



Commission on African American Affairs Public Meeting Minutes Friday, March 18, 2022 | 3:30 pm - 6:30 p.m. via Zoom

Commissioner Dorian Waller, Chair
Representing Pierce County

Commissioner Rev. Walter Kendricks,
Vice Chair
Representing Eastern Washington

Commissioner Andrea Caupain
Representing King County

Commissioner Michael Bailey
Representing King County

Commissioner LeRoy Laney III
Representing King County

Commissioner Joseph Todd
Representing South King County

Commissioner Zellynda Perkins
Representing Pierce County

Commissioner Yolanda Geolingo
Representing Thurston County

Commissioner Sheila Stanton
Representing King County

Executive Director Edward O. Prince

Members present: Chair Waller, Vice-chair Kendricks, Bailey, Perkins, Todd, Laney, Geolingo, Executive Director Edward Prince, Program Manager Charlotte Kerney, Executive Assistant Keahna Umpstead

Absent: Caupain-Sanderson, Stanton

3:30 pm – Meeting called to order by Chairperson Waller

3:35pm – Roll Call

3:40pm - Motion to accept meeting minutes by Chair Waller – Motion seconded by Vice-chair Kendricks.

Chairperson Waller called for vote to accept January 2022 Meeting Minutes

Voice vote – no objections. Motion carried. March 2022 commission meeting minutes approved.

3:45pm – Lieutenant Governor, Denny Heck, Presenting on the results of the Economic Competitiveness Report

- Results concluded under the legislative committee on Economic Development.
 - Committee is strictly bi-partisan and made up of three members from each caucus.
- This report was authorized to be contracted by the legislature during last year's legislative session.
- Committee contracted with Eco Northwest who acted as lead consultant for the study that developed this report.
- This is the first study of its kind in ten years.

Conclusion of the study found:

- As a State, Washington transitioned to the knowledge and tech economy very well.
- Household incomes gained vs. the national average, but inequality widened in the State.
- Housing has not kept pace with the population
- Businesses are struggling for labor and capital.

Conclusions from the study lead to focus groups including 16 organizations, 25 stake holders and 10 focus groups which led to the committee's summary findings:

- Infostructure gaps create barriers for participation in the economy for certain employers and employees.
- Lack of affordable housing is affecting recruitment and employment retention.
- The need for reliable broadband and technology literacy with the shift to a digital work environment.
- Better access to high quality education needed to lead to the opportunity to get into a high-quality job.
- Shift in economic priorities.

Conducted a survey with the Statewide Washington Economic Development Association of Economic Development Specialist and they found the following to be the barriers to quality growth:

- Housing and talent shortages
- Childcare
- Small business regulation
- Access to capital

Big 3 Ideas from the results of the Economic Completeness Report:

- Build more affordable housing of all types. (1)
- Equip the workforce with success by closing the skills gap. (2)
- Revitalize entrepreneurship and make it easier to do business. (3)

3:50pm - Big 3 breakdown:

1. Washington State has the fastest growing number of housing units per household of any state in the country.
 - There are always more homes than actual households because of vacation and second homes throughout the State.
 - Causes more people staying renters which leads to occupancy in rental units to go up along with cost. Leading to many people becoming rent burden and more and more people spending majority of their income on rent above the national average.
 - Principle driver, according to the Dept. of Commerce for the state's homelessness crisis.
 - Black homeownership is about half compared to white homeownership but in Washington State it is 11.5% lower than the national average.
 - Lowest percent out of Washington's peer states and 7th lowest Nationally.
 - Housing matters for economic development.
 - For every \$1 spent on construction of housing, \$.8 are spent on correlating activities. Such as home upgrades and move in finishing touches.
 - Helps to bridge the wealth disparity gap, homeownership is the number one net worth building tool for an average family.
2. Need about 200,000 skilled workers over the next 10 years to keep pace with job openings

3. Currently forming 30% fewer high quality growth potential businesses than a decade ago. (Businesses that have the potential to grow payroll over time)
 - Only about a third of the jobs in Washington State pay enough to support a family and their living expenses without the help from social programs.

3:50 pm – Burdens of regulation on business and development

- The Puget Sound area is the 4th most regulated region in terms of permitting land use in the nation.

3:55 pm- Discussion – Lt. Governor discusses what to do next based on the results from the Economic Competitiveness Report.

