

Joint Advisory Committee Meeting

December 11, 2020 - 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Virtual Meeting (Zoom)

Meeting Minutes

<u>MSWMAC Members</u>	
Joan Nelson	Auburn
Beth Mountsier	Bellevue
Erin Leonhart	Bothell
Emily Warnock	Bothell
Chris Searcy	Enumclaw
Rob Van Orsow	Federal Way
Tony Donati	Kent
Julie Underwood	Kirkland
Jenna McInnis	Kirkland
Penny Sweet—Chair	Kirkland
Amy Shaw	Maple Valley
Jeff Brauns	Newcastle
Earnest Thompson	Normandy Park
Eberley Barragan	Redmond
Aaron Moldver	Redmond
Linda Knight – Vice Chair	Renton
Mason Giem	SeaTac
Cameron Reed	Shoreline
Diana Hart	Woodinville

<u>SWAC Members</u>
April Atwood
Gib Dammann
Kevin Kelly
Ken Marshall
Heather Trim
<u>King County Staff</u>
Ericka Cox, Office of ESJ
Jenny Devlin, SWD
Pat McLaughlin, SWD Director
Dorian Waller, SWD

Call to Order and Introductions

The meeting commenced with a round of introductions of committee members.

Meeting Minutes

Since this was a joint advisory committee meeting, no minutes were reviewed or approved.

King County Equity and Social Justice Presentation

Ericka Cox, from King County’s [Office of Equity and Social Justice](#), delivered a 50-minute presentation on how King County works to advance equity and social justice (ESJ) for all people in King County (KC). The office assesses how to approach the work so that it makes sense within King County to ensure it applies to where we are and who we serve.

Cox began her presentation with a slide with a graphic illustration of a tree depicting the 14 determinants of equity in KC. The determinants and the graphic are not new to KC employees since this was an effort that started roughly in 2006 – 2007, starting with former county executive Ron Sims when employees started seeing disturbing pattern of inequities. These 14 determinants are where we touch people’s lives through KC government. The list is very integrative, and no one would want to live without any one of them. They represent a 360-degree integrative view of a life, a family, a community.

Cox said the people in KC who were responsible for each of these functions of government were seeing a disturbing consistency of outcomes based on where people lived and their race. Many of them urged Sims to take a look at the data. Meanwhile, not unique to KC, or Washington, but a number of jurisdictions were getting preoccupied with what was happening to black and brown men, young men, and boys. Our work in 2007 was influenced by Ron Dellums' report of determinants of health and health outcomes in Oakland CA.

Cox said KC uses [American Community Survey](#) data to fill in the gaps of data between census years, but it was expected the new census data will show a shifting of people of color (POC) moving out of KC, south to Pierce and Thurston, and to the north. Based on a map on a slide, areas of low income show lower life expectancy, which also corresponds to race. She said, until we can no longer predict life expectancy based on race, we have not achieved equity.

Cox showed a number of slides with maps of KC showing measures of well-being such as poverty rates, access to green space and transportation, air quality and food security. Trim asked why the maps were Seattle-centric and asked if maps showing the rest of the county were in development. Cox said the county is working on it, and it is a matter of data collection. She noted the demographer who worked out of the executive's office recently retired after more than 30 years of service and the position has not yet been filled. In the meantime, the county is relying more on place-based surveys to fill gaps in data.

Then Cox played a 2007 KC video entitled [Leading with Racial Justice](#). The mandate for racial and social equity remains unchanged and clear. Cox said that while it is great for employees and members of these committees if the social justice work we do at KC matches their personal values, but that's not the point: it's what the data tells us what we need to do because the discrepancies of health determinant between races is not organic not the natural order of things. It is the result of decades and centuries of where we have made investments and where we have not. It's how racism has shaped institutions and outcomes for people. She noted for POC, it's traumatizing to see this data. She said the deficits are inherent by the design.

Cox then presented a definition of inequity as differences in well-being that are systemic, patterned and not random. The differences disadvantage an individual or group in favor of another, specifically to benefit white people at expense of POC. It's the reality that we are in. She notes this is not about guilt or shame, it's about being real about the data and historical legacy.

Equity is about investing where needs are greatest. Cox acknowledges we have a history that shows investing has been made elsewhere, making it so people are not situated the same. She said we need intervene and look at where needs are greatest.

