



NYC Racial Justice Commission

Racial Justice Commission Meeting 10/19/21

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APPEARANCES:

- [Jennifer Jones Austin](#)
- [Lurie Daniel Favors, Esq.](#)
- [Ana M. Bermudez](#)
- [Yesenia Mata](#)
- [Reverend Fred Davie](#)
- [J. Phillip Thompson](#)
- [J. Phillip Thompson](#)
- [Sideya Sherman](#)
- [Torian Easterling](#)
- [Harold Miller](#)
- [Jimmy Pan](#)

Jennifer Jones Austin (JJA): 00:00

Commissioner Thompson, Commissioner Davie, Commissioner Daniel Favors, Commissioner Mata, and Commissioner Bermudez along with myself, of course, Commissioner Jones Austin. Welcome, everybody. And we have special guests. So we're going to get the standard business, standing business out of the way and then get to our guests. This is the first meeting of the Racial Justice Commission, since the release of our report, the staff report, an interim report from Racial Justice Commission staff. And I just want to take a moment to commend the staff on the report, the many hours that were put into it, essentially it catches and-- Thank you. Commissioner Mata is giving you applause. And they are so deserving. The report really reflects the hard work of the staff, and the hours that you put into summarizing what we heard and the work of the Commission today. I also want to thank the Commissioners for being present in those community meetings when we heard from the community. And I want to know from you all, if you have heard any feedback from community members and stakeholders. I will tell you that, in general, I actually have been surprised by the number of people who have told me that they have read the report. And they've had favorable things to say. That it appears that we have captured not only the voice of the community, and the concerns raised by the community, but also that we have helped to cast a vision to show and demonstrate that our intentions are to address systemic structural racism and not just center on specific programs and policies. And they've been very heartened by that. We have gotten some feedback, people asking for specific, you know, changes that they want to see them. People questioned why solutions weren't presented in the report. That wasn't the intention of this report. This first report was to essentially share what we've learned today, what we've heard and what we've learned today. And so again, I want to commend the staff for their efforts to produce the report and the Commissioners for being a part of the effort. The staff also launched a website and

hosted a successful briefing for community organizations who wanted to learn more about the report, and the Commission's work overall. I just want to remind everybody of the new website address, or tell you if you haven't heard it. It's nyc.gov/racialJustice, nyc.gov/racialJustice. In the upcoming weeks, the Commission and the staff will again, engage with the public virtually and in-person to gain additional information, garner additional input that will be crucial for our solutions building. And you'll hear more specifics about that just a little later in this meeting today. I commended the staff instead of worrying about the Commissioners. But I just want to say a little bit more about the Commissioners. You've been at this work now for better than six months. And we've asked a lot of you, a lot of your time, a lot of your thoughts, you know, to help shape and inform where we are and where we're going. And I can't thank you enough for staying the course. We now have, goodness, I guess a little less than eight weeks to complete this work or I should say complete the-- how do I best say this. Complete the work that will take us to the first set of proposals for this City to help to append structural racism as it's embedded in our charter. And so I just want to acknowledge all the time that you put into this effort. It's been a great deal of time, and I hope that you find that it has been value add. We're very appreciative of the thoughts, your ideas, the concerns that you brought to the table. And so we just want you to know that we appreciate it. We're in this kind of final stretch, a lot of work to be done. And we just hope that you will stay the course with us. We know that you will because you've been committed thus far. So today, we are going to hear from the Executive Director of the taskforce on Racial Inclusion and Equity. And the taskforce Executive Director is the Sideya Sherman, and she'll present recommendations from the taskforce. We're also going to hear from Dr. Torian Easterling who is the first Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. And Dr. Torian Easterling is going to be presenting some of the recommendations that they'd like the charter and the Commission to take at this point. Then we're going to go over the upcoming public engagement schedule. But first, before we do that, we just need to take a minute or two to review and approve the minutes from our last meeting, which was September 27, 2021. The meeting minutes were distributed in advance and posted on the website. I hope that all Commissioners had the opportunity to look at them and what I'll do is just take a minute right now in case you haven't had an opportunity for you to take a look at them. They've been shared with you and as I said, they're also posted on the website and then I will ask for a motion to approve the minutes and to circulate the minutes to all that want to. All right. May I have a motion to approve the September 27, 2021 minutes?

Ana M. Bermudez (AMB): 06:18

Motion to approve.

Fred Davie (FD): 06:20

Second.

Jennifer Jones Austin (JJA): 06:21

Thank you. Any questions, comments? Okay. Seeing no hands and hearing none, I'm going to do a roll call. Call the names of each Commissioner and ask for your vote. So beginning with Commissioner Mata. Will you approve, Commissioner Mata?

Yesenia Mata (YM): 06:52

Yes, I approve. Sorry, I didn't know I was on mute.

Jennifer Jones Austin (JJA): 06:56

Commissioner Bermudez?

Ana M. Bermudez (AMB): 06:57

I approve.

Jennifer Jones Austin (JJA): 06:59

Commissioner Davie?

Fred Davie (FD): 07:01

Approved.

Jennifer Jones Austin (JJA): 07:01

Commissioner Thompson?

Phil Thompson (PT): 07:05

Approved.

Jennifer Jones Austin (JJA): 07:06

Commissioner Daniel Favors?

Lurie Daniel Favors (LDF): 07:09

I approve.

Jennifer Jones Austin (JJA): 07:10

Thank you, and I approve as well. So the minutes of the September 27 Meeting have been approved. We're now going to turn to our Director of Policy, who will introduce our guest for this afternoon and walk us through what we're going to be hearing and what he'd like us to do. Jimmy?

Jimmy Pan (JP): 07:39

Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Commissioners for attending this meeting today. And thank you for our guests for joining us. In the next portion of this meeting, we're going to be hearing two sets of recommendations from City leaders. As you all know, we offered City agencies the opportunity to submit recommendations to the Commission for consideration. And we very much appreciate ideas and thoughts from the leaders across the City. And today, we're very pleased to introduce two leaders in racial equity and racial justice within City government. We're here to share a selection of the recommendations that the Commission has received. So these two groups presenting undertook a thoughtful process to hear ideas and the thought recommendations and offer a list of proposals. You know, they'll tell you about their process, and I urge you to give them close attention and thought

considering how much effort went into these ideas. After the meeting, we will make sure that you have their proposals in written form so you can review them a little more closely. We're inviting them here to speak to you and highlight the recommendations that they want to discuss with you and with the public. And after each person presents, you'll have the opportunity to ask questions of them. The first I'm really pleased to introduce Sideya Sherman. Sideya is the Executive Vice President for Community Engagement and Partnerships at NYCHA, the New York City Housing Authority. And in this capacity, she oversees partnership based collective impact model for engaging and connecting public housing residents to economic opportunities and services across six departments. But importantly, in 2020, The mayor has also appointed Sideya as the Executive Director of the City's taskforce on Racial Equity and Inclusion, which was launched in response to the racial disparities laid bare by the COVID-19 pandemic. And with Executive Director Sherman at the helm, the taskforce brings together leaders across City agencies to advance new ideas, programs, policies, initiatives that center equity in the City's ongoing response and ensure that the communities hardest hit by COVID-19 are able to come back stronger. So with that, Executive Director Sherman, if I could invite you to provide some background on the taskforce, and on the process that you undertook to create these recommendations, and then, of course, to share the recommendations themselves, after which again, we'll have a question and answer session with you.

Jennifer Jones Austin (JJA): 10:22

Please unmute.

Sideya Sherman (SS): 10:24

Oh, great. Thank you so much for that introduction, and just confirming that everyone can hear me okay?

Jennifer Jones Austin (JJA): 10:30

Yes.

