North Carolina Commission on Inclusion

Wednesday, May 20, 2020
10:00am – 12:00pm
Virtual Microsoft Teams Meeting with a Call in Option
(This meeting was recorded and said recording is available upon request.)

MINUTES

Members Present: Secretary Sanders, Pat Martinez, Emily Turner, Paula Kohut, Christy Smith-Foster, Alesha Hunt, Jenny Black, Barbara Rimer, Lydia Lavelle, Cecelia Surratt, Michelle Fullerton, Cristal Figueroa

Government Staff Present: Emily Roach, Catherine Rivera, Betty Marrow-Taylor, Marqueta Welton, Mark Edwards, Laura Ammons, Michael Sprayberry, Tammie Hall, Bob Coats, Kristen Kincade-Coats

Guests and Present: Matty Lazo-Chadderton, Thomas Stith

Welcome/Call to Order

Secretary Sanders called the meeting to order and welcomed the commission members and guests. She noted that in times of crisis we are always reminded of the importance of diversity and inclusion and our commitment to our mission.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Secretary Sanders opened the floor for motions on two sets of meeting minutes: Minutes from the November 20, 2019 meeting and the February 19, 2020 meeting.

Pat Martinez moved that the commission approve both sets of minutes. Jenny Black seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the minutes were unanimously approved.

Acknowledgement of New Members

Machelle Sanders, Secretary, NC Department of Administration

Secretary Sanders presented the three new members of the commission: Aleisha Hunt, Henry Cruz-Reyes (not present) and Cristal Figueroa

Ms. Hunt introduced herself. She is employed at Eastern Carolina University and has been working in higher education for 14 years. She is originally from Robeson County and is Native American. She is excited to join the commission and its work.
Virtual Meeting Norms

Commissioner Pat Martinez

Secretary Sanders turned the floor over to the Commission Parliamentarian, Pat Martinez, who gave some reminders and tips to the commission regarding media norms and virtual protocols:

- She reminded attendees that the new norm of teleconferencing is more intimate than traditional meetings, meaning everything is up close and personal. People can see and hear everything you do.
- She asked that people use mute and turn off their screen as needed if they need to step away from the space.
- She reminded people to look into the camera when speaking and reiterated the importance of eye contact to teleconferencing.
- She recommended members look at the excellent tips provided by Catherine Rivera.

Roll Call

Catherine Rivera conducted a roll call of the members, reflected in the attendance list above.

Opening Remarks/Objective for the Day

Secretary Machelle Sanders

Secretary Sanders announced the meeting objective: Identify issues of equity during Covid-19 and make recommendations for resolving them.

She welcomed the experts who are guests today who will inform and feed the commission’s brainstorming.

Secretary Sanders acknowledged all those devastated by pandemic and all those who have lost friends and family. She lifted up that this time has seen a change in how we work and provided insight on weaknesses in our system we can work to change. It has also highlighted historic disparities. African-American and Latino communities have been hit particularly devastated by the pandemic. She also acknowledged that Covid-19 knows no boundaries. It affects us all and it will take us all to get through it. Gov Cooper has been working closely with Dr. Cohen and the administration to work on a scientific plan that appropriately balances the public health and economic concerns. She lauded the governor for his leadership.

The Secretary noted the totality of the impact of this non-stop situation, not only physical, but emotional and spirituality.

The Secretary exhorted everyone to remember and follow the safety guidelines as we look to move from Phase I to Phase II.
Director Sprayberry thanked the Secretary. He highlighted the commitment to be intentional about reaching out to HUBs when contracting for Covid-19 related needs. He also noted that for people who don’t historically have access to good health insurance and health care are affected disproportionately, which underscores the need for expanding Medicaid.

This week the state started off with Tropical Storm. While it just grazed the coast, there are swift water rescue boats in Western North Carolina. The shelters being provided for people in disaster are non-congregate shelter situations. One challenge is how to provide this in a larger event.

Day 72 of this operation and 19,700 lab confirmed cases. 585 folks in the hospital. 691 deaths. So there are around 700 families in our state who are in mourning. All the data can be found on the DHHS COVID-19 dashboard. The website also provides testing locations.

FEMA has extended funding for non-congregate shelter for people without a place to quarantine which covers many people from homeless people to medical workers.