King County has an [ESJ Strategic Plan 2016 – 2022](#) that is was very inclusive in data collection when it was drafted. It was written by a small group of employees who spoke to over 100 community-based organizations (CBOs) and over 500 KC employees. The Office of ESJ still stands by theory of change written about in the plan.

Cox presented a graphic illustration showing “the unhealthy stream” of how policies, practices, systems influence conditions that occur at the community level and outcomes on an individual level. The theory of change involves making intentional efforts to change policies, practices, and systems to lead to more pro-equity outcomes.

A “healthy stream” graphic illustrates how investing upstream where needs are greatest can positively influence outcomes. Our system will continue to do what it was designed to do unless we change it at a systems' level. These are KC's primary strategies investing in community partnerships, and in employees, with

accountable and transparent leadership. By working with CBOs, KC gets better access to data about communities. By working with employees, KC learns about their experiences regarding hiring and promotions so we can establish standards and get our own house in order with respect to ESJ. Our leaders at every level must be accountable to this work.

Cox showed historic redline maps of Seattle. Redlining was a practice in the early 20th century to force people to live in certain neighborhoods and preventing them from living in other areas. It was done with a lot of imagination with a lot of tools such as discriminatory lending, blockbusting, realtor code of ethics, wall/borders, block clubs, and racial real estate covenants. The federal Fair Housing Authority in 1934 and it took private and public interests working together to pull this off so people wouldn't be able to qualify for loans. She noted this practice was not unique to Seattle, as Atlanta's traffic patterns demonstrate urban planning built around this kind of segregation.

In KC, those racialized covenants were recorded by the county recorder, who may or may not have supported the intent behind the documents, but still enabled the practices to be codified, said Cox. This is an example of where there is a system of collusion where employees can be part of a system of practices that produces and perpetuates those outcomes. Cox showed another map illustrating where racial covenants are still in place. Today, people can work with KC to modify restrictive covenants. She said, this isn't about individual level of prejudice; this is about impacts which is important when we think about our own work where we are not responsible for these outcomes, but we are responsible to them.

About a decade ago, Cox said, KC wanted to do the right thing regarding the high rate of black and brown youth held in detention. After implementing some changes, the numbers went down overall. But ESJ was nascent and there was no intentionality with respect to the criminal justice system. With no ESJ lens, the biggest beneficiaries of reductions in youth detention were white youth. She said the negative impact was still affecting black and brown youth who were being detained in greater numbers for same crimes and behaviors as white youth. It's a cautionary tale KC has taken to heart in its current ESJ work.

Cox said KC is doing better now, for example, with the creation of the [Open Space Equity Cabinet](#), a group of community members who spent nine months working with DNR leadership to change where KC is investing in green space since historically, KC invested large amounts of money in areas that are more white and affluent than other areas. This work will change how KC invests millions of dollars over the next 10-20 years. Metro Mobility is another example of this work.

Cox shared the news of an announcement made just yesterday, that the county was forming a [countywide equity cabinet](#). Like SWD's advisory committees, this is a partnership and co-creation approach that works when it's taken seriously.

Another example of KC making intentional steps to improve equity impacts is the creation of the [food safety ratings](#) that are displayed in every restaurant in KC. Cox said since our food safety standards have been historically derived from a western perspective, they did not include cultural wisdom from other countries about food handling and preparation. For a lot of small business owners who could be immigrants, our western standards might be too stringent. An equity impact review in this case involved recognizing that we needed to talk to those business owners, pause, and elongate the process of making these policies so we take time to do it right.

Another example Cox highlighted was the redesign of the parent child health/public health centers that came about due to analysis of data that showed that new POC moms in particular were not taking advantage of

prenatal support. She said it was because they could not get to where the resources were held. So, they made mobile units to better ensure universal access for every new mom and children aged 0-5 in KC to have post-natal care and support. Public Health fundamentally restructured their outreach and service to better meet the needs of KC's communities.