Sideya Sherman (SS): 10:31

Right. So I'm really pleased to be here on behalf of the taskforce. And I'm really like enthusiastic about the work of the Racial Justice Commission. There's lots of synergy and opportunities. So we're really glad to be presenting this evening. And thank you for that introduction, Jimmy. So just to reiterate the taskforce, it's really a body that emerged in response to the COVID pandemic in the racial disparities that were laid bare here in New York City and certainly nationally. The taskforce brings together a variety of City leaders. What's unique about the taskforce is that it really brings together many of the City agency leaders of color. And agencies work across teams and in interdisciplinary fashion to really execute and implement new projects and initiatives. So there have been over 30 initiatives that have emerged from the taskforce, everything ranging from support for MWBEs programs to our recent announcement on universal college savings or baby bonds. And the work has been really exciting and important to how we address COVID, but most importantly, how we eventually recover. We can be in the taskforce members to develop and share ideas for the Racial Justice Commission. We led to what we called ideas sprints,

which were facilitated brainstorming sessions with a number of breakout discussions and question prompts that range from you know, if you were building government today, what would it look like, to more specific questions about how people understand equity within their organizations or their agencies or within the portfolio that they oversee? From that process, we generated over 200 ideas, and worked to really synthesize to those ideas that we're sharing with you today. So this is just, you know, a snapshot of some of the feedback that we received around a few key areas, as well as ideas that can be implemented at an institutional level within City government, today and in the future. And so, I'm happy to be with you today and share some of those recommendations, particularly in the area of addressing equity within our City workforce, community engagement, as well as establishing a long-term equity infrastructure for the City. So next slide, please. And we can skip that slide. Yes, I'll look to that. Great. So I'll just jump right in. So many of our recommendations from taskforce members really pertain to City employment. And it's not a surprise. It's an internal body, right, that, you know, is made up of City employees. And there was a lot of focus on making sure that we're not only addressing equity within our City at large and within the programs and initiatives that we lead, but we're also making sure that it exists within our workforce and within our workplace. Pay Equity has been an ongoing issue, and it's something that the taskforce has recently tackled. And so some of the issues that were identified in this process were really, you know, identifying that there's not a clear process, law enforcement mechanism to ensure that there's equitable pay levels. And there's some complexity to this because civil service titles can be used in many different ways. And so there needs to be a mechanism to ensure that there's constant evaluation to identify pay gaps. There was also an acknowledgement that many of our frontline roles, essential roles, in particular a low wage relative to the value that they provide to the City. There were discussions about the civil service process and making sure that there are entryways for all New Yorkers, particularly young New Yorkers, to navigate the civil service process. Discussions around really better leveraging lived experience and experience based exams versus traditional testing, to create new pathways for employments and other ways to reduce barriers that limit our workforce from diversifying in certain areas. There were recommendations that pertain to enforcement at agencies to make sure that there's regular professional development and that they're career ladders for City agency employees, particularly of color. And then making sure that there are equity goals and there's a way in which the City is enforcing them across organizations. So some of the recommendations that emerged from this discussion, we're updating the City EEO and anti-discrimination policies to address systemic racism. And I think that this aligns with some of what the RJC has been considering in reading the report. Really, you know, a lot of the ways in which we address discrimination is really at the individual level, but really thinking about how we address it at a systemic level through our policies that protect workers. Really being able to standardize the process for onboarding for City employees, starting at the top with City agency leaders. Making sure that everyone has the same understanding of equity, using the same language, and that this is a core part of being a public servant. It's not a nice to have, and that it is critical to everyone's function and City government to understand racial equity to begin to adapt anti-racist practices within their work. Really leveraging the newly established Pay Equity cabinet to serve as an ongoing mechanism to address Pay Equity across our workforce. So the taskforce in partnership with the Commission on Gender

Equity and diecast, have recently established a Pay Equity cabinet that will work to really support agencies in completing job evaluations, implementing recruitment strategies, and other measures that actually can work to close the pay gap. And so the goal here is to really make sure that that's sustained and that's an ongoing feature of City government. And then establishing goals for agencies around professional development and making sure that that applies across all civil service titles, and that there's a clear way in which employees that we're investing in our workforce, and that there's a clear pathway for employees. Next slide, please. So there was also lots of discussion around community engagement. This is, you know, emerged as a very important topic for taskforce members. So there's certainly, you know, many features already within the City Charter and within City process that provide a pathway and a mechanism for community engagement. There are community District Needs Statements, 197-A plans, we have our Ten-Year Capital Strategy. Many agencies have community advisory boards and feedback forums, and other mechanisms for community input and shared decision making. And so a lot of the discussion here really focused on making sure that low income communities, communities of color, communities that have been historically excluded, can actually take advantage of those tools in a way that's meaningful. And a lot of this pertains to resources. And so some of the proposed solutions include reducing the barriers to participation, particularly for low income New Yorkers and New Yorkers of color. There could be a very high bar to civic participation, particularly if you're low income, and you're giving your time to be part of working groups and meetings. And there was lots of discussion around making sure that as a standard practice, to the extent that the City is formalizing advisory committees and boards or groups, that there is a way in which we are incentivizing and reducing barriers to participation, through reimbursements, incentive, stipends, other forms of compensation to really make sure that we're valuing the time of New Yorkers as they participate in these bodies. There was interest in making sure that we are explicitly considering racial equity and the process for prioritizing capital investments. And so this is actually within the charter, but amending it to actually include that language so that everyone goes through that exercise in building the narrative around capital priorities. And then, you know, there was certainly discussion around community boards and making sure that they're all adequately resourced and equitably resourced relative to the communities that they serve. There can obviously be lots of variation by borough, with the resources and the staffing and support that community boards have, particularly their ability to participate in planning exercises and having that resource. And so, you know, making sure that community boards, in particular, are equitably resourced and that communities that have been historically excluded have the capacity and the technical assistance to participate in the tools that are available. Next slide, please. And then racial equity infrastructure. So, you know, underpinning all of these recommendations, the one that I've shared today, and many of the other ideas that came from subcommittee members and taskforce members, really was this need for an infrastructure within City government to really centralize accountability around racial equity and make sure that racial equity is upheld across all of our processes and policies of our City government. Also making sure that agencies have the tools that they need, they have the resources, they have the training, there's enforcement mechanisms, and there's ways in which we are supporting agencies to reach these goals and helping them establish that goal. So some of the proposed solutions were to really establish a taskforce as a permanent office within City

government and charge it with dismantling structural racism within government and within the City programs that we serve. And that would be really leveraging a lot of the work that's already underway, within, you know, the taskforce structure, but also activating agencies to pull the various levers that they control, to really implement and execute on the goals that come out of the taskforce. There's also, you know, the goal around really just establishing some overarching inter-agency racial equity goals, and using that to inform City budget priorities and decision making. And then really applying an equity framework to the way in which we roll out programs and services and intentionally building in wealth and ownership opportunities and programs that particularly serve low income communities of color. So there have been some examples of this and taskforce initiatives such as the college savings, or the equitable ownership strategy, which requires a certain percentage of ownership by MWBEs and nonprofits and affordable housing deals. And there are some other taskforce initiatives that have that component. And so there were recommendations around making sure that this is a way in which we consistently approach our work when we're rolling out any program or service within the City. That we try to identify ownership and wealth building opportunities for low income New Yorkers and New Yorkers of color. Next slide. So that concludes my presentation. I'm happy to take some questions. And our contact information is there for more information as well. Thank you.

Jennifer Jones Austin (JJA): 21:37

Well, thank you very, very, very much which you've been doing. We've heard of your work even before the Commission began. And so we appreciate having the opportunity to listen to you and to learn from you. And now what we're going to do is engage in dialogue with you. And so I will defer to Commissioners, other Commissioners first, and then come back. So the Commissioners who have questions, please begin. And I'm looking just to let me know that you have a question by raising your hand. Then we will go to you. Okay. Commissioner Davie?

Fred Davie (FD): 22:32

Sure. Thank you, Madam Chair. And thanks for the presentation, Sideya . I really appreciate it. I'm just curious if you could say a little bit more about the discussions around making the taskforce a permanent entity within the City. How did that work? Can you talk about where those discussions were had? And then I wasn't clear about what the conclusion was. So can you talk a little bit more about that, and how that was reached?

Sideya Sherman (SS): 23:10

Sure. So the taskforce is a permanent taskforce via executive order, so that has already happened. And I think that the next step would really be based on, you know, what was shared as resourcing the taskforce as an office. So those conversations actually are current, active as we speak, and certainly have been reflected in, you know, some of the feedback that we've received in this exercise, as well as some of the other agency feedback. But the taskforce itself, you know, was made a permanent body early this year, actually. So every mayor will need to convene a taskforce for this purpose. And I think as we've gone through this exercise, we've discussed charging the taskforce essentially with more responsibility

and supporting agencies around this internal equity work through more resources and an office and staffing to execute that. And so those conversations are happening as we speak.

Fred Davie (FD): 24:07

That's great. Thank you. I'm just curious, though. Can an executive order actually make an office permanent, or is there some other mechanism by which they did that?

Sideya Sherman (SS): 24:20

Oh, that's a great. Yeah. So it is by executive order, presently, and you're correct. You know, and I think the lawyers can weigh in but I think yeah, mayors can change executive orders. I mean, I think that there's a lot of internal support for this work and across agencies have been very committed to this work, but that is certainly an important point.

