

Equity and Empowerment Advisory Board  
City of Roanoke, Virginia  
MINUTES (Virtual Meeting)  
March 4, 2021

I. **CALL TO ORDER - ROLL CALL**

Vice Mayor Trish White-Boyd called the meeting to order at 6:38 p.m. Angela O'Brien called the roll.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Vice Mayor Trish White-Boyd, Councilmember Bill Bestpitch, Rabbi Kathy Cohen, Patice Holland, Rev. Bill Lee, Angela Penn, Jerel Rhodes, Dr. Elda Stanco Downey, Peter Wonson

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Mayor Sherman Lea, City Manager Bob Cowell, City Attorney Tim Spencer, Chief Strategy Officer Angela O'Brien, Community Engagement Manager Tiffany Bradbury

Vice Mayor White-Boyd recognized Mayor Lea for comments to the Board. The Mayor thanked everyone for agreeing to serve on the Board. He acknowledged that the history of racism in the City of Roanoke requires action and stated that actions would be guided by recommendations from the Board to City Council. He emphasized that every decision of the City must be evaluated in terms of who is helped and who is hurt to ensure access to success for all. He noted that the removal of the Lee Monument was only the beginning of this important process.

II. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM FEBRUARY 4, 2021 MEETING**

Rabbi Cohen moved approval of the minutes as written; motion seconded by Dr. Stanco Downey and approved by unanimous roll-call vote.

III. **NEW BUSINESS**

**A. Appointment of Members to Subcommittees**

Mr. Cowell briefly reviewed the process for developing the five priorities of Interwoven Equity; each priority will be addressed by a subcommittee of the Board. Vice Mayor White-Boyd announced that the Executive Committee had made the following nominations for appointment to the subcommittees:

**Subcommittee on Trust**

Patice Holland - chair  
Dr. Elda Stanco Downey  
Vice Mayor Trish White-Boyd  
Mary Bishop  
Grace Church  
Courtney Craggett  
David Harrison

**Subcommittee on Break the Cycle of Poverty**

Robin Mitchell - chair  
Rabbi Kathy Cohen  
Jerel Rhodes  
Sheyonn Baker  
Dr. Deneen Evans  
Jayveon Tucker  
Aaron Washington

**Subcommittee on Neighborhood  
Choice**

Gloria Manns - chair  
Rev. Bill Lee  
Angela Penn  
Amazetta Anderson  
Alicha Grubb  
Eboni Harrington  
Bernard Johnson

**Subcommittee on Inclusive Culture**

Rachel Ruhlen - chair  
Peter Wonson  
Lori Baker-Lloyd

Phoenix Keesee  
Rev. Kathy O’Keeffe  
Ahoor Salem  
Katie Zawacki

**Subcommittee on Service Delivery**

Rev. Bill Lee - chair  
Councilmember Bill Bestpitch  
Angela Penn  
John Camacho  
Marlene Hamlette  
Tiphaney Helm  
Courtney Smith

Councilmember Bestpitch moved approval of the appointments as presented; motion seconded by Ms. Holland and approved by unanimous roll-call vote. Councilmember Bestpitch moved to waive the residency requirement for Dr. Evans; motion seconded by Rev. Lee and approved by unanimous roll-call vote.

**B. Public Hearing**

Vice Mayor White-Boyd opened the public hearing to receive recommendations for renaming Lee Plaza and other comments regarding the work of the Board. The following persons spoke during the public hearing:

1. Ron Lacks recommended that the plaza be renamed in memory of his grandmother, Henrietta Lacks.
2. Dotsy Clifton recommended that the plaza be renamed in memory of Henrietta Lacks.
3. Aaron Ewert recommended that the plaza be renamed in honor of his father, former Roanoke City Manager Bern Ewert.
4. Rachel Ruhlen recommended that the plaza be renamed in memory of Rev. R.R. Wilkinson.
5. Tiffany Jordan recommended that the plaza be renamed in honor of Rev. James P. Beatty.
6. Gloria Manns recommended that the plaza be renamed in memory of Henrietta Lacks.
7. Barbara Duerk recommended that the plaza be renamed Freedom Plaza or Freedom Square. She thanked the Board for its work and wished it success. She noted the importance of collaboration among government, businesses, and neighborhoods. She recommended rebooting Roanoke Neighborhood Advocates and emphasized the need for improvements to neighborhoods, infrastructure, and transit facilities. She stated that people should be asked what they think.
8. Jordan Bell recommended that the plaza be renamed in honor of William Bernard Robertson.
9. Maston McCorkle commented in the chat feature that he would not be speaking.

10. Lea DeCosta noted the free services available from Roanoke Valley Alleghany Region 5 Adult Education. More information is available at [www.regionfiveadulthood.com](http://www.regionfiveadulthood.com).

11. Carla Thomas commented on the need for healthy food options along Peters Creek Road and said that the area is underutilized.

**IV. REPORTS FROM BOARD MEMBERS**

Mr. Cowell stated the members appointed to the subcommittees would receive information about the policies and action items for the priorities to be addressed by their group. He said that a meeting would be scheduled to review ground rules for all subcommittees, after which each would begin working independently.

**V. ANNOUNCEMENTS AND NEXT MEETING**

Vice Mayor White-Boyd reminded everyone that the next meeting is scheduled for April 1 at 6:30 p.m.

**VI. ADJOURNMENT**

Vice Mayor White-Boyd adjourned the meeting at 7:32 p.m.

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Vice Mayor Patricia White-Boyd  
Chair

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Councilmember William D. Bestpitch  
Secretary