

Health Equity Advisory Commission meeting minutes  
Meeting Date: Tuesday, May 2, 2023 (12:30PM-2PM)

12:35PM start

Abbreviations:

VDH = Vermont Department of Health

Chair MH = Rev. Mark Hughes, Chair, Health Equity Advisory Commission

CPO = Chief Prevention Officer Monica Hutt

LAOB = Land Access Opportunity Board

DCF = Department for Children and Families

JG = Jay Greene, Office of Racial Equity Policy and Research Analyst/notetaker

HEAC = Health Equity Advisory Commission

ORE = Office of Racial Equity

LEG = Legislature

RFP = Request for proposals

AOA = Agency of Administration

DVHA = Department of Vermont Health Access

### **1. Agenda Consensus, Previous Meeting Notes (5 mins)**

a. Intro to Rachel Edens (she/her), new Director of Race, Gender, Equity, and Accessibility at DCF

b. Vice Chair Kheya Ganguly not attending today

### **2. Public Comment (10 mins)**

a. Have a few members of public attending today, but no one spoke up during public comment portion

### **3. Equity Break (5 mins)**

a. Chair MH: health emergency status at National and Statewide level declared due to COVID-19, helped advocates pull levers to make change

b. Federal emergency status ended April 10 after 3 years

c. What does this mean to VT? Was associated ongoing exec order in State of Vermont, pandemic laid bare disparities in public health systems, and social determinants of health

d. What did we learn? If we had another pandemic today, would we be in a better position to response?

e. Racism is still a public health emergency-passed as resolution in City of Burlington, also in VT State Legislature as [R-113 of 2022](#)

f. "Sustained and deep work of eradicating racism throughout the State"

### **4. Governance (25 mins)**

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Topic: Administrative and Legal Support, HEAC Funding

a. Chair MH: Have \$200K in place, no 2024 appropriation for HEAC yet-at this stage, should be able to get needs met with remaining \$200K

i) Previous RFP remains to be addressed-

ii) Where is the admin and legal support person going to be placed?

b. Kirsten Murphy, VT Developmental Disabilities Council (VT DDC): mentioned that she also serves on Land Access Opportunity Board (LAOB), that is a well-supported process and has yielded great benefit-incredibly important to hire someone and pull from LAOB play-book, suggest short term consulting contract with meeting facilitator and supporter would be helpful. Suggests locating admin support within AOA or ORE, just for expediency. Then we can make bigger plans for securing additional funding.

a. JG: shared Office of Racial Equity perspective-expected HEAC support to sit with VDH, not ORE (was a temporary agreement for ORE to support, we have limited capacity compared to VDH)

b. Chief Prevention Officer Monica Hutt: LAOB is with VT Housing Conservation Board, they have dedicated staff capacity. Thinking about how hiring someone just to support HEAC would work-need to look at enabling statute again. Jay's point may supersede all of that-if admin/legal support shifts from ORE to VDH, that opens up more capacity than we've had up until now. Have talked about using funds to hire consultant to do an assessment to orient the Commission to the work-want to think about best use of funds.

c. Chair MH: priority as I view it is to get admin/legal support legs under us to enable us to do anything, everything else will be possible after that.

i. JG: agree

ii. Kirsten Murphy, Sara Chesbrough: agree

iii. Lehana Guyette: thumbs up

iv. CPO Monica Hutt: agree it's a priority, but think we need to figure out step 1-shifting responsibility from ORE to VDH

d. Chair MH: should be careful-need to wait for VDH to give the OK that they can accept the work. Know we need admin/technical support to move forward, and that ORE is not in the position to do that optimally, we have \$200K available. There is a draft RFP-should we dust that off and place an admin support in Office of Health Equity to support HEAC?

e. VT DDC Kirsten Murphy: I looked at the enabling statute. the language is that "the Executive Director of Racial Equity... [is charged with] temporarily overseeing the establishment of the HEAC ... until the Office of Health Equity is established." the legislature has not done this yet, not intending to burden EDRE, but that is in statute-seems like until we can get that changed/corrected, we'd have to issue a contract through ORE.

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f. JG: Short form bill introduced at end of LEG session 2023: [H.512](#)-could be a vehicle for shifting responsibility for admin support to VDH instead of ORE, but will have to be addressed in next Legislative session because it was introduced too late to make crossover

g. Chair MH: suggest having an additional meeting between now and next month to reinvigorate the RFP, maybe create a subgroup to work on it

i. JG: believe that Shalini Suryanarayana/ORE did help with drafting RFP

ii. CPO Monica Hutt: could we modify RFP to add facilitation/forward momentum? Easy answer, probably yes we could. Maybe first look at it, move through the process with Melissa Mazza-Paquette's help.

h. Chair MH: action step-review old RFP, Exec Assist to Agency of Admin Melissa M-P may be able to help (although we haven't been able to lean on her because she is the sole admin support for AOA leadership). Looking for volunteers to be on subcommittee for RFP? Need 3 folks to help review RFP, add language related to administrative/facilitator support?