Fred Davie (FD): 24:49

Thanks so much. Thank you.

Jennifer Jones Austin (JJA): 24:51

The next mayor could undo the taskforce. But we could look at institutional or mandating it to the charter on a permanent basis.

Fred Davie (FD): 25:02

Great. Thank you.

Jennifer Jones Austin (JJA): 25:03

Thank you. Commissioner Daniel Favors?

Lurie Daniel Favors (LDF): 25:07

Actually, Chair, that was one of my follow up questions was whether or not institutionalizing this, the taskforce as a permanent agency would be within our purview. Because we all know the beauty of executive orders is that they exist and the horror of executive orders is that they exist and can be undone with a subsequent change of will from within the same person who executed the order as certainly it can be with those who follow in that position. So thank you for clarifying that. And I was just lowering my hand right when you called on me, so thank you for clarifying that.

Jennifer Jones Austin (JJA): 25:45

Thank you. Is there other questions?

Ana M. Bermudez (AMB): 25:50

Yes, I have several since I was part of the Commission. Sideya, good to see you again. Um, so one of the things that we are looking at, or should be concerned with is, you know, sort of duplication of functions or is there a better way of streamlining this? Right. So can you comment a little bit of an idea such as this? Could the racial justice work of the TRIE be sort of embedded in or made part of, for example, the Commissioner of Human Rights that we already have? Right. Like, how do we, you know, since racial justice-- I mean, to me at least is

a human right. You know, couldn't that be just combined into an existing entity that then doesn't require a creation of something else through the charter or any other way? What are your thoughts on that?

Sideya Sherman (SS): 26:56

Sure. Yeah. I mean, I think that's interesting because the Commission of Human Rights has this enforcement mechanism built into it. I mean, I think that you know TRIE has been like multifunctional and you know firsthand. So I think one is that it really has this internal focus within City government, right, of really activating projects, which is different from the way the Commission would work or works today.

Ana M. Bermudez (AMB): 27:19

Or too, now, right.

Sideya Sherman (SS): 27:21

Like, activating City agency leaders to implement projects immediately, get past red tape, push things forward quickly. And then there's the second layer of, and I think a lot of the way in which the direction of the work of TRIE has been moving, is really to start to focus on like practice within agencies, capacity building, support for agencies, and really implementing racial equity within their work and addressing racial-- like looking at their data in a way that addresses racial bias, understanding disparities. So there is this like very internal piece of TRIE and then there's like this external, which is really like projects or, you know, initiative focus work, which is communities. The last piece of it is that TRIE has also recently launched these community-based coalition's in the 33 most impacted neighborhoods. So now there's like a community focus side as well to where there's this constant feedback loop. So I think that there's lots of synergy across existing arms of government because there is a commitment to equity in like many of the functions that we have in government today. I think, you know, the spot that TRIE has filled has really been bringing agencies together really in a crisis. And responding quickly, and how do we maintain that, essentially, that form of working, but then also began to institutionalize the work more within agencies. So, you know, the TRIE as it exists today is, you know, again, continuing that fashion, and the idea of supporting it to grow would really be to support agencies really in more of the implementation work.

Ana M. Bermudez (AMB): 29:02

Thanks. Because I mean, I see your point of like CHR has been more of an enforcement type of approach. Then TRIE has a different, you know, set of both resources as well as slightly different benefit, but it all seems on a continuum. So I want to think through also how it can all fit together, maybe not necessarily under one entity, but a series of entities under one other roof or something. Something that I think we do need to create a little more synergy around. As to your recommendation number one on, you know, can you talk a little more about how this is all related because from personal experience as a City agency, a lot were very constrained based on collective bargaining and civil service processes to achieve what you're suggesting, which we would love to achieve, right? Yeah. How are you contented

with that? And are there any suggestions of where we might look? I don't know if Commissioner Garrido is with us, but if he were, I'm sure he wouldn't be wading into that.

Sideya Sherman (SS): 30:20

Yes, so this is a really important issue. So there's two ways in which-- There was a working group, subcommittee in the taskforce, which was focused on Pay Equity. And I think for everyone's awareness and benefit, the way the taskforce is functioning are these like interdisciplinary subcommittees. So there was a subcommittee around Pay Equity. And I think there's sort of two ways in which to address it. One is, you know, when you look at titles that are subject to civil service, there's actually not that much of a gap because so much of it is formulaic. When you look at titles that are managerial or provisional, that's where you see more. We get more latitude. So some of the recommendations are to formalize and we are moving forward with this, which is exciting, is to actually go through a formal job evaluation process, which is what other municipalities have done when they are addressing Pay Equity. So it's less about the Civil Service title of the position. But it's really an assessment of the value of the job and the work that would then lead to recommendations that can inform compensation. And obviously, there are budget implications for this, too, which is why the Pay Equity cabinet would include OMB and other agencies that would be part of that decision making. There's also this component of occupational segregation, where some of the gaps exist by virtue of who's in jobs, right. So the jobs people are being compensated equally in their titles within jobs. But there are jobs that are dominated by white men or jobs that are dominated by women of color, for instance, right. And so there's recommendations that have also been made around recruitment strategies to increase diversity, reducing barriers around certain positions, pursuing potentially blind recruitment and other strategies that would also address some of the segregation within particular occupations. So this builds on Local Law 18, and the requirement to do this annual assessment. And we'll take it a step further to really dig in deeper on, like, what the real disparities are by the titles and assessing the actual jobs.

Ana M. Bermudez (AMB): 32:28

Great, thanks so much.

Sideya Sherman (SS): 32:30

Yeah.

Jennifer Jones Austin (JJA): 32:33

Commissioner Mata?

Yesenia Mata (YM): 32:38

Hi. So I had a question about the organizing that's happening around that. I know one of the recommendations, I believe recommendation number two talks about community engagement. And I love the fact that you are also having mind of compensating individuals, right, when they are part of these specific groups. Because, as we know, majority of our communities are like one of the most impacted and for them to take a day off of work and do this type of work, it's very difficult. Right? And I know you mentioned that there's 33

groups right now forming in the areas that have been the most impacted. So I guess my question is, like, I'm interested in knowing the organizing around that. Like, how are these meetings being held? Or how do they planned to be held? Like, who will be conducting these meetings? Will there be a specific agency or will be the community itself? And also, would there also be an educating process along the way because I know when I conduct like meetings with the community, I need to start first like educating them on the issue, and then letting them know how the process will go. So I want to hear more about how's the organizing happening around this?

Sideya Sherman (SS): 33:51

Sure. And thank you, Commissioner. So the 33 groups that are forming or have recently formed, these are neighborhood coalitions, so we actually will support. So this is a project in partnership with the Civic Engagement Commission and the Young Men's Initiative, essentially released a solicitation for community coalitions, existing or forming, to have essentially funding and support to do the work that they're doing. So there's a lead organization that's facilitating the meeting and helping to structure. There are certain activities that they're supporting, particularly around vaccine outreach and education, at least right now. And then there'll be leading participatory budgeting process in their neighborhood with like an allotted amount of money that they can put towards that work. Those are all being led directly by the community coalition. So the role of the City in that project and the role of the taskforce is support resources, some framework for, you know, to your point, like how people should be invited, how they should participate, amplifying and advertising the information that they have. But those are all being led directly by community groups themselves and some of whom were already coalitions and this is enhancing their work. The recommendations that came from the taskforce were aligned for when the City is building an advisory group or a body of sorts that there'd be a standard practice. That there's some way in which we're addressing people giving their time to participate and reducing the barriers for that. And I'd be happy to share more information about the coalitions offline if that's helpful.

Yesenia Mata (YM): 35:30

Thank you.

Jennifer Jones Austin (JJA): 35:33

Are there other questions? Thank you. If whoever was controlling the screens can put up the equity slide just once more. I have questions about that. I want to zero in on something. The Pay Equity slide. Yes, okay. Looking at the second issue, one of the things that I was centering on, that I was cross walking this in my mind with the City Council's recent report on hiring, and then there's a national report on hiring and the experience that Black women have in particular. And one of the things that I centered on in the national report is the ideas around blind scoring of applications before you get into this. Will you focus solely on Pay Equity? Well, I'm appreciating that your recommendation is to fall to work environments around recruitment and hiring as far as Pay Equity. But did any of your recommendations, did you go deeper in looking at how to even address issues centered on actual recruitment and hiring, in addition to Pay Equity?