Cox closed her presentation with a point that on some level, there is an element of pride in this region that there wasn't a legacy of slavery here. But it is important to note that part of the reason the white settlers of the Oregon Territory, which included the land that became Washington State, did not want slavery was because they did not want black people in the territory at all. When Oregon gained statehood, it was only free state to have black-exclusion provision. Cox notes her grandmother, who influenced her greatly in her childhood, was born in 1915 and Washington State gained statehood in 1889. So, while statehood seems like it might have occurred long ago, there are people alive today who are touched by the influence of people who had to live under codified racism. The impacts of that racism did not vanish; it did not just go away. Cox said the outcomes and impacts are very much with us today.

Waller asked the committees to consider three questions as a matter of continued discussion.

Discussion Area 1

Prior to today, what were your own definitions of equity and/social justice? Have they altered in any way based on the info today? How?

Knight said she has benefitted of learning along with KC staff involved with the Hazardous Waste Program about ESJ priorities and the ESJ journey KC has taken. She said it feels great to have had a lot of teachings, lessons, learning, and the conversations. She notes her kids went to a south-end Seattle elementary school that did a lot of work with parents about ESJ. Knight said she is interested in how this committee can further the mission of the county to expand the knowledge and bring to forefront in discussions about policy and projects. She said the upcoming conversation about rate restructure has a room for this.

Sweet says this conversation has started a million times in her lifetime. She said she had read the ESJ Strategic Plan and says it is a beautiful document. She said this is one of those things where stuff is finally sticking to the wall. She said her council and city have been actively working on these issues since 2016 because of episodes in the city. She noted that all city employees have been through bias training and have had long conversations about these topics. Sweet said she is associated with other leaders on the eastside who recently held a facilitated three-day forum working on equity and bias. Sweet says this topic is not new to her, but the way Cox laid out it out today felt very real. Sweet said she grew up in Laurelhurst where they had those covenants, and it was a very white neighborhood. She said while you say don't feel guilt, but you have got to feel a little. Sweet said this is a step toward healing and thanked Cox for her presentation.

Thompson said he wanted to be sure to understand the fundamental basis of Cox's thesis and asked if it was true that the inequalities we experience in our society are fundamentally based on white supremacy and racism?

Cox says she struggles with the term white supremacy as a given. She said if we are talking about a system based on a notion of white supremacy and racism, then it is a fundamental factor in many if not most of the inequality we see in this country. Thompson asked if the core problem is that people are white. Cox said no. Thompson said that when he looks at most of the ethnic groups writ large, the most successful ethnic group in America is the Indo-Americans, people from India according to the US Census Bureau, their median income is 60% higher than the median of Caucasians. He added that the census bureau says Asians as a whole have a 20% higher income than Caucasians, and Latinos are only about \$1,000 less per year than Caucasians. He said if you

look at all the problems Cox described and base the solutions on racial identity, then the premise is fundamentally flawed. Thompson said from his point of view, it is clear-cut economics and the single-most meaningful act KC can do is to raise minimum wage to a living wage, which last he looked was at least \$27/hr. He said it is fatally flawed to address the wrong issue when it's a matter of economics.

McLaughlin said economics is only one determinant of equity. He said Thompson rightfully points out that this is not an issue of 'because someone is white, therefore they are a problem,' but what history shows is that there has been an inordinate amount of privilege in this nation. McLaughlin said he is new to the understanding of determinants of equity. He added he enjoyed an earlier conversation with Ericka the other day, and as she eloquently said, 'until the color of someone's skin doesn't determine their outcomes, then our work is not done, and we have big problems.' He said that today, you can predict with high degree of accuracy someone's experience, just based on the color of their skin and that is tragically ridiculous. McLaughlin said, it's about access to education, healthcare, and the tree illustration shows there are many determinants that go beyond economics.

Knight said economics definitely plays a role and she would definitely be in favor of raising minimum wage. She said it is about access to jobs and property, and how people could historically buy and acquire property transfer of wealth. Knight noted the sky-high rates of housing in Seattle. She said she bought a house in the low-end in the 90s and all of a sudden, real estate just blew up. She said while this experience is true for a lot of people, it is not true for everyone. She noted that Cox pointed out there were covenants that locked certain people out of that potential to gain wealth, so economics is one key but there are so many different aspects buried on policy that follows the history of America. She said it is enlightening learning about the policies at that have carried forth in America, which is not to say there aren't some black people who earned wealth and transferred property but on the whole, they don't. There are policies and system structures that have locked people out of gaining wealth. Knight said with regard to education, and about which schools they can go to and what resources are available at those schools, some areas in the city have historically wealthy and active PTAs and in others there might be a mix where there are families that can't afford to be active in PTAs. Knight said there are so many issues at hand, and we should see it as the work before us to turn things around. She said in MSWMAC, we can look through different lens when considering projects and policies to lift everyone up; we do better when everyone is thriving.

