

Reparations Commission

SUMMARY/ACTION MINUTES

Wednesday, April 10, 2024

6:00 p.m.

Location: Alameda County Training & Education Center
Hayward/Union City Rooms
125 – 12th Street, 4th Floor, Oakland, CA 94607

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by the Chair, Debra Gore-Mann at 6:00 p.m.

II. Roll Call

Members present:

Leo Bazile
Jesse Burleson
Lori Cox
Alan Dones
Philip S. Gardiner
Debra Gore-Mann
Shenita Hurskin
Carolyn Johnson
James Knowles
Larry McClendon
Brandon T. Sass
Shadrick Small
Natasha Tripplett

Excused: Artavia Berry, Vickie Stephens

III. Public Comment (items not listed on the agenda)

Marian Johnson, resident of Alameda County, commented on the historical use of eminent domain to disrupt and displace African American communities in Alameda County. Ms. Johnson requested that the Commission consider the harmful effects of this practice and take action to restore the land, repair the harm done to the community, and repay the debt owed for the loss of generational wealth and loss of familial community.

IV. Approval of Minutes – Action Item

Minutes of Wednesday, March 13, 2024

A motion was made by Commissioner Hurskin and seconded by Commissioner Sass, to approve the minutes for March 13, 2024, as submitted.

Ayes: Bazile, Burleson, Cox, Dones, Gardiner, Gore-Mann, Hurskin, Johnson, Knowles, McClendon, Sass, Small

Noes:

Excused: Berry, Stephens, Tripplett

Motion passed 12/0

V. **Russell City – Hayward City Council Meeting - March 25, 2024 – Informational Item**

Chair Debra Gore-Mann presented a PowerPoint presentation about the Russell City Reparative Justice Project (RCRJP), undertaken by the RCRJP Steering Committee appointed by the City of Hayward Council. The presentation outlined categories of recommendations, such as restitution, compensation, and rehabilitation for descendants of Russell City. Collaboration with academic and policy research partners, as well as a community survey, helped to inform the recommendations.

Commissioner Carolyn Johnson was a member of the RCRJP Steering Committee and shared her perspective on project. Ms. Johnson is a descendant of Russell City residents and explained that there are addendums to the report, including critiques of the process and the city of Hayward's role, that should be considered in the summary document. She clarified the recommendations were sourced from a research group and ranked by committee members. There is need for further discussion regarding differing needs among community members, such as property ownership.

Commissioner James Knowles, a former resident of Russell City, expressed his frustration and anger due to past injustices, during the Russell City Reparative Justice Project. He stated that two of his daughters were members of the RCRJP Steering Committee, one as the chair. He discussed his distrust towards certain individuals at the local level, and his ongoing involvement in matters related to Russell City.

Discussion points

- The mayor and the city council directed staff to thoroughly assess all recommendations of the RCRJP for financial and implementation implications
- Need for continued vigilance and community engagement to ensure that the outcomes align with the community's needs
- Challenges with survey methods, including technological barriers and biased question structures
- Use the story of Russell City to frame discussions on reparations and to ensure that survey methods are fair and inclusive

VI. **University of Massachusetts Amherst – Crosstabs/2023 January National Poll/Reparations/Racial Attitudes – Informational Item**

Chair Debra Gore-Mann presented findings from the University of Massachusetts Amherst on a poll regarding reparations. The poll was organized by gender, race, age, education level, income, party affiliation, and ideology. The survey showed significant support for reparations among African Americans and Democrats. Reasons for supporting or opposing reparations varied across demographic groups. Additionally, the survey explored attitudes toward racism, revealing widespread anger about its existence across different demographics.

Commissioners discussed various ways to approach different demographics in Alameda County regarding the topic of reparations.

VII. **Subcommittee Reports – Informational Item**

Infrastructure - marketing, communication, outreach/community engagement, legal/political
(Leo, Jesse, Larry, Lori, Artavia, Vickie, Shad)

Commissioner McClendon provided an update on the Infrastructure Committee's meeting. The discussion focused on budgeting and ensuring clarity in budget requests. The committee has worked on creating a budget template to detail the specific needs and costs associated with their initiatives. The subcommittee discussed coalition building and outreach, possible contacts for pro bono legal assistance.

