

# African American Health State Advisory Council Meeting Minutes

10/22/2024

## Attendees

### Council Members

- Rae Blaylark
- Charles Dixon
- Patrick Ingram
- Andrea Lawson
- Dr. Brittney Lewis
- Livingston
- Pleasant Radford
- Chris Smith
- Abdou Manjang
- Paul May Kramer

### MDH Staff

- Jordan Burt-McGregor
- Endurance Ehimen Eichie
- Nila Gouldin
- Sandy Johnson
- DaVonna Rucker

## Review and Approval of Minutes

### Agenda

- 4:00-4:20 Meal/Arrival
- 4:20-4:25 Attendance
- 4:25-4:45 Share Out
- 4:45-5:00 Council Standards

- 5:00-5:05 SWIFT Vendor Registration Roll Call
- 5:05-5:15 Break
- 5:15-5:45 Co-Chair Selection
- 5:45-6:00 MDH Staff Update
- 6:00-6:15 Next Meeting
- 6:15-6:30 Final Thoughts and Adjourn

## Old Business

- SWIFT Vendor Registration Status
- Council Activities Defined
  - In-person/virtual council meetings
  - Community engagement or networking events
  - Work group meetings
  - In-person commitments related to the council

## New Business

- Co-chairs selected: Patrick Ingram, Cindy Devonish
  - Who will like to step forward into a co-chair position? Charles Dixon and Cindy Devonish expressed interest in the Google sheet previously sent to group. Patrick Ingram expressed interest and stepped into the role, with a possibility of stepping away at some point if asked to lead the states HIV conference. Charles Dixon nominated Dr. Carolyn Livingston and stepped down himself. The group voted for the remaining two who expressed interest to be elected as co-chairs with Dr. Livingston serving as an alternate in the event Patrick Ingram needs to step away for a period of time.
  - Are we going to vote today? Yes. 8 for and 0 against.
- Next meeting date (monthly in-person with a hybrid option as needed).
  - Meetings in Minneapolis and URock.
- There is an operations budget for the council.
- Mixer: council and grantees on November 12. Nila provided information regarding this.

## Notes

- Dr. Brittney Lewis: asked a series of questions to staff last meeting and learned a number of things that still need to shift/change. Wants more clarity on some things and whether the things we (council) raise makes any impact. We could use a laundry list of issues our community is facing. The systems and faucets do not communicate with each other. Our approach should be a holistic model and not looking

at individual issues as though they're not related. Which brick do we take off first and how can you be confident about that brick. Let's be strategic about the brick we're taking off.

- Charles Dixon: nothing new. Old: working with DHS for eight years now. Here to be part of the solution but nature of gov is nauseating and frustrating for him. Wants to see exactly what AAHSAC results in. Part of g: internet cyber bullying, comm violence and racism in school. The department decided to focus on cyberbullying instead of comm violence and racism in school. Are we an aspiration group or are we practical? Given our short timeline, what are we going to do? Prevention is something we can control. Education campaigns: what can somebody do to improve health outcomes? Ex: dandelion.
- Abdou Manjang: First day attending council meeting. What made him join is the effort that lies ahead to transform voices and hold at higher level. Policies are subjective and not objective...not considering unheard part of community. If not involved, can't make changes. Learn structure and process to see how to be more effective in making a difference in lives of people we represent. Knowing we have two years, let's have a roadmap of priorities and be time specific. There's a tool that helps with strategic planning and creating a timeline. The tool allows the next person to pick up from wherever you stopped. How do we make impact without community engagement. DR: are you talking about the council or the office? AM: council. DR: council may interact with community as much as they'd like.
- Chris Smith: Q: term technically started January 5, 2024, is that correct? Jordan: yes according to SOS site. So end of term is January 5, 2026? Jordan: yes. So upcoming legislative session is our only session to advise legislator or anything. This is my biggest concern.
- Pleasant R Junior: First meeting because he has 5-week-old daughter keeping him busy. Excited to be here and have privilege to participate in this council. Share many of the concerns being addressed. Helping the black community is not something he can do on his own so happy to be in the room with other black people. Here to listen and see what has been discussed and see how to move forward with the truncated period (one legislative session). Do we have examples of states with similar councils? California had a council/body focused on reparations but didn't pass. Evanston, Illinois, had a similar process for reparations and it did pass in the city. Has the team done the research or know anyone or anything that's doing this work.
- Livingston: it's really nice to be in a space with black people talking about black issues. Doesn't get to do this often. Outcomes and objectives should also be about making.
- Blaylark: not new to working with state and how things move incredibly slow. This is first meeting due to being OOO often. This space allows people to focus on the issues concerning our people. What is the commissioner's involvement? What is her push with this work? Well beyond changing people - need to change policies. Does this council have a charter? Jordan: there's no legislated mandated charter; council can elect co-chairs and create own charter. Has a council like this existed in the past? I'm looking for historical knowledge: what has worked before, what hasn't. Instead of trial and error, there needs to be a strategy to utilize the time we have. Jordan: there has been other councils in the past but not one mandated to focus on AAs; there's still work to be done and I can't point to one council that's doing the work that we're pushing for. Is there funding? Nila: we have funding: a million for PBH grant. Is there an opportunity to start where others stop? We tend to start, stop, star, stop without progress. Let's be careful: just because they throw money at us doesn't mean they throw change at us. How do we put efforts together so we can stop these silos and stop duplicating efforts.

Where are the young people? How can we do anything without hearing their voices? Precedence is a good start. What is in the legislature? Starting from scratch isn't practical. How many people do you have in your office? DR: four gms, one finance rep, one admin support. How well does the community know this office exists? DR: not much. This is where we should start: let community know the office exist and increase our voices. There should be basic understanding of what's being done.

- Andrea Lawson: glad to be in a space with black people. Things to touch on: space (URock said we can use their space). Coming up with one initiative each quarter. Does work with MCH and is typically the only person in the room and with MDH. How to help community get access to services. Was told to have an annual gala and pull in community partners to network. Where does policy come in (e.g. race-conscious policy).
- Pat Ingram: no longer at Hennepin County; are there specific examples the dep. Comm can speak to on how MDH is listening to councils. What are the top three or four things council can really focus on? Will love having some data to rank what's the most urgent things to address. Orgs. Get money to work with certain comms and don't do that. How does MDH funding hold a level of accountability by grantees? Meeting frequency? What is appropriate? Do we have ad hoc community? Can we have a charter or document/guiding principle with the info we're working on so the people after us will have it to use? Jordan: absolutely. After January 5, 2026, everyone can serve for two more terms if you so wish. Can we hold conferences? Nila: we had conferences back when EHDI started. Does this office have an outreach staff that goes to community? DR: short answer is "no"; we are primarily internal facing as an office.
- Paul Kramer: had COVID last month and couldn't make meeting. Really want to contribute to this effort. Things being both foundational and invitational: letting someone see the door is open to them.

**Meeting adjourned at 6:20 p.m.**

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