Cox said everything Knight said is right on-point. She added there is a beacon of hope because we 'policy-ed' our way into this, so we can policy our way out of it. She said it should feel liberating, in a sense, because we can work our way out of this. She said if she didn't believe it, she wouldn't be committed to the work. Cox added that she has a list of readings to share that will be emailed with the slideshow.

Discussion Area 2

If you were to discuss KC's mandate on ESJ with a colleague or family member, how would you describe the difference between individual bias vs structural racism?

Thompson asked for a definition of structural racism for the group. Knight pointed out the question is asking for a personal sharing of that definition as in: what is your own understanding of individual bias vs structural racism. She said the question is getting to the crux of what you know so we can as a group, can get to a more common understanding of where people are coming from.

Thompson said the concept of structural racism might have come from the Hartman Institute, but he was not certain. He said this was a serious subject so it important to make sure we are all talking about the same things. He recalled that when he worked with labor unions, discussions could be about communism, fascism, or

capitalism, but people were not using the same definitions and often talking past each other so he is a stickler for definitions. He closed with a suggestion to cut county executive salaries closer to what the working class has.

McInnis said when she thinks about structural racism, she thinks of the examples already brought up and cited Knight for bringing up schools as a good example. She said the way the system is set up, schools are about the neighborhood they are in, and the resources that flow through, but certain schools are going to get more resources and advantages and that's what needs to change. She said what she thinks about people themselves is her just her perception, but redlining and racist covenants are part of a system that perpetuates the difference in outcomes for different races.

Trim said the whole way we have the waste management plan is set up like an institution, so that is something that we could look at and flip it on its head. She said multifamily services for example could be something that could be looked at completely differently. She asked who says poor ppl don't care about trash; they are living in neighborhoods that have been complete dumping grounds and they do not get services. She suggested flipping the whole conversation around and start from a people-perspective and then build the plans, that would be one way to work with community, ask them what works for you.

Searcy said he would describe it by looking at elected official, for example, who chooses to live in portion of community that culturally looks like them, and decides to prioritize the placement or maintenance of sidewalks in that area at the expense other areas that are culturally different. He said that's an example of how you can be part of a structural system versus an individual's decision to choose where to reside. He said Trim did it well bringing up multifamily as a better analogy for solid waste versus services provided to single family homes, which is indicative usually of a higher economic status. He said that is a great analogy and a good starting place.

Trim said she was only looking at last question about what this committee can look at and we have a lot to do with multifamily.

Mountsier said this is not just about individual actions or individuals within an organization, hopefully those are being addressed, but understanding the system of policies and actions that went on for many years that have created a system of inequity. That dynamic of changing is to understand and recognize that there's a history, not feel guilty, but what can we do to undo those inequities that are built into our communities in some cases. She said because of redlining you have whole areas where there is low income and lower investments in schools. She said there are areas where some things were sited that have impacts on communities, so it is looking at not just individual bias of racism, but the structure and how to retune policies and systems so outcomes are more equal.

Discussion Area 3

How could your committee begin to apply commitment to invest upstream?

Knight gave kudos to Trim who Knight said is an optimist and is always prepared with great suggestions, and she is appreciated. Knight added that not all members are in on this training and joint meeting today. She said we need to develop joint agendas with an eye toward ESJ, and a consideration of what we are going to learn about and how are we going to conduct our conversations. She said we already highlighted trainings and what not, but let's identify those topics where we can dig a little deeper into conversations; like Trim's great example of building the comp plan in a different way. We have not had this conversation about the rate restructure, about who it impacts and how it impacts different groups. Maybe those conversations happen among the staff at KC, but not yet in the task force.

Van Orsow said he wanted to echo what Knight and Trim are pointing out, the planning about the rate restructure and with zero waste of resources. He said it is important to take a minute, since planning is vital for how we move forward. He acknowledged there is probably an equity element he is not aware of but it would be great to have Cox's resources or some of her time to see if we're on the right track as far as equity goes and help us see what we're overlooking and if there's a fresh approach to take so maybe we'd have more workable and sustainable outcomes. He said he thinks it would be worthwhile to do that.