The office is also engaged in buying 14 days worth of PPE for long-term care facilities across the state. This has been a large operation.

Another operation is helping provide food for people, particularly children who no longer attend school. They have provided over 18 million meals. Food banks are crucial and Director Sprayberry asks everyone to donate food and visit feedingthecarolinas.org and share with everyone. USDA has also approved some waiver extensions for child nutrition programs.

The state has formed a food supply chain workgroup as well led by a Brigadier General. They meet with the Restaurant Association and different food supply sources. There have been constrictions and disruptions. All meat processors are open now except for one Tyson plant in Wilkesboro. There are guidelines on DHHS website for food and farm workers.

The disability integration specialist Sherry Badger works every day to ensure that people with disabilities in NC are included in the planning. They have Spanish interpreters at state EOC to ensure that language need is met and have their documents translated as well.

State is providing wifi hotspots in rural areas to help students participate in their education.

Director Sprayberry also reminded everyone to Wear, Wait, Wash and to tune in at 5pm to the press conference with Governor Cooper and Doctor Cohen. He thanked the commission members and stressed the importance of diversity and inclusion for a more effective state and for better agencies.

Questions

Pat Martinez: In Charlotte they have been having problems with hotels and rentals for shelter for people who are infected. Is the FEMA shelter discussed available for these people?

Director Sprayberry: It’s not folks who are infected. It’s those who are at high risk, or may be quarantined.
Christy Smith-Foster: Asked if he indicated FEMA pays 25% of that?

Director Sprayberry: It’s 75% paid by federal government and 25% by state. It’s for people at high risk with unstable housing and also medical responders.

Lydia Lavelle: As mayor of Carrboro she thanked the director for all his work and leadership. She has assisted the emergency planning calls and for people who don’t do this daily, it has certainly been a learning curve. She also commented that having the MAC team set up to operate with out all the other elected officials involved has been a new experience.

Director Sprayberry: He thanked Mayor Lavelle for her comments and leadership on this issue and complimented here team.

**Thomas A. Stith III, NC District Director, U.S. Small Business Administration**

**Small Business Administration Presentation**

*(Slides available online)*

Dir. Stith thanked the Secretary and Dir. Hall.

Small businesses are a critical part of our economy across the state. Here in NC, there are natural disasters. SBA also responds in these cases of disaster. The SBA, on Mar. 18, US SBA declared NC a disaster beginning the formal response.

- Paycheck Protection Program (forgivable)
  - Initial funding 340 Billion dollars
  - Round two several modifications to ensure small lenders participate, including minority institutions

- Small Business Debt Relief (6 mos)

- Economic Injury Disaster Loans (forgivable)

Director Stith provided the most updated data for the PPP, which shows in phase two stronger participation from smaller and more diverse businesses and nonprofits.

Director Stith also shared data regarding EIDLs in North Carolina. 77,000 advances approved for 263 million dollars. These are direct applications to SBA.

D. Stith noted that the business centers are available working virtually to help small businesses and provide technical support.

He thanked the commission and reiterated the SBA’s commitment to servicing small businesses, with a commitment to minority and historically underutilized businesses, during this time.

**Questions**

Cristal Figueroa: What about SB owners who have filed for bankruptcies in the past, especially chapter 11s?

Stith: In general, would still ask for those small businesses to review PPP and if have applied to EIDL to continue in that process. Some of this may come down to timeline. They can either contact SBA directly or a resource center to get assistance with their particular situation.
**Tammie Hall, Director, Office for Historically Underutilized Businesses**  
**HUB Presentation**

Dir. Hall thanked the secretary and the commission. She also thanked Dir. Stith and celebrated the great relationship between HUB and SBA.

Mid-March, the office conducted a survey to begin to understand needs and plan ahead in Covid-19. Professional services were seeing the worst impact. Construction was continuing near normal. The survey also showed that the businesses would need help understanding SBA Guidance. So the office reached out to SBA to collaborate.

They conducted one webinar and realized there was a significant need for more. They did them every week once a week for HUBs. The response from the community had been excellent.

They also realized they needed to bring the Dept of Commerce along to also explain unemployment issues and CARES Act funding.

