

Minutes, TRC meeting #4, Carlisle Borough Hall, July 6, 2021

Co-chair Emily Kelahan called the meeting to order at 6:00pm. All members responded to a roll call as present: Raff Donelson, Kendall Isaac, Tristan Milazzo, Andrew Razanauskas, Dorene Wilbur, Emily Kelahan (co-chair), and TaWanda Stallworth (co-chair). Ms. Stallworth was not physically present, but participated via Zoom, as did Jeff Stuby, a member of Borough Council. Others present in person were Stephanie Taylor, Carlisle Borough Public Communication Coordinator, and Fred Baldwin, TRC Secretary.

Minutes of the TRC's meeting of June 21 were approved by a unanimous voice vote. Motion to approve by Mr. Isaac, seconded by Mr. Donelson.

Ms. Kelahan began by reminding members that the TRC would have to make difficult choices among competing issue, all arguably important. She asked if TRC members wished to discuss TRC priorities that had been identified at prior meetings. Receiving no comments, she asked Mr. Donelson to begin a discussion of the TRC's proposed Action Plan.

Mr. Donelson suggested that the most basic decision of the TRC may be a choice between two possible main thrusts: "truth-telling" vs. "policy." That is, should the TRC put substantial emphasis on hearing and compiling community stories related to its broad mission – with minimal prior effort to tighten its focus on specific issues? Or should the TRC promptly focus on identifying and evaluating possible remedies to some of the many problems of racial injustice that have already been identified?

Whichever overall focus is chosen, Mr. Donelson added, the TRC will still face at least three operational questions: How many topics can it take on? Which topics should receive most attention? How should those topics be explored and analyzed?

The subsequent discussion included the following comments (summarized below in no particular order).

- One option would be to spend approximately three months listening to community concerns. This would demonstrate the TRC's determination to be accountable to the community. (Several members endorsed variants of this perspective.)
- One possible problem with that focus might be the difficulty in identifying community groups with which to talk. It might also involve duplication of effort.
- The TRC already has a substantial body of statistical data documenting race-based inequalities and injustice. It should make maximum use that that from the outset. (In response to questions, Mr. Stuby indicated that it should be possible to provide the TRC with data used in Deputy Mayor Shultz's statement to the TRC, probably augmented by data previously compiled by the Human Relations Commission.)
- The Cumberland County Historical Society can provide access to an extensive body of information – not merely from the present but from both the distant past and the relatively recent past. "Listening" need not be synonymous with new interviews.

- Most previously developed elements of the proposed Mission Statement focus on truth-telling. New policy issues can be added as identified.
- With either approach, a critical decision will be how to divide the labor. TRC members should expect to be identified by name with responsibility for focusing on whatever areas of emphasis are chosen.

The consensus, as summarized by Ms. Kelahan, was to focus as soon as possible on topic areas already identified as priorities.

TRC members also discussed the level of detail appropriate for its work statement to Borough Council. The metaphor most frequently invoked was borrowed from academia: a course description (relatively broad-brush) or a syllabus (relatively detailed). The consensus appeared to be that the initial submission to Borough Council should be nearer the “course description” end of the spectrum.

Ms. Kelahan indicated that Ms. Stallworth wished to suggest some preliminary consideration of an issue related to a pending decision on a probable merger between two existing local organizations, each formed to address issues of racial justice. Ms. Stallworth expressed concern that the ultimate decision – with implications for Borough funding – may well reflect “structural racism” by failing to fully recognize the need for Black control of a group whose target clientele is predominately Black. Ms. Wilbur, who serves on the board of one of the organizations, responded that the issues involved are complicated and can be addressed more systematically in other forums. The consensus was that the TRC should not be drawn into playing an advocacy role on behalf of any specific organization. The TRC may, however, find it appropriate to review how the Borough defines and implements its funding policies as they apply to community-based organization.

Before moving to the two main decision items on the meeting, Ms. Kelahan invited public comments. There were none.

Adoption of by-laws. Motion to approve by Mr. Donelson, seconded by Ms. Wilbur.
Unanimously approved by voice vote.

Adoption of mission statement. Motion to approve by Ms. Wilbur, seconded by Mr. Isaac.
Unanimously approved by voice vote.

Ms. Kelahan indicated that the next TRC meeting will be hold on July 19 at Borough Hall. The meeting adjourned at 7:28pm.