Sideya Sherman (SS): 37:23

I'm very glad you raised that Commissioner. Yes. So I touched upon Pay Equity, but within the Pay Equity framework in the cabinet, blind recruitment was actually the first recommendation. So part of the work that the Cabinet will take over is not only this job evaluation. There's a whole workstream around instituting a blind recruitment process and supporting agencies in doing that. And there's some technology solutions to explore as part of that work stream. There are recommendations around upscaling City agency HR departments. There are a number of recommendations that came from that. But blind recruitment was the first on the list.

Jennifer Jones Austin (JJA): 38:03

Got it. Very, very helpful. And that was pretty much it for me. I mean, there are tons of other thoughts and questions that I think that we probably should spend some more time with you on the whole, and just delve more deeply into your recommendations, and how they can, you know-- just even the taskforce itself and its legal establishment, in some ways it mirrors some of the thinking that we've been having around how to ensure on a continuing basis, attention to and adherence to recommendations that are brought forward. And then essentially, you know, through the charter, make law, but I think there'd be value add in continuing the conversation. And tell me a little bit about like, is there an actual report that we can lean into?

Sideya Sherman (SS): 38:58

For the recommendations or on the-- I'm sorry?

Jennifer Jones Austin (JJA): 39:03

On the whole, like, is there a report with your recommendations?

Sideya Sherman (SS): 39:06

Sure. So we have a paper with backup information on the recommendations. I can share that.

Jennifer Jones Austin (JJA): 39:13

Okay. And has that been given to the staff already?

Sideya Sherman (SS): 39:16

An earlier version of it, so we will share the final. So we'll share that and then just on the taskforce overall there's a report but we'll share the backup for the recommendations.

Jennifer Jones Austin (JJA): 39:26

Good deal. Thank you. Commissioner Bermudez?

Ana M. Bermudez (AMB): 39:33

I forgot to ask. Could you say a little more about one of your potential solutions in that first, the Pay Equity and that slide was to revise the City's EEO policies, I believe, or something like that?

Sideya Sherman (SS): 39:53

So one of the recommendations were-- so there were some recent updates to the City EEO policy. So it was to revisit the EEO policies and anti-discrimination policies to identify whether there is a way to address systemic racism versus only individual behavior. And that may not be exclusive to City employees, right. Like there may be a way to evaluate that in the context of New Yorkers in the workforce overall, but that was essentially seeing if there's an opportunity to take our anti-discrimination EEO policies further by addressing systemic issues.

Ana M. Bermudez (AMB): 40:38

Okay. Thanks.

Jennifer Jones Austin (JJA): 40:41

Looking to see if there are other questions. What I have to share with you is that even though we may not have a lot of questions at this point, Director Sherman, we have had quite a few, but we may very well be coming back to the well. We just want to digest all that you shared, and get a copy if we may have it of the most recent report. And then we will be back to you I'm sure of it.

Sideya Sherman (SS): 41:10

Okay. Thank you so much.

Jennifer Jones Austin (JJA): 41:11

We really appreciate you spending time with us this afternoon. And I just want to make sure that we're just gonna do another quick round of Round Robin. I think we're good to go. Is there anything that you want to share with us as we wrap up? Anything additional?

Sideya Sherman (SS): 41:28

No, thank you. Thank you for taking this work on. It's really important and exciting. And so, you know, I'm happy to meet with you all and support. And I'll be listening in to the remainder of the meeting. So thanks.

Jennifer Jones Austin (JJA): 41:45

Commissioner Daniel Favors has raised her hand.

Lurie Daniel Favors (LDF): 41:50

Yes, thank you for that, Chair. You're very quick. I'm so sorry. I believe you may have mentioned this. I just wanted to ask if and clarify if the last point that you addressed about hiring also extended to retention. And I apologize if you mentioned that, and I missed it, but I just wanted to get confirmation about that.

Sideya Sherman (SS): 42:10

Sure. So there were recommendations around blind recruitment in the hiring process. There are also recommendations around the City's promotion policy as well, too. So there are some recommendations that pertain to retention, promotion, and as well as our like internal HR practices.

Jennifer Jones Austin (JJA): 42:33

Very good.

Lurie Daniel Favors (LDF): 42:34

Thank you.

Jennifer Jones Austin (JJA): 42:35

Thank you. Thank you, Director Sherman. We very much appreciate you and all that you're doing on top of the work that you've done over the years. Thank you.

Sideya Sherman (SS): 42:46

Thank you.

Jennifer Jones Austin (JJA): 42:47

Let's see. Director Pan, do you want to set us up for our next conversation?

Jimmy Pan (JP): 42:57

Sure. And thank you so much, again, Executive Director Sherman for all the work that taskforce has done. I cannot understate how much work they put in to collect these recommendations and present them to us. And so we're very, very grateful for your partnership in that. I'm really pleased now to introduce Dr. Torian Easterling, just to give a quick bio. Dr. Easterling is the first deputy Commissioner at the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. And in this role, he is the agency's top deputy and plays a chief corning role for health matters for the agency. And then in addition to serving as the second in command at the department, Dr. Easterling also serves as its inaugural Chief Equity Officer, unifying and directing the department's internal and external equity agenda. Previously, Dr. Easterling served as the Deputy Commissioner of the Center for Health Equity and Community Wellness at the Health Department, which uses a racial and social justice approach to eliminate health inequities for those who are most marginalized in New York City and to reduce overall premature mortality from the leading causes of preventable death. So Dr. Easterling if I could also ask you to provide a quick background on the process that was conducted by the Department of Health to create these recommendations and then share the recommendations themselves. And again afterward, we'll have an extensive Q&A session like the one we just had. So with that, thank you for joining us.

Jennifer Jones Austin (JJA): 44:28

And before you begin, I just have to do something that I've never been able to do before but now I can. You don't just play a doctor on TV. You are a doctor. It's been good seeing

you and hearing you talk about the importance of people becoming vaccinated for COVID-19 and thank you for that. Thank you for all you're doing. Never got to say that before.

Torian Easterling (TE): 44:57

And that was a great intro. That was more important but I do. I'm a doctor in real life. And I thank you. But I do want to say thank you to all of the Commissioners and all of the staff. This has been tremendous work, just to really witness and watch it even from the sidelines. Certainly, there's been an extensive and intentional practice in generating public input. And so it is really an honor to be joining you all this afternoon, to share some of the work of the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. And also lift up ways in which we can really think about how we advance a racially just, you know, recovery from COVID-19 and think about the policies going forward. I do quickly want to acknowledge and thank Grace Bonilla who was the first executive director of the taskforce for Racial Inclusion and Equity, and also our current Executive Director we just heard from. And is really leading our agencies, as I've already mentioned, towards a path of recently just recovering from COVID-19, but also helping us and stewarding us to implement really important policies that are in structural racism. And so thanks, Sideya, the director and chairman for her leadership and her partnership, both in overall work of the taskforce, but certainly as we have been partnering together to really ensure that our vaccination campaign has been equitable.

Torian Easterling (TE): 46:34

And so I'll jump into my slides. And part of my intro, I think it is important for the Commissioners to know that, you know, I think this presentation is really building on decades of work that we've been doing at the Health Department, and certainly during this administration to really advance an anti-racism public health agenda. Our practice is really to understand, you know, that the importance of centering health in these conversations is really a matter of life and death. And I don't think we have seen it more clear during this pandemic, that all of the intersecting factors that really that people interface with, certainly can contribute to their health outcomes. And so again, it is really important and critical that we are having this conversation today, lifting up these recommendations, and really thinking about how we can transform the ways in which the City work, and certainly our agency. And to that point, we are coming off the heels of a recent passage of a resolution that the New York City Board of Health did yesterday. Officially passed a resolution that declares racism a public health crisis, but more importantly, is committing the Health Department to concrete actions. And those concrete actions are important in that we're really taking a deep look at our structures and our policies to ensure that we're thinking explicitly how we're advancing that agenda. So just to give you a flavor of some of the actions that were part of the declaration, in this resolution, specifically, were ways in which we are thinking about our data. I just alluded to the work that the taskforce is doing with the Health Department, both identifying the neighborhoods that have borne the greatest burden of this pandemic, but also using that data to inform our operations. And so you can think about the 33 neighborhoods as a map, as a catchment area. But really, how are we bringing all of our resources and all the assets to bear so that we can close the gap, and we've made significant gains over several weeks. In addition, we are also doing an intentional anti-racism review of our own health code. I don't think many New Yorkers really understand that this