The office served as the conduit to educating the community. The first funding round from SBA there were some challenges with businesses getting access. But, now many of the businesses are accessing that funding on the second round given the new parameters allowing for CDFI institutions and nontraditional lending systems, like PayPal, etc.

The office took on the task of going live with the farming community when the expanded access to funding for the agricultural businesses was implemented. This was the first live session in conjunction with DOA and SBA as well as in partnership with Gov’s office and NC A&T and the cooperative extension branches. The goal was to disseminate the information as widely as possible.

Another initiative has been to connect HUBs that can provide PPE to DHHS, as well as working on new contact tracing contracts.

The office has seen certifications increase and have also followed the request to streamline processes. Working with all departments to turn around a very speedy certification for the applicants.

*Secretary Sanders thanked both directors for their service.*

**Bob Coats, Governor’s Census Liaison, Office of State Budget Management**  
**Kristen Kincade-Coats, NC Complete Count Commission Liaison**  
**2020 Census and COVID-19 Presentation**  
*(Slides available online)*

Coats acknowledged that our leadership in this state has been the silver lining in this pandemic. Given the new normal, its nice to know that the Census remains constant.

He would provide a quick update as the census is still happening.

Timeline has changed but importance has not. The overall process has also remained the same.

The easiest way to participate and be safe is to respond at home. This is the first census to allow internet responses. You can also respond by phone or using the paper mailers. A quick response is the best way to keep social distance and safety.
Coats overviewed changes to the timeline, including what dates remain the same and what changed. After explaining the changes, he also noted that depending on how the pandemic proceeds these timelines can continue to change.

He shared the website [https://www.census.gov/newsroom.html](https://www.census.gov/newsroom.html) for people to get updates on the census and timeline.

He next gave an update on Group Quarters timelines. Group Quarters are places where people live in group settings away from their normal home, like college, military barracks and prisons as well service-based enumeration which attempts to count people who are homeless by going to where they are served, and enumeration of transitory populations.

Census data is important for disaster response. It helps those in charge understand where and how to deploy resources. This means you can help your community by reing both resources and good data.

As of the 18th, the response rate is 55.8 percent for North Carolina. This lags a bit behind the national average, but it is showing improvement.


Kristen Kincade Coats stepped in to give update on how to continue outreach in the Covid environment.

The “I counted 2020” window sign is available to help spread awareness. There is also a coloring sheet version. It is available at

Outreach is crucial. Even a 3% undercount can cost billions and have a disastrous impact on vulnerable communities. About 1800 per person per year is provided because of the census. This is even more crucial during recovery.

We know that one major gap is lack of internat access. The Dept of Information Technologies has an interactive website on its map that shows everyone where they can go to get free wifi.

These are covid-safe opportunities, you pull into a parking lot, park and access wifi.

Low tech options will have the largest impact for these populations, and she shared some strategies for doing that, including using local media and phone banks.

The toll free phone lines have many languages available for those who want to fill out the census by phone in a language other than English. It can be accessed at the website my2020census.gov.

Resources for promoting the census were compiled and shared with the commission members including the NC Census Outreach and Engagement Toolkit available at [www.census.nc.gov](http://www.census.nc.gov).

“Ten minutes will shape your future for ten years.” #makeNCcount

**Questions**

Pat Martinez: She asked what was being done at this time to put things in place so that when 2030 arrives that people realize the importance of the census? Is this being shared in the schools? What lessons have been leaned now to be put in place for the future?
Bob Coats: There is a program called “Statistics in Schools” with lesson plans and other resources. They are available always and have targeted resources for each grade. What we don’t really know is there are about 700k households in NC without internet and we need to keep those people in our future planning.

We have been growing about 100k a year in NC so the census is crucial to continue to meet the needs of that rapidly changing population. Every year we can carry that message to the front to prepare for 2030.

**Recommendation Brainstorming**

*Emily Roach set forth the recommendation questions and announced a break.*

*At 11:50 the meeting reconvened to discuss the following two questions.* The discussion only briefly reached question 1 due to time constraints (see below for discussion). Each subcommittee was tasked with holding a meeting to discuss the questions and formulate a recommendation to be communicated to Catherine Rivera, along with meeting notes, by the end of June. When each subcommittee settles on a date for its meeting, it should also communicate that date to Catherine.