Commissioner Burluson reported on the budget subcommittee's budget discussions. They discussed

Identifying pre-existing revenue streams, such as parking meters or funds from casinos, which could potentially contribute to reparations initiatives. The funds could be redirected to help sustain long-term projects.

Safety/criminal justice

(Leo, Jesse, James, Carolyn)

Commissioner Johnson reported that the Safety subcommittee met two times since the last Reparations meeting, and they have a summary report.

Economic - housing, small businesses

(Brandon, Alan, Artavia, James)

Commissioner Sass reported that the Economic subcommittee did not meet but will schedule a meeting soon.

Health and Education

(Natasha, James, Shadrick, Shenita)

Commissioner Tripplett reported that the Health and Education subcommittee met, and the focus was on developing questions for future focus groups. Commissioner Knowles reported that he has contacts at the Alameda County Board of Education and Alameda Health, and he has volunteered to contact those individuals for the purpose of their subcommittee work.

VIII. **County Budget Process Overview – Informational Item** – continued to a future meeting.

IX. **Budget Funds Request – Action Item**

Liyu Woldmichael, District 5 staff, presented a landscape analysis covering various cities and their funding for reparations task forces, with funding ranging from \$200,000 to over \$2 million. The allocations varied based on factors like research, implementation, and community engagement. Asheville, NC allocated approximately \$325,000 for consultant services, focusing on community engagement, while Boston, MA set aside \$500,000 for research purposes. Some budgets were absorbed within departments or supported by foundations.

The commission discussed that the commission's proposed timeframe should align with the budget and the commission's goals.

A motion was made by Commissioner Johnson and seconded by Commissioner Sass, to approve the budget fund request of \$5 million for the work of the Reparations Commission.

Ayes: Bazile, Burleson, Cox, Dones, Gardiner, Gore-Mann, Hurskin, Johnson, Knowles, McClendon, Sass, Small, Tripplett

Noes:

Excused: Berry, Stephens

Motion passed 13/0

X. **Term Extension Update – Action Item**

A motion was made by Commissioner McClendon and seconded by Commissioner Bazile, to request to the Alameda County Ad Hoc Reparations Committee to extend the term of the Reparations Commission to June 30, 2026.

Ayes: Bazile, Burlleson, Cox, Dones, Gardiner, Gore-Mann, Hurskin, Johnson, Knowles, McClendon, Sass, Small, Triplett

Noes:

Excused: Berry, Stephens

Motion passed 13/0

XI. Allyship and partnership with academic institutions - Action Item

A motion was made by Commissioner Sass and seconded by Commissioner Hurskin, to approve the request to seek allyship and partnership with academic institutions for the work of the Reparations Commission.

Ayes: Bazile, Burlleson, Cox, Dones, Gore-Mann, Hurskin, Johnson, Knowles, McClendon, Sass, Small, Triplett

Noes:

Excused: Berry, Stephens, Gardiner

Motion passed 12/0

XII. Seeking Alameda County Department sponsor(s) to help guide the workload – Action Item

A motion was made by Commissioner Triplett and seconded by Commissioner Sass, to approve to seek Alameda County Department sponsor(s) to help guide the workload of the Reparations Commission.

Ayes: Bazile, Burlleson, Cox, Dones, Gardiner, Gore-Mann, Hurskin, Johnson, Knowles, McClendon, Sass, Small, Triplett

Noes:

Excused: Berry, Stephens, Knowles, Gardiner

Motion passed 11/0

XIII. Letter/Email request for all Alameda County Departments to share equity plans, research or action steps taken regarding Black Communities – Action Item

A motion was made by Commissioner Hurskin and seconded by Commissioner Sass, to approve a Letter/Email request for all Alameda County Departments to share equity plans, research or action steps taken regarding Black Communities.

Ayes: Bazile, Burlleson, Cox, Dones, Gardiner, Gore-Mann, Hurskin, Johnson, Knowles, McClendon, Sass, Small

Noes:

Excused: Berry, Stephens, Gardiner

Motion passed 12/0

ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 7:59 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for May 8, 2024.

Board of Supervisors' Committees agendas are available online at: www.acgov.org