Health Department has its own legal making authority not just to change the calories on the menu, but also to think about how we are licensing childcare centers. Really also thinking about how we're ensuring the safety from foodborne illnesses by grading our restaurants and there's so much more that our New York City Board of Health has authority over. And I really do think it is important that we take a look at what decisions have been made, what policies are in place. And so we are building out equity analysis that will allow us to examine all of the health codes that are now in place and thinking about going forward. So there's just a flavor of some of the committed actions that the Health Department will have to assume as a result of the resolution. And we will be writing updates to our new City Board of Health on a semi-annual basis. And this is going to really ensure that there is accountability to the work that we do. And there's certainly more ways that we've been really thinking about this. But to the matter at hand, in essence, you've already asked sort of how we've been thinking about the recommendations. We wanted to really think about how our recommendations could mention or address social determinants of health, as we understand, as I mentioned earlier, the intersecting factors of how structural racism can show up in our practices and our policies. We certainly wanted to think about how we can create and strengthen community-based decision making power, hold to the agency leadership and staff accountable for meeting and the needs of communities. Then also require the reproduction of reports that are effective in measuring and communicating on equity indicators across those said social determinants of health. So those are just the ways in which we began to really think about those recommendations. We did a really extensive engagement throughout our agency, really engaging all of our divisions, and really thinking about how within those divisions that we can also engage our staff at all levels, and no civil service titles. And so that was really important that we did a really extensive staff engagement while also taking a lot of recommendations through just outreach to staff. And so what we were able to elevate, we had a total of 12 recommendations. And in partnership with the taskforce, we also submitted some of those recommendations to the taskforce for Racial Inclusion Equity to consider as well. But this afternoon, I'm going to actually focus on four of those recommendations and happy to submit additional documentation so that you can see the full list. So next slide. So the first recommendation that I'm sharing is really to sort of center values and principles. Certainly what we believe and what I think the City also believes is thinking about how we integrate anti-racist, gender neutral, and inclusive language in the charter going forward that certainly reflects the importance and impact on social service of health. And so the example here is ruling off male pronouns for the Commissioner, replacing minority groups members and women with historically underinvested or underrepresented communities of color, replacing words like mental retardation and substance use with appropriate updated language, and also including race and race explicit strategies in the functions, powers, duties, and policies of the department. And I think it is really important. And this will also sort of get covered in some of the other recommendations. That this last bullet of how intention and explicit that we can be around transforming the functions of agencies, of offices to make sure that embedding equity in the work that they do, organizing, and operationalizing, which are key pillars for our own internal transformation process has been really essential, right. So it's not enough for us to just name that this work is important, but really begin to talk about how we're embedding it into our organizational identity so that it can connect to the outcomes that we are achieving.

So to the next slide. The second recommendation that I'm lifting up, and this actually connects to my role within the agency, and also the vision of our current Commissioner. So making permanent the role of the Chief Equity Officer within City agencies. Requiring one Deputy Commissioner or Executive Deputy Commissioner to serve in this capacity, who will be responsible for coordinating and implementing an equity agenda, anti-racist practices, equity based evaluation, and monitoring and publicly reporting for each agency. In the charter, there is a call out for the heads of agencies and also sort of describing some of the functions of those heads. And I think, you know, to the point that I made earlier, being explicit about the function of really addressing and dismantling structural racism would and should be an only part of, you know, this administration, but really embedded into agencies work. And we know that there have been steps by not only the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, but there have been steps by other agencies to really be explicit in these roles. And certainly some of the functions that we would expect that a Chief Equity Officer to take on, really monitoring the agency's practice to prevent and eliminate existing internal structural conflicts. Certainly, as you've already heard from Director Sherman, really starting to think about how you're embedding some of the equitable work release practices as well. Certainly, building capacity and training around how you have a shared analysis around structural racism, which are all I think our key steps and sort of thinking about how you can take more intentional committed actions around employing an anti-racism practice. Next slide. And this is also building on the previous presentation and the recommendation to make permanent a mayoral office of Racial Inclusion and Equity led by essential Chief Equity Officer, and requiring one deputy mayor or executive deputy mayor to serve in this capacity to coordinate and implement a Citywide equity and anti-racist policy, research and budget agenda, and produce public reporting on progress to advance Citywide equity goals. I think what we've already heard from Director Sherman is the importance of how we operationalize this work, and certainly for this office, to really think about also how we are employing what we would call a "Health in All Policies" approach and framework. Thinking about how you're centering equity and all of the intersecting factors that allows us to really prioritize equity practices. We know that some of this work is already underway, and certainly has been a part of Executive Order Number 45. And really thinking about how the City begins to establish standardized metrics, so that we can hold our work more accountable. But I think this would be the next step to really think about how not only are we using our data intensively, using our research intensively, using our budget, and all of our expanded work would be included here. And the final recommendation that I will share with you. And so I've already mentioned, as part of next slide, I've already mentioned some of the work of the Board of Health. Our legal making authority as an agency to really pass and amend any legislative policies for our health code. And so in the spirit of transforming function, but also really to look at how we are modernizing our City Charter in all of the different roles that are within City government, we are putting forward a recommendation to restructure requirements regarding Board of Health Service in order to diversify membership. And we know that as part of the City Charter, really laying out the role of the Department of Health, the role of the Commissioner, but the Board of Health is also named within the City Charter. And we do think that is really important to begin to, one, modify the requirements and qualifications for the Board of Health to expand or non-physicians, Master degree members. Really make sure that the representation of the board members are

reflective of the City as well. And so either the Commissioners would either consider thinking about how we restructure the current board or expand the number of board members that will be part of the Board of Health so that we can achieve this recommendation. And so with that, I will pause there and welcome any questions.

Jennifer Jones Austin (JJA): 59:16

I'll just begin by thanking you for both your presentation and for all of the work that has gone into developing these recommendations. I have to think that this is a work that is long in the making, and it's not just over the course of the last few months, but perhaps the last eight years, building on the creation of the Center for Health Equity, and it's just tremendous to see. And one of the things that I appreciate most about it is that you are centering on the opportunities and the need not just being specifically like healthcare, but all the attended circumstances. And I really, really appreciate and applaud that. As I was listening, and I'm just going to jump in because I don't see hands up, but you will get your hands up. Can I take liberty Commission Bermudez and just jump right in? Okay. Um, a few thoughts came to mind. Let me first say that I really do appreciate what you've done. A lot of what you shared resonates with a lot of what we've already been talking about. But I think the strength of the work and all the time put into it. This is not charter revision specific, if you will. But I am curious whether DOHMH has documented its efforts, its work over the course of the last eight years? Is there a roadmap that we can look at? Just curious about that. And you don't have to answer that in this moment. But I do think that that is something worth paying attention to. You mentioned City agencies. You suggested to the agencies each have a Deputy Commissioner or Executive Deputy Commissioner. I imagine that you're extending that to mayor's offices as well? That's just a simple question, not--

Torian Easterling (TE): 1:01:16

Yes.

Jennifer Jones Austin (JJA): 1:01:17

Okay. Good deal. And I just want to ask a few questions about it. We had a conversation with a national thought leader on racial justice. And it is that person's opinion that you have to be very careful about setting up people with accountability that seems that they may move it from the Commander in Chief, if you will. And so there was a bit of a back and forth about, well, the Commander in Chief is going to need people to actually do the work and then kind of report out, report up. Is that something that you will, you know, spend some time with, you know, whatnot? And I see that you have the central body, this deputy mayor, who should be over everything. But did you spend any time with the whole accountability where the buck stops?

Torian Easterling (TE): 1:02:16

Yeah, no, really good question. So to the first question, we are documenting the work over the last eight years of both our internal transformation work, as well as some of our external work. So we really do hope to put out some of those products by the end of the year. So that's going to be really important to just document what we've been able to do. But then to the most recent question, question at hand. Yeah, so we've really thought about sort of the

structure itself. But you know, I think it's also important to think about the accountability practice as well. We want to be clear about what the role, the responsibilities, and functions of a Chief Equity Officer who would either be in a mayoral office and also within the agency. But it's also important that the head of the agency, the principal is also communicating that this is the responsibility of everyone. And it has to be very clear, and it's very clear within the agency, but then also building with and the infrastructure some of the accountability tools, which is why passage of our resolution yesterday was really important. And certainly even as a principal for the agency, coordinating across all of our deputy Commissioners to make sure that this work is going to move forward. But we do, you know, really have other leaders within the agency ensuring that this work is advancing.