i. Ginger Irish, DVHA-can help with RFP, staying on the meeting today until 1:30PM

ii. Kirsten Murphy, VT DDC: can help, have experience with RFPs

iii. CPO Monica Hutt: also can help

iv. Andrea Brett: could RFP meetings be in the evening instead during the day-I can do that, but not during the day (notes via chat that Andrea's work day ends between 4:30PM-5PM)

v. Kirsten Murphy-can do 4:30PM meetings, Monica Hutt-agrees

i. Chair MH: noted, moving on-funding, with later submission of HEAC report there may have been a domino effect of not getting funding appropriation for HEAC. Chair Lori Houghton (House Health Care) and Chair Ginny Lyons (Sen. Health and Welfare) didn't send any memo to House appropriations, report submission would theoretically have given them time to submit appropriations. There are programs/services, but they leave gaps-have a "grassroots hope" to get grant funding out to community members. Funding request was \$1.57 million, but the LEG didn't want to appropriate any funds this year. Now what we're left with is what we currently have. Don't agree with that-we'll figure it out.

j. VT DDC Kirsten Murphy: completely agree with Mark's characterization-didn't appreciate that the Chair Lyons said that our report was a year late, when the report was a month late with the Legislature being notified and giving a 1 month extension. We need grassroots support so this doesn't happen next Legislative session.

k. Chair Hughes: want to thank ORE for providing support during time frame, acknowledge the fact that ORE provided letter of support and slide deck for Joint LEG presentation. Stay tuned for funding updates. In communication with President Pro Tempore to get more info.

## **5. Health (Equity) in All Policies (20 mins)**

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a. CPO Monica Hutt: can speak to vision of Health in All Policies group that existed pre-pandemic, was created by Exec Order several years pre-pandemic (around 2018), unlike HEAC, very much internally focused/driven within State Government. Intent was to bring players in state gov't to table to discuss physical health even if their purview doesn't usually include health. Example members-ANR, AOT, AOE, parks and recreation, AHS. How to better center health in policy conversations even when those conversations don't usually include health effects. Will send link to reports. Group had state government focus-wanted to begin to consider how your department, no matter what you're doing, could enhance/improve it. Wanting to work collectively to center health. Fast forward to now-group wasn't able to continue to meet through the pandemic, Dept of Health Commissioner Levine is the leader but lost key staff that was supporting it. Have hired new person to take on the project recently. Chair MH has spoken with new Director of Planning at VDH. Can we reach out to the group to support not only Health in All Policies, but Health Equity in All Policies? (Realizing the group is state-government focused, wanting to "clean our own house first".) Have clear connections to social determinants of health that are shaped by state government, more than just access to health care. Talking about physical, emotional, mental health-can't separate one from the others. Shared in chat: [Health in All Policies 2018 Annual Report](#)

b. Chair MH: have responsibility within enabling statute of HEAC, there's going to be a data discussion to have across all agencies of government too, need to monitor internal processes and outcomes disparities. Want to emphasize that this needs to be a whole of government approach. Office of Health Equity will need to work across State government to make it happen. Need to figure out what we do next with it.

i. VT DDC Kirsten Murphy: from HEAC enabling statute- "review, monitor, and advise all State agencies regarding the impact of current and emerging State policies, procedures, practices, laws, and rules on the health of individuals who are Black, Indigenous, and Persons of Color; individuals who are LGBTQ; and individuals with disabilities."

ii. Sara Chesbrough, VDH: Katie Stettler, new VDH Director of Planning, is paying attention to HEAC February 2023 report-she won't be moving forward with Health in All Policies group until HEAC advises her.

iii. JG: suggest inviting new VDH Director of Planning to HEAC meeting

1) Sara Chesbrough: she has joined some Social Determinants of Health subcommittee meetings before now

2) Action item-June 6 agenda item: HEAC group introduction to VDH Director of Planning Katie Stettler (group agreement on this)

c. Chair MH: suggest full HEAC meeting Mon/Tues May 15-16, suggest HEAC meeting every weeks moving forward

i. JG/ORE: worried about increased admin load, questioning if meeting more often will help increase group participation?

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ii. Chair MH: suggest meeting even without ORE present if they're not available, as far as the community folks who are not here-will have to go on a parallel track. It is something we should be mindful of/concerned about. Frequency of meetings won't be a resolution-need legislative change.

iii. VT DDC Kirsten Murphy: suggest meeting in 2 weeks of full commission to move forward with RFP, don't want to decide today that we want to meet every 2 weeks permanently until we have administrative support to support that pacing. May want to engage in conversation with VDH planning team about who is in the room for Health (Equity) in All Policies collaboration.

iv. Chair MH: request that Sara Chesbrough set up a meeting with VDH leaders, CPO Monica Hutt, Chair Mark Hughes, Vice Chair Kheya Ganguly, ORE if available to talk about Health in All Policies-Sara Chesbrough: suggests 9AM-10AM on 5/18 for separate Health in All Policies conversation.

6. Project Work— Youth Prevention and Support Systems (15 mins) saving this item for next meeting, Tuesday 5/16 at 12:30PM-2PM

7. Next Steps (10 mins)

a. Action items highlighted in meeting notes

b. Meeting in 2 weeks to go over RFP, action items today for then:

i. To do for ORE: send out copy of RFP from last year to volunteers who will review it (cc Chair MH on RFP)

ii. To do for ORE: send out additional meeting invitation to whole of HEAC in 2 weeks to finalize RFP

c. Next HEAC meeting agenda: Tuesday 5/16/23, 12:30PM-2PM

i. Finalize RFP

ii. Continue Health (Equity) in All Policies Discussion- introduction between HEAC and new VDH Director of Planning

iii. Talk more about remaining agenda item that wasn't covered today-Youth Prevention and Support Systems (CPO Monica Hutt on point to lead discussion with Chair Mark Hughes)

End time: 2:00PM