

Champaign County Racial Justice Task Force (RJTF)
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, May 26, 2016
6:30 pm

I. Call to Order

Sam Byndom called the meeting to order at 6:31pm.

II. Roll Call

Members Present:

M. Ar-Raheem, S. Balgoyen, L. Branham, B. Butts, S. Byndom, E. Dee, A. Felty, D. Harber, R. Hughes, A. James, E. Patt, H. Ross, K. Schneider, S. Silver, D. Turner, G. Walter.

Members Absent:

P. Burnside, R. Byrd, A. Evans, C. Randolph.

III. Approval of Agenda

Sara Balgoyen moved to approve agenda. Kevin Schneider seconded. The motion carried.

IV. Approval of Minutes

Esther Patt moved to approve the minutes. Kevin seconded the motion. The motion carried.

V. Public Participation

There were no public comments.

VI. Task Force Member Updates

Sara updated the group. Fliers have been drafted and she would like comments. A time and date has been confirmed for Love Corner. Artice James is close to securing a space also. The fee for Love Corner is \$150. The ACLU has committed \$100 towards the event. The NAACP is also considering supporting an event. Sara noted that without a budget, the task force has to solicit funds from other organizations.

Sara asked about doing two events in one week: one on Thursday and one on Saturday. Artice noted that the week of the 25th, he will be out of town. Gerry, Kevin, and Esther noted they also cannot attend. Kevin, Demario, and Amy Felty do not have an issue with multiple events in one week. Sara said that this is an event sponsored by NAACP and ACLU. A discussion regarding the rules of the meeting followed. Amy noted that minutes need to be taken and an agenda needs to be posted. Artice did not feel that if the meetings are sponsored by other organizations that they would need to follow the Open Meetings Act. Esther stated that all the task force needs to do is make a public posting saying that task force members will be present at this date and time to discuss racial justice. Lynn Branham stated that this meeting is being held by the RJTF in order to help determine the direction of its work; she believes the task force needs to be profiled.

Lynn also said she would like to see “Community Dialogue on Racial Disparities in the Criminal Justice System” on the flier. Artice asked if “Racial Justice Task Force Community Dialogue” was a better alternative. Kevin asked if we could vote on the flier today to move forward. Maryam believed the second flier presented was neutral. Maryam Ar-Raheem also stated that the task force needs to realize that getting one voice for the whole community from these meetings will be difficult; she does not want the task force to censor the comments of the community. Lynn clarified her suggestion that the task force avoid language that suggests attacks on people. Esther noted that the task force charge is related to criminal justice but that the fliers don’t show this anywhere. Kevin agreed that it needs to say something about the criminal justice system, but he wanted to avoid making suggestions. Some members agreed on “Racial Justice Task Force – Community Dialogue on Racial Disparities in the Criminal Justice System.” Sara asked if suggestions about dialogue topics should be added. Kevin and Maryam did not. Ester suggested “Community Dialogue - Champaign County Racial Justice Task Force seeks your input on racial disparities in the criminal justice system”. Kevin moved to give the volunteer group the task of finalizing the flier. Demario Turner asked if the flier will be posted on social media. Kevin stated that the task force is allowed to share it, with the approval of the whole group.

Kevin moved that all members of the task force be allowed to promote these and future meetings by spreading the word and ensuring that fliers are distributed in all ways including all media. Maryam seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Gerald Walter noted that someone should be designated as a spokesperson. Sara and Artice stated they will place their contact information on the flier. Sara will email the flier, and she requested that people send her contacts of whom they are sharing the flier with. Ryan Hughes noted that we need to remember that these meetings are from the entire task force, not just the volunteer group, and that everyone should put time and effort into them from here on out.

The dates of the two events will be:

11-1 PM June 25th

6:30-8:30 PM June 23rd

Artice noted that we should ask the County Board for \$500 for input. He moved to do this. Gerald seconded the motion. Discussion followed: Amy noted that we need to specify what the task force is asking for because it will need to be accounted for. Kevin agreed and stated asking for \$500 would result in \$100. Lynn thought that the task force will need funds for other activities, and one request for funds may be all that is given. David said that the County Board was very clear in not supporting the task force by not giving any funds. Esther also believed the task force could only ask for funds once and the group needs to be more ready for that ask. Kevin agreed. Lynn was concerned that it will take too long to wait to see what the task force will be doing before asking for funds. Amy stated that someone could volunteer to ask what types of support the County Board will offer, including tasks the County could perform. David noted the importance of persuading the County Board. Sara agreed and pushed back on the expected formal report; she stated that part of the task is to push on things that have already been done, including data collection. Susan Silver asked who would pay for the printing of fliers. Artice felt

that the consensus was that the task force needs to consider what it would propose for funding to the County board. Artice rescinded his motion with the approval of the second. He also asked that the agenda next meeting include a discussion on what the task force would need funded. Demario asked what other funding opportunities could be explored. Kevin said there are two issues: figuring out what money is needed and then figuring out what sources of funding could be pursued. Demario responded that an effort needs to be made to make a case for funds and then deliver that to where the task force seeks funds from. Maryam stated that the task force should go to the County Board first in order to have them put the money in support of the task force. Maryam also reminded the group that the Independent Media Center can offer its space for another community dialogue, for free of charge. Henry Ross noted that the Love Center space is being provided for free.

Maryam will check the IMC for a weekend date. Kevin suggested holding an event outdoor in a park which could be open and inviting. Amy asked about the plan for capturing people's comments. Sara said that scribes will be assigned for each small group. Ellyn noted that video recording is available, and Sara responded that the group discussed having that as an opportunity so that it is voluntary. Sara asked about liability for offering child care. Kevin stated that there was definitely liability and it was not a good idea. Kevin stated that the Champaign Bar Association is going to discuss how they could assist the RJTF.

Ryan presented the draft statement of support for the City of Urbana's marijuana fine reduction.

Kevin stated that he likes it. Artice agreed and stated that it indirectly asks the County to take the task force seriously. Sara asked if we could read it to the Champaign County Board at the public comments. David Harber, Kevin, and Amy supported the statement.

Ryan will finalize the statement and place it on the agenda for the next meeting.

VII. Task Force Member Comments

Susan Silver brought up the point that members were unclear on the booking process. She asked what the task force would like to do to learn more. Kevin brought up a recent article about an algorithm/software that is used in pre-trial and sentencing based on factors including risk, and how this was biased towards race. He asked Susan if she knew of any software being used in the County, and Susan did not know. Kevin recommended the article from ProPublica and said that he would like to learn more about how the system works.

Susan asked that a presentation on the criminal justice system be added to next meeting's agenda.

Demario thanked the work being done to create the flier and publicize the meetings. He noted a meeting on a racial justice issue in the community that he was not aware of.

David spoke about the racial disparity of the school resource officer arrests and the federal investigation around that. He suggested inviting someone in to speak about this issue to the group. Sara noted that other communities are working towards removing police officers from their schools, and she asked to seek information on solutions being applied elsewhere. Lynn

noted restorative justice is integrated in schools, the criminal justice system, social work, and other areas.

Sam stated that the task force received mail from an individual who is incarcerated. He asked the group how the information could be best utilized while protecting the information disclosed in the letter. Kevin volunteered to summarize the letter and present to the group at the next meeting.

VIII. Adjournment

Kevin moved to adjourn. The meeting concluded at 7:50 pm.