



African American Equity Restoration Task Force

Community Empowerment

Regular Meeting

<http://knoxville.tn.gov>

~ Agenda ~

Monday, May 8th 2023

5:00 PM

Pellissippi Magnolia Campus

ORDER OF BUSINESS

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Tanisha Fitzgerald-Baker called the meeting to order at 5:08 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Present: Matthew Best, Tanisha Fitzgerald-Baker, Stanley Taylor, Deb Porter, George Underwood, Councilwoman Gwen McKenzie

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Monday, April 10, 2023

Motion to approve (McKenzie), 2nd (Best), passed on unanimous voice call vote

4. ANNOUNCEMENTS AND EXTRAORDINARY MATTERS

Porter announced that on 5/06, she graduated from Johnson with an MA in Ethics & Leadership

Fitzgerald-Baker reminded everyone of the East Knox Cleanup on 5/20 in the morning.

Best noted that on 5/20, there will be free ballet classes, a Black musical group, etc. at The Art for Change event at The Change Center.

McKenzie announced that on 6/06, there will be an unveiling of a street naming for Big John Tate at Lakeside with activities to follow including dinner and a movie.

Porter announced that on 6/17, there will be an Alex Haley event, and details will follow.

On 6/01, there will be a Visit Knoxville Open House.

5. STAFF REPORT

- a. East Knoxville Community Open House Summary
- b. Grant Report

-Toombs gave a report on the Community Connect Grant Program which provides financial assistance that will provide service at or above the Broadband Grant Speed to all premises in rural or economically challenged communities where broadband service does not exist. Category: business and commerce community development, regional development. She is figuring out what local organizations may be interested in having our support with this initiative. The award ceiling is \$5M, and the applications close on 6/20.

-Toombs also announced that Mayor Kincannon has announced her investment of \$300,000 to support the initiatives and investments of the AAERTF.

-Toombs is working with the National League of Cities Fellow for the Office of Financial Empowerment, Dennis Campa, who wants to help and participate during the strategy session in June.

-Toombs also said that she is gathering data for the State of Black Knoxville Report and that we are waiting to receive an update from the Atlanta Federal Reserve regarding a timeline for this project.

-Toombs also noted that Jordan the intern has compiled a report of her research for the main identified needs by the Knoxville Community; the top 3 are neighborhood development and recreation, health and wellness, and education and investment in Black businesses/Black business development. Page 2 breaks this down further.

6. COMMITTEE REPORTS

a. Executive

Strategic Session in June coming up. To be discussed during the strategic session: how often the committees meet. Other topics include:

Fitzgerald-Baker said that one outcome we need from the strategic session is to get a framework together.

McKenzie noted that we should review the community feedback and that community outreach and education is an important piece the AAERTF needs to address (i.e., E. Knoxville Greenway). Fitzgerald-Baker asked that this be added to the strategic session agenda. Toombs will list these by the topics in the report.

Toombs also noted that the Executive Committee created a running list of items and called for other TF members to email her if they have other suggestions.

Fitzgerald-Baker noted that in September, NLC is planning a visit to Knoxville, and she noted that we should have a meeting to discuss best practices, progress, etc.

Toombs noted that on 6/01 at Bearden Middle, there will be another community open house, and the TF will recreate what was done at the most recent open house which was successful on 4/11.

Fitzgerald-Baker noted that Emerald Youth has talked to the TF a few times and that the TF has discussed creating a letter of support. Underwood noted his reservations about this land potentially being used for affordable housing instead. McKenzie stated that developers have approached the City when they are interested in installing new housing, and as far as we know, this land has not been a subject of interest for affordable housing recently. Best noted that this project could lead to more economic development and act as a catalyst. There was a motion which came from the committee, so Fitzgerald-Baker called for a vote. This passed on a unanimous voice call vote. Fitzgerald-Baker asked Toombs to draft a letter and email it to the TF.

7. PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS

a. United Way, Kaki Reynolds (E. Tennessee Collaborative Director)

Presentation on the TANIF Opportunity Act (TOA), which is to spend down the \$700M of excess cash reserve that had accumulated. A Families First Community Advisory Board was created to help distribute the funds. UW of Greater Knoxville got \$250,000 through the Dept. of Human Services and the TOA. Goals are to reduce poverty, increase economic opportunity pathways, and enhance social supports in a relational and comprehensive, evidence-based approach. Buckets include supportive services for families (child care assistance, paying for a certification program to get a better job, etc.), goal action payments (small incentives families can earn when they achieve a goal), transitional benefit support (as people achieve success, they often can lose benefits; this support allows them to acclimate to the change of income), and emergency support (crisis/episode specific). Eligibility: have a child in the home, be a US citizen, basic needs are met (i.e. not homeless), must be willing and interested in pursuing self-sufficiency, etc. Hope is to enroll 600 families by 2024 (they started in February of this year and have about 94 families now). UW is committed to sustaining this project, even if funding runs out in the future. To see about getting enrolled in the program, there is an interest form online, referrals can go to partners, or people can email – there is a “no wrong door approach” here.

8. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT DISCUSSION (Report given by Fitzgerald-Baker)

a. (6/17) BECK Cultural Center- Racial Justice Town Hall

McKenzie noted that it would be good to have a presence here and to let Rev. Kessler know ahead of time.

b. (6/18) Rooted East- A Celebration Rooted in History (Botanical Garden)

c. (6/19) MLK Commission Juneteenth Parade

McKenzie noted that it would be good for the TF to participate in the parade and have people walk with a banner or in a car. Deb Porter said she would be happy to register the TF for the parade.

Fitzgerald-Baker asked the Committee to discuss how to best represent the TF at these events, what the TF presence looks like, etc.

9. PUBLIC FORUM

10. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn (Best), 2nd (Taylor), passed on unanimous voice call vote at 6:18 p.m.

Strategic Planning meeting in June – details to follow.

Next Meeting: July 10th 2023 at 5:00pm at Pellissippi State Community College- Magnolia Campus