Jennifer Jones Austin (JJA): 1:03:50

Thank you. And I apologize for not commending you on the passage of the resolution, the declaration that we have a public health crisis. It's a tremendous body of work. And that's a tremendous achievement. And we all should make sure that we avail ourselves up, and I'll make sure that it is shared, the resolution and shared with the Commission members, but tremendous and congratulations to you.

Torian Easterling (TE): 1:04:18

Thank you.

Jennifer Jones Austin (JJA): 1:04:19

Commissioner Bermudez?

Ana M. Bermudez (AMB): 1:04:22

Thank you, Chair. So first of all, I want to thank you and commend you and all of those things because your recommendations were extremely comprehensive, well thought out. And you know, I love that you get to play a doctor on TV as a doctor. I love watching you because you're very comforting. So, you know, it's fantastic. I can say I know him, you know. So I have essentially a follow up. Chair Jones Austin said exactly the way that I was thinking in terms of accountability, would your kind of suggested structure, if you will, of all-- let's say, will all of the agencies have the chief diversity officer at a high level? I agree with you that it needs to be somebody who essentially reports to the Commissioner in the regular course of, you know, business, if you will, because those are the people who are carrying out the work, right. But then is your view then that these folks would have a dotted line, I guess, to the deputy mayor, that you suggest? Like, how do we ensure that everybody's on the same page, if you will? And then the accountability for like, look, your agency is not advancing on this? What's up with that? You know?

Torian Easterling (TE): 1:05:46

Yeah, I think that's a really good question. And I'm glad to have thought this all the way through, because I do think we're going to really have to make sure that the structures are in place. But here's me taking a crack at it, that the mayoral office that would be in place, who would be really leading the City's administration, you know, equity agenda, I think it's going to be really clear sort of having a strategic plan, sort of thinking about what are those

accountability tools that we need to put in place, whether they're equity assessments, and/or sort of additional. So policies that need to be put in place. And I think that having the taskforce and a taskforce is really important, as you know, Commissioner. That, you know, we're all coming in, contributing the work that we are already leading, and really having sort of a principle that's making sure that this is moving forward. And we have shared goals. And I think the work of our vaccine campaign, and certainly the pay equity cabinet is going to sort of be a model for how these cross agency work groups are going to have to sort of be grounded. And, you know, like, what's the data? Really what are the accountability structures, and then making sure that the principals are aware of the objectives? I think at the agency level, one of the things that we've been really thinking about is how do we operationalize our agency strategic plan. That should be like, you know, the principal deputy first and the Chief Equity Officer, but ensuring that other senior leaders are also bought into that strategic plan, that they are shared goals. And we all are clear about, you know, sort of what the direction is. I think that those are all ways that we can think about it. But if there's sort of an indirect line from the Chief Equity Officer with an agency to the mayor office, you know, I'm not totally against that. But I do think as long as the Commissioner still understands their role, also in advancing equity, I think is still very important. I hope I got to your question.

Ana M. Bermudez (AMB): 1:08:12

Thank you. No, I mean, a lot of these things, you know, they're in their canal, you know, phase and we will have to wrestle with that as we move along with the Commission here, to really try to figure out what is the most enduring, you know, operationalizing of all of this.

Jennifer Jones Austin (JJA): 1:08:46

Are there other Commissioners with questions? If not, I'm going to just follow up on another recommendation that you put forward. Let's talk about language. I liked what I read. And I really appreciated you're bringing them forward. What I appreciated-- Well, first of all, I saw the value in it, but I guess I want to center on with you some of the thinking that went into coming up with that. How that ties in with health. Because one of the things that we're gonna have to do as we talk about these recommendations, and as we bring solutions forward is to help people make the connect. And you know, it may be more obvious to some than to others. And so we do have people in the public who listen in on these meetings, and I would really appreciate you talking about how language is so critical and how that affects people's health and wellbeing and the value and the structure of the proposal.

Torian Easterling (TE): 1:10:05

Thank you for the opportunity to even try to reflect on it and really try to provide some clarity on how we think about the importance of addressing social determinants of health. Because you know very much even as we center health and health outcomes in our work, and we have to, we are a public health agency, we very much see that our race explicit strategies really are undoing the structural inequities. All right, and it's not just thinking about healthcare access. We're also thinking about food access. We're thinking about education, as you've already talked about, and certainly thinking about the communities

that have been most marginalized, these Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color. You know, language is important because even as we see through our vaccine campaign, folks need to be able to access service. And we need to make it as simple as making sure that folks feel reflected, and the services that have been rendered. But they're also able to understand and comprehend what is available. And we certainly want to ensure that this City charter is reflective of the diversity of the City. And so when we're talking about including anti-racist, gender neutral language, we're talking about reflecting and centering the people who very much we're trying to take care of and engage. And this is really about an upstream approach. So you know, a lot of what we talk about in anti-racism work is how do we focus on those structures and those systems. And all of those systems are intersecting. It is not just racing and gender racing and ethnicity, although that's how we really are seeing, you know, a lot of the work being grounded. But we also understand that there are many intersecting factors that are oppressive to many people. And so how are we centering everyone, and making sure that they feel inclusive?

Jennifer Jones Austin (JJA): 1:12:13

I very much appreciate that. Let's talk a bit about data. Because we've also been centering on how best to collect and use data to hold agencies and staff, leaders accountable as we make these changes. I should say, the Department of Health does a lot to disaggregate the data, and, you know, look at race and gender, and other identities. Help us to appreciate how, you know, like any part that you may have about how we could do that across the system, you know, like structurally.

Torian Easterling (TE): 1:12:57

Yeah, and I certainly am proud of the work that we're doing at the agency. And I know this was also something that was really important for the taskforce, Racial Inclusion Equity to also lead in, you know, having a data use workgroup because there are a couple of things that we're trying to ensure. And certainly how we collect data, you know, keeping individual's information private, certainly how we operationalize it, making sure that we're using data for the good, and then also how we name those injustices, and use it in the way that it can inform our operation so it can close the gap. Right. You know, our outcome is all about how we're achieving our ethical outcomes. And if we are really seeking to do that, then the validation is what are we doing to really center those who are most marginalized and oppressed? So the data collection, we certainly have tried to improve the ways in which we capture data, but expand it as well. That is not just thinking about quantitative but also qualitative. So matching the numbers with the heart and soul. And so it's really about capturing the voices and really engaging our community partners. And I know that one of the Commissioners had talked about that community engagement. So you know, a lot of that we did during the COVID-19 response, certainly the taskforce in the Health Department did. And we can expand on the ways that we really collect data, which is really important. Then sort of thinking about how we're storing data, keeping it private, how are we making sure that we're really disaggregating it so we can tell the story, which is really, really, really important in naming those injustices. So I think it's, you know, it's those three ways that we really have to make sure that we are using data in an intentional way. And I think it is going to be important going forward that City agencies are thinking about how we standardize,

how we share data, collaborate more. And I think those are some additional steps that I think even the City Charter can certainly think about how we institutionalize it.

Jennifer Jones Austin (JJA): 1:15:15

I have more questions, but I don't want to dominate. So I don't see any other hands. I'm going to keep going. But talk a little bit about the Commission. And this is actually a question both for you and for Executive Director Sherman. The Commission wants to set up - we want to put forth proposals that will be impactful, but in order for them to be impactful, they have to be implemented. And I would appreciate hearing from you, both of you, as you've been centering on this work, what are some of the lessons learned that we should be mindful of as we seek to create changes that will reverberate across the City of New York, and with the City agencies? And I'm speaking to everything from you know, how things are worded. You know, even just the work that you did with the resolution, Dr. Easterling, you know. What are the lessons that you can share with this Commission at this point? The same thing Executive Director Sherman.

Torian Easterling (TE): 1:16:36

Yeah, you know, I think, Chair Jones Austin, I think you hit on some of the really important points. I think we want to reflect all our documents in a way that is more inclusive, that really grounds equity in the work that we want to do. And I think that is maybe seen as a small step, but it really is meaningful in so many different ways because there is some accountability when we can lift up and point to how principals or heads of agencies are really responsible for advancing the anti-racism agenda. So I do think that not only for the City Charter, but ways in which we can reflect this in our executive orders, even some of our data agreements, or any type of agreement that we have between agencies, I think it is really important that we have the language to use. And that really reflects the shared analysis of how inequity show up. And so I think it's a really important starting point. And I think that there have been really key examples of how the City has done meaningful community engagement, right. Creating shared spaces, where certainly government, along with community can certainly lead a community coalition, or groups so that we can identify what the problems are and concerns and certainly a lot of it we do know, but certainly even more important is identify the solutions. And we heard very loud and clearly from so many community partners during this pandemic, um, that were very much part of the solution. So we want to be in the spaces where, you know, we're talking about our contact tracing efforts, that we're talking about our vaccine campaign. And so we think going forward, we're going to have to really think about how we institutionalize that practice, not just for health, but for many of the things that we're doing, all of the different planning processes. I think, certainly making sure that we are building out that infrastructure is going to be really key. So I'll leave it there. And I will welcome Executive Director Sherman.