- Advocate for the measuring of the creation of quality jobs.
- Tracking the progress or non-progress of closing the racial wealth gap.
- Creation of more affordable housing of all kinds. Currently the state is 195,000 households short and continuing to fall behind.
- Equipping workers with the needed skills be successful in the workplace. This includes trade schools and training.
- Revitalizing entrepreneurship and providing more access to capital for small business and simplifying the regulatory requirements for these businesses.

4:05 pm – Chair Waller – What kinds of partnership opportunities do you see the commission being able to get into with the Lt. Governors Office and the Department of Commerce as well to get this knowledge out and begin doing this much needed work [highlighted by the report]?

Lt. Governor – By getting together with a coalition of other groups to begin discussion on how to develop a bill for next legislative session that would ask for the state to begin tracking the creation of quality jobs and steps to closing the wealth gap and ask for these progressions to be measured.

4:08pm – Discussion - A lot of these problems we see today began during the great recession and the state has simply not recovered. These problems will take multiple solutions to be resolved and not one single bill will resolve all big three ideas highlighted by this report. The assumption is that these three ideas will be split up and handled individually to come to an overall solution. And we need to recognize that this problem is so big that the public sector will not be able to solve them alone.

4:17pm- Executive Director Prince – What do you think we can do to get cities and towns to rethink how they do impact fees so that we can get more affordable housing?

Lt. Governor – Part of what could be done is allocating some funds to cities and towns to be used to pay some of these impact fees so that it isn't all coming directly out of the developers' pockets which leads to the much higher selling prices (for developers to make a profit).

4:23pm – State Representative Entenman – Delivering a legislative update

- Some major successes from Legislative Session:
 - 17-billion-dollar Transportation Package, with the goal to positively impact who the Department of Transportation contracts with for big projects by opening more contract opportunities for minority and women owned businesses. Something that has been lacking in the past.
 - Allowing interest rates for Washington State students taking out student loans to be 1%.
 - Opens the door for more financial help with the ability to pay these loans back faster than ever before.
 - Plans to be in affect by the year after next.

4:28pm – Corrections made to bills that were passed and enacted from last year’s Legislative Session

- Use of tactics bill around police accountability.
 - Clarifying that police could intervene when someone was in a mental health crisis and be forced to go into treatment.
 - Allows police to detain individuals when they believe that person has committed a crime.
 - Allows police to pursue people when they have committed a crime, because police were saying that this bill stated that they could no longer do so.
- Education bills led way to seeing several investments in early education and childcare.
 - There will be more money for learning providers by increasing the amount of money the State provides to families that need assistance to pay for childcare services. Making it easier for providers to provide more quality care and education to families in need.

4:34 pm – Rep. Entenman – Touches base on voting bills that were tabled this session

- Rank choice voting
- Initiative voting bill that would mean voting on initiatives would be done only every four years during a presidential election year rather than on off years to allow for a larger voting pool.

4:38pm – Commissioner Todd – Will students be able to use the 1% loan system to be able to go to alternative forms of education or is it just intended for four-year institutions?

Rep. Entenman – It is not just intended for four-year institutions. This is for any loan money that a student wishes to take out to attend a school in Washington State if that school is accredited.

4:40pm – Commissioner Todd – Why did there seem to be such a need to tweak the police accountability bills that really pushed police accountability this session? These bills seemed to be really good bills in the form they were in.

- Commissioner acknowledged that people within the communities were not liking the response police were having to these bills. Seemed that the officers lack of response to calls seemed purposeful to ultimately get these bills to be tweaked. But what was the real push/turning point to go about reforming them?

Rep. Entenman (Not speaking on behalf of the Caucus) – Looking at the efforts to reform policing not just in Washington State but also nationally. There is a push back from police and especially police unions. In Washington we have policing but also more than one police union and the legislature is only able to have an impact on the Washington State Patrol. All other local municipal city police departments are run by city councils and mayors. So, when looking at the changes made this year from the 2021 legislative session what happened is that police “de-policed”, they only worked to the letter of the law, and they did not go further. They then claimed that they needed clarification to be able to perform their jobs and stated that the members of the legislature were writing bad bills that made it so that they could not do their job. Bills were clarified this session because of the impact that the police decision of de-policing and not responding to calls was having on our communities.

- All these bills in question however, had been worked on in conjunction with the Washington Supreme Court and the Attorney Generals Office which means these bills were vetted by them, as is any bill. Any bill that is seen as a “bad bill” or unconstitutional would have been stopped and sent back by the Washington State Supreme Court and not allowed to be passed.