Cox agreed and suggested the committee take a look at resources she will be sharing. She said she supports saving time and energy with a little peer-to-peer support. She said she did not spend a lot of time on the notion of targeted universalism, which was applied to fare restructuring in metro. She said the people who worked on the project were not ESJ staff but technical planners, but after spending some time with people from the Office of ESJ, they came up with targeted universal with the universal goal want everyone to be able to afford metro fares with the recognition that affordability means different to different people. But since we can't make a different fare for each person, some fares will have to subsidize others. She said it's about being regular about speaking and choosing different lenses and tools, and that has become regular for Metro staff, it's how they check themselves, asking: have we applied targeted universalism to this. She added, if applying an explicit focus on equity or social justice feels nebulous there are other ways and tools to adhere to. She said she liked Trim's idea about building regularity about it, so it feels less like an awkward exercise and it is just how we engage with each other at each meeting and that will set up the rest. She closed her presentation by offering, in addition to the list of resources today, to connect the committee with people who could help move the discussion forward.

Sweet said she could not remember if they discussed equity when we finalized the comprehensive plan, but she could not believe the Executive would have signed off on it if they had not. Knight said it was a long process but her assumption, right or wrong, was that since KC developed plan, that staff has received a lot of training and is working on those priorities, so it is incorporated in the underlying planning that goes into the comp plan. She said she did not think we had those conversations in MSWMAC.

McLaughlin said in part, we did, interestingly enough in discussions regarding the Northeast Transfer Station. He said we talked about the inequity of that region, where those communities served there are paying just as much as everywhere else, but receiving fewer services. He added that the committees also helped SWD move forward a pilot for the low-income [Cleanup LIFT program at transfer stations](#). He said both of those products came about through the comp planning process. McLaughlin said you should give yourself some credit because there was a fair amount of dialogue back then.

Knight thanked McLaughlin for the reminder and added that this goes back to county staff who are working at developing these proposals and pilots, so we benefit from the work SWD has done in our conversations at MSWMAC. She said maybe we can step up to plate more and lead more conversations about areas where we might see a need for how we flip how we develop waste management plan.

Waller reminded everyone they will have opportunity in Q2 next year when there would be discussions about planning the next comp plan.

Moldver said the city of Redmond is making sure they are trans-creating messaging with the top-spoken languages that are not English, which, he said, is important when reaching underserved communities, so they know their voices can be heard if they knew there are opportunities for their voices to be heard. He said doing that work helps their programs serve their communities better.

Thompson asked if anyone ever brought up the notion that we really shouldn't charge for trash pickup since it is a health issue and it should become part of the general fund where the Executive decides how we should invest toward that. He said we shouldn't charge anybody and there is our answer to the equity problem. He asked if that idea has ever been brought up.

Mountsier said she hears what Councilmember Thompson is saying but that people are paying taxes that support those general services and it's not a free lunch. Thompson agreed and said he thought it was the fastest way to reach our equity goal, since we are talking about universalism. He said he's lived in countries where nobody was charged but it was part of the general tax rate and if you're talking about property taxes, then the wealthier would pay more, but the county council would decide how to implement that. He said it just seems the more rational and quickest way to address all of these issues and would simplify the good work of people like Waller and Cox.

Waller said that idea is easier said than done. He said the outcomes of this conversation won't happen in a flash but will be built because discussions and the work going ahead. He said to look forward to more trainings and discussions, and a survey to get feedback. He asked the committees to keep pushing yourselves and your organizations to look at this work from ESJ standpoint. He said representation is key, so take a look around the room and ask if there are a number of voices and experiences that are not here.

Mclaughlin thanked Waller and Cox for sharing their insights and experience and opening eyes to new dimensions. He said he is excited for the enriching dialog as we move from the discussion from history and the facts of inequity and toward how we can apply to our work. He said he hopes we can strengthen the equity lens as you are advising us and the Executive. He said he is excited we had this discussion and there is more work planned in the workplan. He thanked everyone for leaning in and actively adding to the experience.

Members Comment

There are no additional member comments.

Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 12:00 p.m.