Jennifer Jones Austin (JJA): 1:18:57

Thank you.

Sideya Sherman (SS): 1:18:58

Thank you, Torian. And thank you, Chair. So I'll just build on that point. I think that, you know, some of the lessons learned are like this practice of building this practice, right? So agencies being intentional, really, of course the work that they do from soup to nuts. So looking at the foundational documents, and addressing language and going through that exercise in a very intentional way, with your leadership, you know, leading that exercise so that everyone is really rooting themselves in the same understanding around the importance of addressing race and racial equity, looking at your data consistently through a lens of race and really examining it in that way. You know, I think we've learned a lot in the vaccination campaign around communicating to communities of color, communicating in ways that are authentic, centering communities of color in the ways in which we build access, as well. And I think that, you know, there's this component around, really revisiting the ways in which we work with communities. So the coalitions are an example of really just like resourcing communities to support the work that they're naturally leading, and providing some support in that. And I certainly can share examples from, you know, my (inaudible 01:20:10) of formalizing the way in which we engaged residents. We've recently entered into an agreement with residents where we've outlined specifically the ways in which we will engage with them, where they have decision making, where it's mutually negotiated. So I think that there are lots of takeaways and, you know, certainly lots of lessons learned. But I think having like clear buy in and support from agency leadership is critical. And really building this practice of addressing race and racial inequity. And every single, you know, piece of the work of the organization is really foundational and critical.

Jennifer Jones Austin (JJA): 1:20:48

As you both talked, I couldn't help but think to myself, you know, you've laid out some thoughts about how this work can be centered in the agencies. Perhaps we should be giving some thought to how City agency leaders themselves are hired and appointed and the role of the Chief Equity Officer in that as well, just thoughts. Thank you. I really appreciate you both. Commissioner Daniel Favors?

Lurie Daniel Favors (LDF): 1:21:17

Thank you, Chair. I'm apologizing in advance as I'm also at pick up for my daughter at soccer so you will hear the sounds in the background. My apologies. Very much appreciated hearing from both of you. I am curious, however, about the sustainability of some of the initiatives that have been addressed, particularly because we seem to be in a time when the person in leadership, joined just a bit on your last comment, Chair, the person in leadership bringing a racial justice lens to this space is obviously very important. The persons are the people who formed the leadership. As I'm thinking about what's happening in the current national arena, I am wondering as to your thoughts about the ability to institutionalize these recommendations, regardless of the persons who are in leadership for executing them. I'm going back to that thought about the executive order, where with a new administration, the existing recommendations could be executive ordered into non-existence. And so I'm curious if you have any thoughts about the way in which the charter could be in some way used to ensure that regardless of who is sitting in the seats, so that we're not in a situation where racial justice because it's something that you personally may believe in, how it can be mandated, even if the person sitting in that seat perhaps is not

as inclined or, frankly, as knowledgeable about these issues as the two of you and your current teams are?

Torian Easterling (TE): 1:22:46

Yeah, I'll just jump in. I think that's also why, in addition to naming the position, we also wanted to be clear about the role of the office and the work that the office will do. Certainly, you know, just to go back to sort of the mayoral office on racial inclusion and equity, I think, again, building on what the taskforce would do, but leading with health and equity policy, making sure that there is a way in which we're using our research and our budget intentionally with a racial justice lens, so that we are taking the focus off of the role of the person in the position, and really building that structure, I think it's a first step. And I do think, again, you know, really expanding those types of roles in that work into the agencies is also important. And I don't want to sort of just talk about the health equity policy within the office because there are ways in which we need to sort of operationalize these tools and not just sort of health equity policy, but also racial equity assessments. Like what are the ways in which City government should be working, so that they can advance a racial justice lens and get to the outcomes? And I think both the office and those tools are just ways. You know, like, I think the charter could reflect, certainly, that type of work.

Sideya Sherman (SS): 1:24:29

I would just build on that point. I think that we've also been-- you know, bureaucracies can be very difficult to shift. And I think, you know, in ways that can be helpful too, right, if you want to institutionalize work. So I think there's also been a lot of effort to really think about where, you know, these racial equity practices and strategies can be institutionalized in existing processes within City government into the ways that people do their work today so that they are really, really not only reaching leadership, but really reaching all levels of an organization, and supported and really invested in by leadership. And so, you know, a lot of the recommendations that came were, you know, big ideas and things that can be addressed to the charter and through leadership and through an office, but also like, really, really, micro, you know, fine-tuned recommendations that builds on what City leaders know about procurement processes or hiring processes or a lot of the processes that exist within government where there's an opportunity to really embed, you know, these racial equity goals into the day-to-day work.

Lurie Daniel Favors (LDF): 1:25:39

Thank you.

Jennifer Jones Austin (JJA): 1:25:41

Thank you. I have one other question. And that's something that we haven't centered on. And perhaps, you know, it's something to come back to if you're not at this point able to or ready to apply. Earlier in this process, back in the summer, we met with subject matter experts, thought leaders in different disciplines, and we talked with health professionals, you know, in the field, working in different spaces and places. And there was a lot of centering on specific policy changes in the actual provision of healthcare or in health insurance. And I, for one, perhaps not others, but I for one was trying to figure out how do

you connect maybe some of these policy changes to underlying structural issues around the actual provision of healthcare as a government entity? And so again, you know, I maybe putting you on the spot right now, but I am curious if you have any thoughts about that, and we can come back to it at a later time if not, but again, I very much appreciate the centering that you all are doing on the social determinants of health. Because there's some who believe, like my 24-year-old daughter, you can have all the healthcare funding available, but if you're not centering on the social determinants, you may not get but so far. So I put a plug out there for Kennedy Austin. Shout out. So just curious about that because again, we heard a lot about policy, but not really like structural, like, what can be done with respect to the actual provision of care.

Torian Easterling (TE): 1:27:37

Yeah, no, this is exactly what we're tackling. And so, yes, you're right. We will have to come back and sort of outline some of the ways in which we're thinking about this. And this is also again, why, you know, in our own agency restructure, the Commission did identify a really amazing leader in Dr. Michelle Morris, who's our inaugural chief medical officer. Because one of the things that we've been talking about in our own strategic plan is creating healthy neighborhoods, promoting healthier childhood, and then bridging public health and healthcare. Instead, that continuum allows us to have a place-based focus, think about the life course, right, from childhood all the way up to adults because we know that family cohesion is super important. And even thinking about raising public health and healthcare, we understand that it's really important to think about all the systems that intersect with health. And so even though we call it a health system, we know that healthcare systems interact with food and housing, and all the other things that people care about. And so through our strategic plan, we're now identifying, you know, what are those key drivers that we're going to have to address under systems. We know access to health insurance is important. But we also know that there's an opportunity for us to engage health systems around community benefit plans, that we can really begin to think about how we're engaging non-traditional providers as well. Public Health Core being one investment, sort of thinking about expanding our public health infrastructure, so that when we talk about access, that individuals having access to community health workforce really extends our ability to connect people to care, but also do an environmental assessment. So those are just some of the ways that we've been thinking about how our systems change work could be reflected in our agency. But you know, that was just a teaser, and I think we're gonna have to really just sort of come back and share more.

Jennifer Jones Austin (JJA): 1:29:47

Okay. I very much appreciate that. I don't know if we have you for another two minutes or so, three minutes. Is that doable? Okay.

Torian Easterling (TE): 1:29:56

Let's do it.

Jennifer Jones Austin (JJA): 1:29:57

Okay, good deal. I see Commission Bermudez has her hand up.

Ana M. Bermudez (AMB): 1:30:02

Yeah, this is actually less of a necessarily Commission work. But some of the conversation, Dr. Easterling, leads me to believe that it's time to meet on my other capacity from probation because there's some things we can do together that I think we tried in the past, but I think we're more ready now. So anyway, it's a plug for that. And I'll reach out to your office.