1. **What issues has the Covid-19 crisis highlighted when it comes to diversity and inclusion in times of emergency?**

   *Lydia Lavelle: Her experience in MAC meetings reflected that the crisis amplified the inequities for vulnerable communities that are experiencing disproportionate suffering. One example she gave was that in their local emergency loan program they were intentional about reaching out to more marginalized communities and businesses to get applications for the program. The recovery must also have intentional outreach.*

   *Christy Smith-Foster: She agreed that vulnerable populations are now experiencing heightened harms in a variety of arenas because of their inability to access resources, including people experiencing domestic violence. She noted health disparities.*

   *Cristal Figueroa: She shared that the major issue she has seen is that corporations and agencies that are continuing operations without access to PPE, increased wages, or contact tracing. She noted a lack of effort to protect workers. Even before Covid-19, service workers, farm workers, immigrant workers and others were seen as not deserving a living wage. Now, those problems are exacerbated.*

   *Barbara Rimer: She echoed what was said by others. Especially Lydia’s comment about amplification, particularly in health access. She shared the experience of one MPH applicant who had written a heartbreaking letter to the school about his father’s recent suicide, which appeared to be related to unemployment, leaving his mother, a nurse as the sole financial provider for his family. The school was able to provide him with more financial assistance, but the anecdote makes real the devastation that already struggling populations are facing.*
2. What is already being done to create inclusivity during this crisis? What can we do to improve the practices that are already being implemented?

Barbara Rimer: The training the Commission recommended is now more important than ever, but it should include anti-racism training. People must come to understand our NC history and how that affects the present. We who are white and, therefore, privileged, must accept responsibility for the ways we consciously or unconsciously contribute to racism. At our school, we have a few hundred people registered for several sessions of the Racial Equity Institute’s Groundwater Training this month. It can be done online so it is much more accessible than the overnight training. It would be great for us to hear about what has been implemented from our recommendations so that we could provide feedback about what could be done next. Also, the efforts to increase use of minority businesses in contracting may get more traction in light of Black Lives Matter issues. Our associate dean for finance decided to take this on and actively engage some of those businesses. It is the kind of thing that could be transformative, and I believe we have reached the tipping point on some of these issues, where people who were not motivated to act before may be willing now.

Paula Kohut: When the PPP program came out, Paula reached out to DOA. She had heard that it was a friends and family program for the well connected with bankers. A lot of work trying to be done in DC to remedy that. She suggested giving Tammie Hall greater resources to try and figure out ways to reach out to minority and low income communities whether it is a senior center for minority businesses or a group of volunteers that come in. One reason Paula’s firm was able to get a loan is because they are lawyers and they know how to fill out the form. Suggests giving resources to help people figure out how to fill out the PPP form. Paula also stated that the fear of disclosing that you are COVID positive is reminiscent of AIDS crisis. She suggested that unemployment benefits be provided to people who have these short term health related furloughs because most law businesses are exempt from having to provide pay leave.

Cristal Figueroa: Our healthcare shouldn’t be tied to our jobs. Is there a way we can create an unemployment if someone resigns due to medical conditions? This is an excellent opportunity to call again for the expansion of Medicaid and call for a $15 minimum wage.

Announcements/Updates
Secretary Machelle Sanders opened the floor for announcements.

Betty Marrow-Taylor invited attendees to the Office of the Governor’s eighth COVID-19 Latinx conference call. The calls occur weekly on Thursday at 1pm and this week will focus on COVID-19 impact on Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault and Human Trafficking. The invitation will be shared with commissioners.

Emily Roach shared an update about action that was taken as a result of Commission recommendations regarding diversity and inclusion. The DOA’s HR department is piloting a diversity training series on a range of topics including race, cultural competence and communication. After implementation, it will be shared with other agencies.

Secretary Sanders shared that the next meeting date will be October 14th.
Meeting Adjourned
Secretary Sanders thanked the commission members, the presenters and attendants for all they do and exhorted them to maintain safety measures and a commitment to the work.

She opened the floor for motions on adjournment. Aleshia Hunt moved to adjourn. Paula Kohut seconded the motion. The vote passed unanimously and the Secretary adjourned the meeting.