

**City of Hyattsville
Race & Equity Task Force
February 15, 2022 7:00 PM
Zoom
Minutes**

Present

Task Force Members:

- Malcolm Clarke
- Jennifer Gafford
- Alicia (ah-**lee**-syah) Freemyn
- Daniel (dah-nee-**ehl**) Vallejos-Avila
- Daniel Amador
- LaToya Robinson
- Rodrigo Blanco

Council:

- Councilmember Rommel Sandino

Staff:

- Staff Liaison Jan Guszynski

Guests:

- Lt. Steven Thomas (Anne Arundel County Police)
- Jocelyn Medallo

Meeting called to order at 7:11 PM by Chair Clarke

1. Welcome and Call to Order

Roll Call – Chair Clarke

Acknowledgement of Meeting Guests – Chair Clarke

2. Grief and Healing Address

Lt. Steven Thomas –

As a resource during this time of grief and healing due to the passing of Mayor Kevin Ward, Lt. Steven Thomas of Anne Arundel County Police has joined the Race and Equity Task Force Meeting.

- LST: Kevin’s life was very important. I know he had a great impact on the community and on the lives of a lot of people. The community is grieving, and individuals are grieving. We all grieve differently. It will have different effects on us. It can have an effect on how people sleep at night and appetite. It’s important that we consume water and eat food. It’s important to stay away from alcohol when we are grieving and when traumatic incidents happen. Our brain needs to heal like any body part needs to heal.

When we consume alcohol or other drugs we are not able to get into that deep REM sleep which is when our brain processes and heals. It is important to get groups together to get together and be there for each other, remember the positive things about Kevin.

- LTS: Lt. Steve Thomas; 443-848-2922; p01225@aacounty.org
- AF: Thank you Lt. Thomas for holding space for us. This is such a grief filled time and this grief is compounded with all of the other griefs we have experienced in the last two years due to COVID. Some of us I think are feeling grief fatigue. Is there grief support for the wider Hyattsville community outside of this meeting?
- LST: I am a sworn Lt. in Anne Arundel Police Department. I work in crisis response. What we do, is instead of bringing social workers into the police department, we have inserted and fully integrated the police department into the mental health system. The PG county organization is Santé. They can meet with individuals/families.
 - o Prince George's County Crisis Hotline: 301-429-2185
 - o Website: <https://www.thesantegroup.org/where-we-work/prince-georges-county-md/>
- DVA: While processing grief for the loss of a granddaughter and daughter, hospice care resources came once a month for several months and it was very helpful.
- LST: It's important to talk about what we are feeling and put our feelings in words and get it out of our body. It can tear us up especially when there are repeated traumas over time, it can be devastating. It is important to know that there are people who are there to help. Take care of your Maslovian needs: making sure we are not hungry, not cold, that we feel safe. Repeated traumas can be really overwhelming and so it is important to have someone to talk to.
- DVA: I often think of the black plague and compare it to now.
- LST: With the pandemic, we haven't been able to properly grieve. If you think about the effects the pandemic has had on funerals and viewings, it has been really tough.
- MC: Thank you Lt. Steven Thomas. We can now move to Committee Member introductions.
- AF: This is quite a shift in tone. Daniel sorry for your loss.
- *Lt. Steven Thomas exits virtual call.*

3. Committee Member Self Introductions

- AF: I have a deep affection for rice. Can each person share:
 - o Name and pronoun
 - o How long you have lived in Hyattsville.
 - o Favorite rice dish from your country of origin or culture.
- AF: I will start. I am Alicia, my pronouns are she/her/hers. I have lived in Hyattsville since 2017. Arroz con gandules (pigeon peas and rice a staple of Puerto Rican cooking)
- DVA: I am familiar with sweet rice from Mexican American culture. Came to Hyattsville in September 2020.
- Jennifer G: I have lived in Hyattsville for about 30 years now. My pronouns are she/her/hers. Raised in Hyattsville and attended local elementary and middles school in Hyattsville. Rice is one of my favorite things. My mother is Japanese so I like sushi rice. My father is Colombian so I love all Latin rice dishes.