Torian Easterling (TE): 1:30:31

Great. Hopefully that's a plug for the Neons and all the great work.

Ana M. Bermudez (AMB): 1:30:35

Yes, exactly. I mean, it's more confluent with your health equity centers. Yeah, exactly.

Jennifer Jones Austin (JJA): 1:30:44

So I want to thank you. And I'm gonna make my own plug. I think that you need to come on to open mind and talk about the work, both Executive Director Sherman and Dr. Easterling, especially the resolution that just passed. We're gonna have to work on that as well. Question about intersectionality and intersectional issues. When I think about health and healthcare in America, and I think about what is happening, you know, particularly for women of color, do we need to-- Would you speak to us a little bit about whether it is enough to just center as we think about these issues on race? Or should we be doing a little bit of mission creep?

Torian Easterling (TE): 1:31:34

Sorry. Should we be doing mission creep?

Jennifer Jones Austin (JJA): 1:31:37

Right. I mean, just like centering on there are intersectional issues here, you know, when we think about the experience of certain communities, and particularly women of color.

Torian Easterling (TE): 1:31:49

Oh, absolutely. There's no question there, that we will and we're required to have this intersectional lens and really think about, you know, the work that-- we're talking about a racially just recovery, but what that also means for intersectionality. And so, you know, it's more how do we ensure that we're bringing in and, you know, to address, you know, severe maternal mortality and morbidity and particularly because we know that higher rates of maternal mortality is experienced by Black and Latino women in New York City. So the racial justice lens is there. And we have, you know, responsibility to sort of think about how we're changing those systems as well. So, yeah, there's no question to me that we do need to expand and ensure that there is an intersectional lens.

Jennifer Jones Austin (JJA): 1:32:52

Okay. Good deal. So much has been shared, so much that you both have done. And we are much with a better forward as a Commission. We ask that we have the opportunity to come

back to the two of you as we further delve into the work that you've done. And as we explore other areas where you would likely be helpful to us. So we again extend an invitation to you to come back to us. But we're going to ask in turn that you keep your doors open to us as we work to get to the finish line sometime in the next, I guess, six to eight weeks. But I want to thank you both on behalf of the Commission. You're doing tremendous work. And your work is helping us to get to where we need to be for the City of New York. So thank you, both.

Torian Easterling (TE): 1:33:48

Thank you, again. Thank you for having us.

Sideya Sherman (SS): 1:33:50

Thank you.

Jennifer Jones Austin (JJA): 1:33:51

Absolutely. The Commission is now going to hear from our Head of Public Engagement, Harold Miller, about our plans for engaging with the public over the next several weeks.

Harold Miller (HM): 1:34:12

Thank you, Chair. Good afternoon to the Commission. It was great to see Sideya and Torian with a great presentation, great public servants. So exciting work that they're doing. So over the next few weeks, we are continuing our public engagement efforts. I'm just going to give you kind of top lines and if there's questions, please ask. So on the eighth of November, we're going to be at the Brooklyn Museum for our in-person public session. And then on the 10th, we're going to head up to the Bronx to the Sonia Sotomayor Community Center, and then we're going to have our virtual meeting on the 18th. Running at the same time, our partners, our consultant partners are holding focus groups and constituency-based meetings. Some are listed here. Mutual aid groups, community health and well-being, economic development. Those justice involved, justice oriented, Legal Aid, with the immigration focus, arts and culture, youth, LGBTQI, housing, disability justice, environmental resiliency, and youth and adult education are some of what we're, you know, focusing on. And then also, we've been doing a series of presentations to community boards around the City. So far we had met with seven community boards. We're going to meet with community board 16 tonight. They are averaging about 46 participants per community board, so we have spoken to roughly over 300 members of the community board and the public presenting on our work. So that work is going to continue. We have another dozen or so community boards already scheduled and more to come along with other community-based organizations, arts organizations, and other groups that we are talking to. One last piece, I'm not sure there's a slide for it, but we're going to move forward with the weekend of faith that we want to engage with, you know, somewhere between 50 and 100 houses of worship, in-person and virtually, where houses of worship are currently arranged. And the goal is to provide tools for houses of worship around the City to engage the congregants about the Commission's work, and how the congregation could be involved in the process. And so my ask to the Commissioners today, two things. One, if there are houses of worship that we should connect with, plugin with, please let me know.

And two, as we, you know, start to figure out the weekend of faith, where we want to go, particularly for the in-person, if you are able to commit to speaking at any of the houses of worship we may line up, some will be virtual, some will be in-person. So I ask the Commissioners to help with that. We're going to have staff out as well. And then also, before I forget, we're gonna have other community briefings. We did one a few days ago, which was pretty successful. We had nearly 100 RSVPs and staff-led sessions where we just broke down a report, gave folks a sense of where we are working on the Commission. And so we're looking to do more of that in the near future. And then the upcoming Commission meetings, we're going to have our next Commission meeting on the 16th. Then there's December 3 and December 15.

Jennifer Jones Austin (JJA): 1:38:31

Very, very helpful, Harold. Thank you so much. A couple of things. One, how soon do you want the Commission members to get back to you with specifics on houses of worship that they suggest we engage as well as their availability?

Harold Miller (HM): 1:38:51

Well, this week will be ideal if Commissioners can send at least the houses of worship that we should reach out and participate in the weekend of faith. And then, you know, perhaps in a week or two from now, as we get a little closer, confirm availabilities on, you know, preferred locations, preferred times. And then I will work with the Commissioners on plugging them into particular houses of worship they could speak at

Jennifer Jones Austin (JJA): 1:39:22

Sounds great. I think this is really great, and I really appreciate you organizing this. Also thinking that I'm sure you're probably building off on some of the weekends of faith that had been done around the vaccine and around census and thoughts.

Harold Miller (HM): 1:39:38

Yes.

Jennifer Jones Austin (JJA): 1:39:39

Okay, good deal. Good deal. Good deal. And then Harold provided us with the dates for the remaining public Commission meetings. Those are critical dates. In these upcoming meetings, we will be both finalizing the preamble as well as centering on the proposals that we'll be putting forward to the electorate that we will vote upon ourselves. And really pay attention to the date of December 3 and December 15. December 3 may very well be the date when we as a Commission vote on the proposals and December 15, the review of the proposals, the finalization or the first crack, I should say, at reviewing them extensively. And December 15, we're actually going back and forth. As I think about it right now, we may put another date in there, the week of December, I guess it would be the week of December 6. So there will be Commission meeting December 3. There may be another Commission meeting December 6, and may actually be that week of December 6, where we will be voting on proposals for the final report. We'll come back to you with that. And Harold you may not have that because there has been some changes, as we look at the schedule to get

things done and be wrapped up by December 15. So I just want you all to be mindful of that and be on the lookout, there may be another meeting that is set for the week of December 6 to make sure that we meet our goals, our set goals for completing the work, and completing the report. They're working groups that will continue. And so be on the lookout for those as well. And I can't stress enough we're in that moment of our work in our process, where your attention to your charter email is critically important because we are sending information frequently, you know, just you know. Like, pretty much every day or every other day, we're giving you information. We're giving you briefings. We're giving you updates. And we need you to lean into your charter email so that you can be current, so that when we come together to meet, you're well versed and you have a sense of what we're doing and where we're going, and you're ready to engage. But you all have been great partners thus far. And I'm certain that the work will continue. We're going to wrap up now. I just want to again, recognize everybody's efforts here. I want to recognize all of the staff for the work done to complete the interim staff report and the work that you all are continuing to do to make sure that we are hearing from the community and making sure that their voices are critical components of this process and what actually results. And again, I want to thank all of the Commissioners for showing up, being a part. We've asked a lot of you, and we're still asking more. But when all is said and done, I believe that we will feel good about the process that we undertook. And know that we have individually and collectively fought to make a difference and to really take a critical step forward in dismantling racism here in New York City. And perhaps that will extend out well beyond. That is my fervent hope. That's my prayer. And I'm just going to tell you that you all are helping to actualize it. So I appreciate everyone. Next Commission meeting is November 16 as we shared, 4pm to 6pm. We're planning for this to be an in-person meeting. And that's the time when we're going to be previewing the public ideas that are going to go into the Commission's final report. So I do hope to see all of you there on the 16th. Should you have any questions, never hesitate to reach out to the Commission staff or to me, and we'll try to do our best to be responsive. So I want to thank you all again for being with us. I want to thank the public for engaging with us, the community. We're all trying to do our best to produce a product that benefits us all. So thank you. Have a great evening, and the meeting is adjourned.