

Equity and Empowerment Advisory Board
City of Roanoke, Virginia
MINUTES (Virtual Meeting)
May 6, 2021

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

Vice Mayor Trish White-Boyd called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m. Angela O'Brien called the roll.

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

MEMBERS ABSENT: Rabbi Kathy Cohen

OTHERS PRESENT: City Attorney Tim Spencer, Chief Strategy Officer Angela O'Brien, Community Engagement Manager Tiffany Bradbury, Robyn Mitchell, Rachel Ruhlen

II. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM APRIL 1, 2021, MEETING**

Vice Mayor White-Boyd asked if anyone had noted any corrections or additions to the minutes; hearing none, the minutes were approved as distributed without objection.

III. **NEW BUSINESS**

A. Committee Reports - Scheduling of Meetings and Discussion of Priorities, Policies & Actions

a. Trust: Chair – Patice Holland, Co-chair – Vice Mayor Trish White-Boyd, Secretary – Mary Bishop, 1st Tuesday of every month at 5:30

Ms. Holland reported that the committee met in April and May with good attendance. They discussed their charge and the reasons that the members wanted to serve on this committee. The committee will develop a recommendation to the EEAB for a public apology for racial inequities. They discussed local policing actions, particularly increased traffic stops for people of color; they are working with another group to compile statistics and will pass ideas to other committees. They also discussed the need for more diversity on the boards of non-profit organizations, the need to review CDBG grant process and analyze access to it, and how to reach more citizens. Vice Mayor White-Boyd stated that the committee would receive input during public hearings and let people know when the committee meetings are scheduled.

Break the Cycle of Poverty: Chair – Robyn Mitchell, Co-chair – Dr. Deneen Evans, Secretary - Rabbi Cathy Cohen, Bi-weekly on Tuesdays at 6:00

Ms. Mitchell named the members of the committee and noted that former Councilmember Michelle Davis is serving in an advisory capacity. They are reviewing the priorities, policies, and action items in City Plan 2040 and collaborating with City staff. They also are reviewing the GARE Racial Equity Tool Kit and the One Virginia Foundation. Vice Mayor White-Boyd expressed her appreciation for their work.

Neighborhood Choice: Chair – Angela Penn, Co-Chair – TBD, Secretary - TBD, 2nd Tuesday of every month at 4:00

Ms. Penn reported that the committee met on April 13. They will use the GARE Racial Equity Tool Kit, and they are reviewing their priority area in City Plan 2040. Regarding Neighborhood Choice Priority Three, the committee hopes to develop a resource booklet on financing options for home ownership. Vice Mayor White-Boyd stated that the committee had done an excellent job of setting up a framework. She said that she, Councilmember Bestpitch, and City Manager Cowell would attend committee meetings as requested.

Inclusive Culture: Chair – Rachel Ruhlen, Co-chair – Ahoon Salem, Secretary - Phoenix Keesee, 3rd Friday of every month at 12:00

Ms. Ruhlen reported that the committee had surveyed its members to determine their top priorities. They have realized that a lot is happening already and see the need for an inventory of existing efforts. They have invited Neighborhood Services Coordinator Josh Johnson to their next meeting. They will review the GARE Racial Equity Tool Kit to see if they want to use it. Vice Mayor White-Boyd noted that the committee is “moving right along” in its work.

Service Delivery: Chair – Rev. Bill Lee, Co-chair – Tiphany Helm, Secretary - Marlene Hamlette, 1st Wednesday of every month at 4:00

Rev. Lee stated that the committee would review priorities at each meeting. Councilmember Bestpitch provided a brief overview of the CDBG process. Tiffany Bradbury had discussed City communications at the last meeting. Rev. Lee said that the committee members would review roanokeva.gov to learn how users may access City services. Ms. O’Brien recommended City staff that the committee members could contact for more information on accessing services. Vice Mayor White-Boyd stated that the City’s COVID work groups had identified communications as a concern. She noted that younger people are no longer using Facebook.

B. Recommendations regarding renaming of Lee Plaza

Vice Mayor White-Boyd noted that EEAB members had received the survey for their review, and no changes were requested. Ms. O’Brien stated that the survey would have four choices: Henrietta Lacks, Mayor Sherman Lea, Freedom, and Star City. She said that the survey would go out through all platforms used by the City. Vice Mayor White-Boyd explained that the survey would go to all EEAB and committee members. Rev. Lee asked if recommendations from only one or two people had been dropped. Ms. O’Brien replied that the four options were the ones most often suggested. Dr. Stanco Downey asked about the deadline for the survey, and Vice Mayor White-Boyd answered that it would be open for one week. Rev. Lee moved approval of the survey, seconded by Peter Wonson, and the motion carried unanimously. The survey was to be distributed the following day, and EEAB members were encouraged to share it through their personal networks.

IV. REPORTS FROM BOARD MEMBERS

Board members asked about allowing people who may not use internet or social media to obtain the survey. Printed copies of the survey will be available for pick-up at the Municipal Building.

V. **ANNOUNCEMENTS AND NEXT MEETING**

Vice Mayor White-Boyd reminded everyone that the next meeting is scheduled for June 3 at 6:30 p.m.

VI. **ADJOURNMENT**

Vice Mayor White-Boyd adjourned the meeting at 7:07 p.m.

Vice Mayor Patricia White-Boyd
Chair

Councilmember William D. Bestpitch
Secretary