

Champaign County Racial Justice Task Force (RJTF)
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, June 29, 2017
6:30 pm

I. Call to Order

Ryan Hughes called the meeting to order at 6:42 pm.

II. Roll Call

Members Present: S. Balgoyen, L. Branham, E. Dee, A. Felty, R. Hughes, A. James, E. Patt, C. Randolph, H. Ross, S. Silver, D. Turner, G. Walter.

Members Absent: M. Ar-Raheem, S. Byndom A. Evans, D. Harber, S. Lerner, A. Shelton.

III. Approval of Agenda

Sara Balgoyen moved to approve the minutes from the June 15 meeting. Gerry Walter seconded the motion. The motion carried.

IV. Approval of Minutes

Esther Patt moved to approve the agenda. Artice James seconded the motion. The motion carried.

V. Public Participation

Dave Sutton

It has come to his attention that the jail has a large number of people who have not been tried presumably because they have not paid bail. He asked what the task force has done to reduce fines and fees, or to eliminate cash bail. Lynn Branham responded saying that this is an issue that has been considered by the task force. Some recommendations have been tentatively approved. One is to expand the issuances of notices to appear at the jail in order to limit the number of people entering the jail. The task force is also recommending pretrial services and risk assessment for financial release conditions. She noted her appreciation for his support. Mr. Sutton mentioned he is also in favor of bypassing the jail when possible. Carolyn Randolph noted that she will not support race neutral policies but rather race-based policies.

VI. Presentations

There were no presentations at this meeting.

VII. Task Force Member Comments/Updates

Ryan noted that the task force was informed that the County Board approved an extension for 16 members of the task force. Sara read the names of the individuals who were appointed for the extension:

Maryam Ar-Raheem
Sara Balgoyen
Lynn Branham
Sam Byndom
Ellyn Dee
Amy Felty

David Harber
Ryan Hughes
Artice James
Scott Lerner
Esther Patt
Carolyn Randolph

Henry Ross
Demario Turner
Susan Silver
Gerry Walter

Carolyn read the following statement:

It was recently brought to my attention that the Champaign County Board voted to extend our tenure through October 2017.

Back in mid-March, we agreed to ask for an extension. The extension was never requested, and as a result the entire RJTF reluctantly decided to accelerate our timeline in an effort to complete our work by the original July 2017 deadline.

Now, it is clear that someone finally went to the Board to make a request for an extension without discussing this with the rest of the RJTF. This breach of communication and breakdown in leadership angers me. More important, it is indicative of larger problems that exist within this body, problems that I and others have mentioned on numerous occasions including a tendency to take over and change the group agenda at the last minute; to make decisions without consent and consensus from the entire group; to ignore select voices and/or concerns; to talk around issues of race and racism despite being a racial justice task force, to place the lion's share of responsibility on the shoulders of a few select group members, and so on.

Rather than dance around the subject and agree to spin our wheels for another three months of service, I want the following questions to be answered:

- 1. Who requested this last-minute extension?*
- 2. Why was the extension requested at this late date and not back in March as agreed upon by the RJTF?*
- 3. Why wasn't this last-minute extension discussed with the entire board?*
- 4. What specifically is going to be done during this extension?*
- 5. What is going to be done differently, in terms of leadership, to ensure that we hit our benchmarks?*

Sara responded that her understanding that a request was made but it did not make it onto the County Board until June. Sam Byndom may have more specific answers about the extension. Esther and Sara shared their understanding of how the extension was requested. Artice agreed that meeting the timeline for the final report created by the task force at the previous meeting is the best thing to do. Gerry concurred and said that once all pieces are there for the final draft, the task force can review what needs to happen to craft final report. Lynn noted that one reason for the timeline agreed last time was for budget recommendations to the County Board. Lynn also

mentioned three items for all groups to consider for final report, including training and additional issues to be addressed, CJTF coordinating council, and the need for data collection.

Subsection on Fines and Fees

Esther presented the draft section on fines and fees which has been updated. It is not uncommon for court fees to exceed fines. Some people who do not have fines still have fees. Driving on a suspended license seems to be a big issue. Amy asked about the protocol in recommendation 2. Esther said that it would not require state changes. Gerry asked about mentioning “increasing access to justice.” Gerry will draft some language about this. Lynn asked about the structure of fees; she recommended that if there are any fees that are implemented because of local rules, then the task force should recommend reducing those now (by the County Board). Esther explained fees and fee schedules: counties have different fee schedules for the state fees. Lynn recommended adding “...two bills, as well as take steps at the local level that will reduce the impact of court fees on low income individuals...” Susan Silver asked if any county was doing this correctly; Esther responded no. The group discussed how to address Champaign’s ability to reduce its fee structure.

Subsection on Housing

Esther presented the subsection on housing, particularly discrimination against felons in housing policy. The group discussed the language of the recommendations. Esther explained the Circuit Clerk fee attachment.

Subsection on Structural Issues

Amy Felty discussed the changes she made to the structural section. Amy then walked through the structure and the sections of her report. Esther asked about School Resource Officers. Esther also asked how the report could be narrowed down. Carolyn suggested creating some of this as supplemental reading. She recommended a recommendation, how you collected data and highlights from findings, and then recommendations. She recommended pulling some things from her section into the introduction of the full report. Sara suggested trying to determine how to fit most of it in as “supplemental reading”. Sara likes the idea of pulling highlights and more relevant recommendations together for the report. Amy asked for help to edit the report down. Lynn mentioned how difficult the task of the group is and mentioned a concern about the original role of the task force to study the criminal justice system. The group discussed the Structural section and how it fits into the work of the task force and how it could fit into the final report.

VIII. New Business

There was no new business.

IX. Subcommittee Meetings

There were no subcommittee meetings.

X. Adjournment

Artice moved to adjourn.