked to do more than we have capacity for. Let's utilize resources we have available to us. This doesn't feel like it's working to me w/re: to sporadic attendance etc.

· Rev MH: thanks very much, sounds like the group is leaning towards contracting assistance (would force us to define exactly what we need capacity for.)

· XD: my question is for how long-if we start someone with a salary, have 180K for now, covers per-diems for the group and any contractors. HEAC is supposed to exist in perpetuity, is that person's only role to support the HEAC? Need to be aware of all the questions that come up that we need to be able to answer.

· Rev MH: agree, need someone at the table to set expectations. Will be addressed at some level by Feb report itself

· JG: mentioned that during the Legislative session I'm also tracking Legislative activities and committee scheduling, would be great to have additional administrative assistance from someone else to support ORE in general (since we're statutorily obligated to participate in something like 30 groups)

III. Review of Notes from Previous Meeting Notes (5 mins)

· XD: working on making sure everyone in the HEAC has access to previous meeting notes

IV. Public Comment (10 mins) 12:59 PM

No public comments

Rev. MH: Stopping to acknowledge the funeral of Tyree Nichols, first day of Black History Month-wanted to reflect on intersection of health equity and why we're doing it from an economic justice perspective. A lot of marginalized communities in places where they've been over-policed intersects with the fact that these communities have been under-funded. Poverty breeds instability, instability leads to unsafe situations and less safety. Speaks to the legacy of slavery and history of systemic racism in America. Need to invest in our communities and people, making sure they have everything they need, not guns and badges.

V. Annual Report Discussion (45 mins) 1:04 PM

· General Findings-presented by Kirsten Murphy

○ Report is not finished yet, JG mentioned they will be able to go in and provide editing and adding citations as needed before Feb 15 (have been focused on ORE Language Access Report)

○ Starting with introduction: states what it is that the LEG asked HEAC to do

○ KM will highlight decision points and confirm that people are happy with the decisions in the report

○ General Findings divided into 4 parts-

§ Equity mandate-need a mandate across State government that equity is a priority (will need to say more about what that looks like). Group has talked about that the Governor needs to make the statement, without that clear direction it's hard to move forward.

□ Comment from Justin Kenney: curious how Governor's mandate would apply to LEG, JUD, independently elected bodies-Governor's only purview is entities under the Governor's Office

□ KM: can't speak to JUD, think it's worth a conversation about whether LEG has made some steps-declared racism a PH emergency, made it a priority to create HEAC, might say something in the section about not only the GOV making the mandate clear but the LEG building on that messaging from the Governor

□ XD: Raises important question-have been working with community members about equity messaging. If we really want to saturate all of State, Local, etc. with equity messaging, have to go beyond just one person/Office. Want to make sure we're aligned on what we see as "the work".

□ Rev MH: Agree with Justin, should take into account that LEG is on this and revisit the LEG's role, the JUD has begun some of the work and think they would be receptive. Despite all of that, currently there is no mandate from the Gov himself. Would get important Executive Agencies to do more.

□ KM: worth adding group worth mentioning that XD brought up, which is Federal delegates to Congress

§ Programmatic approach-need to go through program by program across State government to look at health care systems AND social determinants of health to ask each of those systems how they support equitable outcomes

§ Community participation-talks about HEAC is designed to

□ Talking about struggles with attendance and how to make meetings as inclusive as possible, per-diem reimbursement being too low for work

□ Vice Chair KG: would be helpful if HEAC could go to where people are and do the meetings when it works for community members. Reduce the recommendations to bullet points and present them for feedback.

§ Administrative support: have touched on it in this meeting, need to utilize contracted support to assist with administrative tasks.

· Specific Office of Health Equity findings:

○ Talks about what the enabling statute says

○ Some of us have had conversations about how we haven't settled on where OHE should go

§ Agree it should have statewide reach

§ Mechanics about who appoints director, whether it is independent or situated within AOA/AHS etc. This section on OHE is very general but have a specific appendix at the end of the report that has answers to the questions laid out by LEG.

§ Subcommittee on policy and SDOH found useful input into those q's from H.210, those specifics were struck from what was passed. That info is in the Appendix

§ JG: wondering why that extra info is in the Appendix and not body of the report?

§ Vice-Chair KG: Request that reports be short, details be kept in appendices (gives readers the priorities of what needs to be known)

§ Rev MH: Know that LEG has kicked the can down the road by design-the inconclusive nature of this report is a reflection of the LEG process. Could it be that we can make a decision now?

§ KG: depends on future participation and outreach, lack of participation. Location of OHE depends on function.