- Jan G: If I may please, I'd like to go back and convey some items that City Administrator Douglas asked me to convey to you all and then we can move on.
 - o One note: we forgot to put approval of January 25 meeting minutes on the agenda.
- DA: I am Daniel Amador. He/his/him. Been in Hyattsville since October 2019. Alicia and I spoke with Council Member Croslin and Sandino and they are a big part of why I really like Hyattsville and decided to get involved. Me and my partner are a same sex couple. We were visiting a bunch of properties in MD/VA/DC. I saw two women walking down the street kissing and they were an interracial couple while we were visiting Hyattsville. Hyattsville has a special place in my heart. I am originally from Chicago. My favorite rice dish is my grandma's red beans and rice with vegetables, with mole sauce. It is a chocolate spicy sauce. My grandmother would make it and I would go back for seconds and pour mole over the rice.
- RS: Pronouns are he/him/el I lived in Hyattsville for 20 years. My family immigrated from Nicaragua. We came to MD and made it our home. My favorite rice dish gallopinto which is a staple food of Nicaragua. This is rice and beans mixed. The taste is elevated when you mix freshly baked beans into the rice. I am also a dessert type of guy and one of my favorite desserts is Thai sticky rice with mango.
- MC: He/him/his. Hyattsville since 2015. Went to school in DC. Senior year I stayed in an off-campus dorm in the area and have stayed here ever since. I am surprised about learning so many new rice dishes. My favorite is rice and peas (Caribbean rice and peas). My family is Caribbean. We would have gravy on top of the rice and peas. I am excited that there are a couple places in Hyattsville that do that really well.
- Jan G: I spent the last 30 years of my adult life in Chi-town. I never thought I would be anything but the urban girl. But after dropping anchor in Columbia Heights, my husband and I were looking in VA and MD and we picked Hyattsville. People don't all look like me and they don't all speak the same language, and this feels right. We are going on our fourth year here. I'm Polish, so we don't eat rice, we eat pierogis.
- AF: Every culture has their own pocket-sized foods: tamales, pasteles, pierogis, dumplings. Thank you all so much for talking about rice. I will mention more about myself, my wife and I moved here in 2017. We wanted to have a child and raise our baby in a beloved community that was diverse, speaks different languages, and access to cultural foods. Also, looking for a community where it felt safe to be a queer couple of color. I've been in DC since 2001. Hyattsville has small town energy with big city accessibility. I am always looking for ways to get involved.

4. Administrative Announcements

- MC: Approval of minutes for January and September. Table September and January in March.
 - o AF move to table. DA second.
- Jan G: City Administrator Tracey Douglas wanted to be at this meeting. The loss of Mayor Ward has gripped us all to say the least. We have acknowledged as a city that no matter what your relationship with Mayor Ward, grief for Mayor Ward can bring up grief from the past. Tap me if you would like access to these resources. Focus on his life rather than the circumstances surrounding his passing. Reach out to us and

Chair Clarke. What can people do to support Chad/Norman/Sydney/Eli (Mayor Ward's family)? My best recommendation is to keep them in your thoughts. If you know them personally, sometimes it's nice to not ask what you can do, and just suggest something. Send a card to his family or note through the city mailing address and we will get it to them. We ordered purple ribbons and we have bracelets. We ordered purple lights that people can pick up and put outside their homes. February is the month meant to honor Mayor Ward. There will be purple outdoor lighting and the flag will be at half-staff. Join in the purple wave. It was Scooter's (Mayor Ward) favorite color.