4:45 pm – Bill 1202 – Handles tort reform regarding police accountability and would be fundamental to how we perform legal duties when it comes to the ability to sue police officers who work for a city or county.

- If we truly want community policing the immunity need to be removed.
- Could not make it out of committee for second legislative session in a row.

4:51 pm- Discussion – The need to acknowledge that it is not one thing but a system of things making it hard for people and for the black community specifically. The legislature is trying to undo 400 years of oppression and that cannot be done in one legislative session. There are currently 60 bills that need to be passed on police reform alone. This is a process that could take lifetimes.

5:00pm- Brian Boudet – Presenting on the Home in Tacoma Project/Initiative

- The initiative is to help with the reform of the zoning and land use resolutions in the City of Tacoma.
- Being used to get the City of Tacoma to rethink its overarching housing strategy.

5:07 pm – Things the city is doing to support this initiative.

- Putting together an equity index to help combat historical implications of red lining in Tacoma.
 - Identifying the multi-generational impact.
 - Identifying social determinants of wealth and opportunity.
- Putting together an equity task force to look at the relationship between housing policies and race and equity issues.
- Goal is to support the need for increased housing supply, choice, and affordability.
 - Currently the city's growth strategy is to have majority of Tacoma's residential areas be reserved exclusively for single family homes, which is the least affordable home option.

5:15 pm – Key Components of the Tacoma Housing Initiative

- Increasing housing supply and affordability.
- Recognizing housing is a basic human need.
- Creating inclusive neighborhoods to increase access to opportunity.
 - Small single family, duplexes, fourplexes, etc. not just single-family home structures.

5:20pm – Phase 2 is the zoning implantation part of this initiative and will run through 2023.

- Looks at changing zoning in Tacoma along with design standards, affordability tools, and anti-displacement measures throughout the city.

5:26pm- Chair Waller – Where do African Americans fit into this plan?

Brian Boudet – Tacoma is more diverse than a lot of communities around it. Where the state has 4-5% African American Population, Tacoma’s population is about 11% and the white population in Tacoma compared to the rest of the state is about 10% lower. The city is trying to make sure every policy is made based on equity and with the focus of broadening and increasing opportunity throughout the city.

5:27pm – Vice-Chair Kendricks – Is the city of Tacoma doing anything as far as gentrification of current homeowners in the various areas of Tacoma?

Brian Boudet – Gentrification causes problems because it comes with community advancement but often also community displacement. Which is the challenge in front of the city by trying to find ways to put together an anti-displacement strategy.

5:30pm – Vice Chair Kendricks – People are priced out of almost all the current new condos developed in Tacoma. Are there plans to address this issue in the current plan?

Brian Boudet – In phase one the city of Tacoma has used the family tax exemption program, a program that gives builders a larger tax break, but now the city has gone a step further by saying this exemption only goes to those builders who include affordable housing options.

5:35pm – Commissioner Todd – As the city does the incentive program is there a focus on the number of units that the development must have to get the tax break?

Brian Boudet – The tax incentive works on a percentage of units; in Tacoma the developer must have 20% of their homes be affordable units. So, the bigger the project the more affordable units there must be.

5:40pm – Paul Bitar – Commission on African American Affairs (CAAA) Budget Conversation

5:45pm – Funds allocated to the Commission during this Legislative Session for two studies.

- Black community Health Needs Assessment.
 - To be conducted and results reported back to the legislature by June 30th, 2023.
 - Report will be conducted by a private contractor of the Commissions choice.

- Funding will be split between the remainder of this fiscal year ending on June 20th, 2022, and the upcoming fiscal year.
- Education and Opportunity Gap Report
 - Working in partnership with the office of Equity.
 - Commission on Hispanic Affairs (CHA) and Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs (CAPAA) and The Governors Office of Indian Affairs also received this funding to perform the research within their communities.
 - The purpose of the assessment is for CAAA to conduct analysis on the education and opportunity gap among black students and develop recommendations and performance measures to monitor progress.

6:00pm – Discussion – Overview of CAAA budget and spending projections along with when the Commission can expect funds to be allocated for the coming fiscal year. Breakdown of yearly costs to allow the Commission to operate as an agency.

6:18pm – Public Comment – No public comment.

6:20pm – Closing Comments from Commission – Reminder that first in person meeting since COVID will be on Friday, May 20th in Spokane, WA.

6:30pm – Meeting Adjourned