□ Does OHE stand alone, go in ORE, go in VDH? OHEI team in VDH is to work on internal processes at VDH.

□ What power do we want this Office to have?

○ KG: opinion is that OHE should be free-standing entity to be neutral watchdog for issues

○ XD: if we want it to occupy similar space to ORE, what relationship do we expect OHE to have with Healthcare Advocates Office, HRC-are we erecting new silos or overlapping/duplicating work that's already happening? How can we make OHE distinct in and of itself?

○ KG: fear is if it gets put into a huge agency, will get lost in the shuffle

○ Rev MH: two other demographics that OHE encompasses besides Racial Equity-outside purview of ORE. Q for Xusana-curious to understand your thoughts on where OHE should go?

○ XD: not certain, expectation was that it would go in VDH, but didn't have capacity during COVID. Thinks that VDH is the correct subject matter entity, we need to make sure we're not having the same kinds of people with the same priorities in the OHE as in VDH. In state government, we're creating a lot of roles and offices around equity, but don't see the conversations happening in a central way. Does it need to be distinct? But see the point about work not getting watered down.

○ KG: agree with concerns about creating more government bureaucracy. Concern about putting it into existing structure (VDH) worried that because it has to answer to the Sec/Commissioner of VDH, that it can be swayed as to what its focuses are.

○ What about HRC or Healthcare Advocate?

○ KG: maybe we should consider HRC or Healthcare Advocate?

○ Rev MH: HRC pursues overt forms of discriminatory practices, mission of OHE and its ability to communicate across government without obstacles could be hampered by the mission of the HRC and nature of HRC's work. People are intimidated by HRC's work. RE: putting OHE in other State government agencies-concerned reporting/review process could be tempered by OHE reports going out through chain of command. Budget process is also a hierarchical process.

○ XD: sounds like all of these entities have a stake. Wondering if nobody fully owns it, but all relevant entities partially own it. "Legs of a stool" - HCA, HRC, VDH could all be co-owners of the work. No one has unilateral authority. How do we have collaborative, un-siloed work that doesn't funnel up to one person at the top.

○ KG: interesting thought about co-ownership.

○ KM: corollary question-where does it sit and who appoints? Different models. Wonder if groups named could be appointing entities.

○ KG: suggests making a list in the report of all the questions we're trying to consider for the LEG to think about-this is why we don't have a decision.

○ JG: mentioned that House deadline for bills has passed, no need for HEAC report to make final decisions because making legislation won't happen until next year's session

○ XD: special session was used to create EDRE role

○ Rev MH: pointing out that Senate doesn’t have bill submission deadline

Statewide Programs and Policies-introduces discussion about health in all policies, health equity in all policies-should turn this into recommendation if the group is interested.

· Funding and Grants-HEAC not funded to make grants, but recommends that we do so

· HEAC Budget-would ask for $ to sustain our work with admin support that we need, help us with community engagement and listening sessions/grantmaking.

· Data collection-from data subcommittee, adds principles of data collection, challenges with data, health-related individual data should include SDOH, uniform strategy for data collection (need common meanings and subcategories identifying populations etc.) need disaggregation by social identity factors, OHE will need a data person/people

· ARPA Fund Investments

VI. Next Steps (10 mins) 1:50

Next meetings:

· XD suggests coming to a consensus about monthly standing meeting

· KG suggests monthly meeting plus extra meetings as needed

· Rev MH: 12:30PM-2PM has been our meeting time in the past

· Lehana: Tuesdays preferred

· KG: already have standing meetings on Tuesday but not every time

· Rev MH: suggest first Tuesday of the month, 12:30PM-2PM

· XD: march 7 is a state holiday, need to switch

· Rev MH: suggest Wed 3/8 12:30PM-2PM, then go back to first Tuesday of month in April

· XD: likely conflict with VCNAA on Wed 3/8

· Rev MH: could we meet last Tuesday of Feb (28) instead of in March?

· KG: first Tuesdays of the month from 12:30PM-2PM starting in April, meet on Feb 28 (Feb 28 will be the "March" meeting, no meeting during calendar dates in March due to conflict with Town Meeting Day on March 7.) Starting in April, resume first Tuesday of every month from 12:30PM-2PM.

· XD: went over history of in person vs. virtual options, desire for RSVP for in-person options.

· KG: agree with XD's motion that we offer in-person but require RSVP

· KM/Lehana: in-person better in terms of access

· Rev. MH: will check in with Kemp Center about using their facilities

· XD: providing hosting space would be a way to help HEAC for member orgs

· Annual Report Submission – 2/15/2023