- Equity Officer:
 - o Jan G: There are two finalists in the pool for the Equity Officer position. Looking for two veteran task force members who can participate in the panel interview. Malcolm/Rodrigo/LaToya can participate. The same panelist from the task force would need to participate in both interviews for consistency. Scheduling is being worked out right now, but if the task force members could be available, the week of the 28th and the first week of March that would be great.
 - o DVA: Will the interviews be virtual?
 - o Jan G: Most likely zoom.
- Vacancy for the position of Mayor:
 - o Jan G: There will be a special election for the Mayor vacancy
 - 140 days out
 - If you want to help with ballots, please reach out
 - o CM Sandino: Time frame was extended to allow for the board of elections to have time to be intentional
 - o MC: If someone is interested, who do they contact?
 - o Jan G: Email the City Clerk's office.
 - o CM Sandino: There is a public hearing on the proposed amendment to the city charter regarding the special election. This is happening next Tuesday at 6:00 PM.
 - o Jan G: Info posted on website

5. Schedule Equity Plan Presentations

- MC: Last meeting we walked through the sections and assigned primary task force members to the sections. Daniel Amador you were not at the meeting last time, but we did assign reviewers to each section so if you are interested in reviewing any of the sections, let us know.
- DA: I would be interested in reviewing or supporting the housing portion.
- MC: Daniel VA, I know you are the primary person on the housing section, would you mind collaborating on housing with DA?
- DVA: You can be a reviewer and do not hesitate to provide constructive feedback
- DA: I would like to review housing and transportation

Rodrigo Blanco joined the meeting.

- MC: I know next meeting we wanted to set aside time to review census data. So the earliest we can probably start reviewing sections of the Equity Plan would probably be April. Daniel (Vallejos Avila), would you mind if I call you Daniel V?
- DVA: Ok. Or you can call my Daniel Avila if you'd like. That would be fine.
- MC: You said you have drafts for the housing section. So would you mind going first in April?
- DVA: I'd be happy to. We will present the draft prior to the reviewer? Or should I send my second draft to Daniel Amador.
- MC: I envisioned that the two people work together offline before presenting. The primary task force member would send their draft to the reviewer prior to the presentation.

Latoya Robinson joined meeting.

- DA: What is the time frame and what are the goals? Are there metrics that we are trying to meet?
- Jan G: Former Mayor Hollingsworth started the Race and Equity Task Force and wanted to see equity in the community and across all departments within the city administration. I attend Council on Government meetings to see what other municipalities are doing.
- DA: Sounds like there are guard rails but room for creativity within the sections
- Jan G: Yes.
- DVA: There was a first draft presented to Council.
- Jan G: Time check 8:25 pm
- MC:
 - o April: Housing - Daniel Vallejos Avila
 - o May: Aging and People with Disabilities - Rodrigo Blanco
 - o June: Transportation – Malcolm Clarke
 - o July: Community Policing – Alicia Freemyn
 - o August: Community Engagement – Latoya Robinson
 - o September: Jobs – Jennifer Gafford
- MC: We will also have the census data presentation in the March meeting.

6. Open Discussion

- Jan G: Jocelyn (guest), you have been unmuted if you have a comment.
 - o Jocelyn: I've been enjoying the conversation. I am so new to Hyattsville. I am just observing.
- Jan G: There is one vacancy on the Task Force if you are interested.
 - o Jocelyn: I didn't know there was an opening. I will take a look.
- MC: Will send meeting notes from September and January to equity@hyattsville.org.

Review Agenda for Next Meeting

- Jan G. to present information on census data
- Approve meeting minutes from September and January
- Mural project update
- Equity Officer update
- Update on Driskell and Centennial parks

- Cheri Everhart will send input on cultural programming.
- Task Force Survey
- Jan G: I was the staff liaison for the census campaign. I have contacts at the census bureau that can help me mine that data. I will find that data and get it to you.
- AF (in chat): Does the Task Force give a statement for Black History month.
- DVA: I don't know if that's our charge. Maybe higher. Council?
- DVA motion to adjourn and Alicia seconded.

Adjourned 8:43 PM