

Meeting Minutes: Cultural and Ethnic Communities Leadership Council

Date: 1/24/2020

Minutes prepared by: Rebeca Sedarski

Location: Rondo Public Library, St. Paul, MN

Attendance

- **CECLC Members:** Jean Lee, Kia Moua, Lucas Peterson, Russell Pointer, Rebeca Sedarski, Danisa Farley, Petronellah Thomas Shanobi, TaShonda Williamson, Serena Xiong, Elizabeth Taylor-Schiro, Mariah Norwood, Rosa Tock, Sheree Steele, Alana Wright, Maria Sarabia
- **DHS Staff:** Helly Lee, Nicole Juan, Jennifer Blanchard, Verona Mitchell, Roberta Downing, Dr. Nathan Chomilo, Charlie Lawler, Ashley Reisenauer, Diego Diaz
- **Guests:** Sen. Patricia Torres-Ray, Rosalva Hernandez, Sabrenia Young, Claudia Santoyo

Decisions Made

- Review/approve minutes from the November meeting
 - 1st motion to approve: Lucas Peterson
 - 2nd motion to approve: Kia Moua

The decision to approve the meeting minutes from the December meeting was tabled.

- Review/approve today's agenda:
 - 1st motion to approve: Sheree Steele
 - 2nd motion to approve: TaShonda Williamson

Action Items

- Send to the members of the Legislative team, the CECLC legislation once it comes out of the Revisor's Office.

Agenda

- 12:30: Welcome, Networking/Light Lunch, Land acknowledgement, Chair remarks and grounding:
- 1:00 Introductions
- 1:20 Review and Approve Meeting Minutes & Agenda
- 1:45 CECLC and POCI Caucus Discussion
- 2:45 Open Community Space
- 2:55 Announcements
- 3:00 Adjourn

Meeting Notes

Welcome

CECLC Chair Maria Sarabia welcomed everyone to the meeting and the meeting was called to order with members present and quorum reached. The chair provided a land acknowledgement as the CECLC meets on the traditional land of the Dakota Peoples.

CECLC and POCI Caucus Discussion

Chair provided grounding and background, acknowledging:

- The success of the council and the council's efforts, including how the equity policy has been influential not just for DHS but many other entities including Ramsey County.
- The values of being in this space and working toward systems change.
- The importance of centering the voices of those who go through our systems and challenging the status quo and the need for approaches that are impactful in community.
- The foundation of work that gets us to where we are now. If we want to do this work, we must work collectively and own our own weaknesses and strengths.
- Our responsibility to address systemic oppression, undo and unpack the barriers that we have and, leverage our resources and collaborations.
- The chair emphasized that we need to work on our strengths, be focused, and stick to our priorities.

DHS Legislative Discussion

Lucas Peterson, co-chair of the council's external and legislative workgroup, shared the council's legislative priorities. The council has been working on legislative language to eliminate the June 2020 sunset and expanded the statutory language to address disparities. The workgroup has met with Representative Moran and Senator Hayden who were authors of the council's language last year and are also looking for bi-partisan support this session. Lucas also discussed the importance of continuing to build relationship with DHS and their legislative directors to be more engaged in the legislative process on DHS proposals early on.

Dr. Jean Lee reminded the council that she had legislative revisions (deleting a section and instead placing it in the bylaws of the council, and bringing back a line that was deleted by the workgroup). There are still other pieces of the legislation that she also disagrees with moving forward, that the sunset language used in the previous bill is how legislators removed expirations. The council took the suggestions and referred the discussion back to the Legislative/External Workgroup.

Sen. Torres Ray challenged the council to look at the root causes of why children and families end up in the system, which is because of poverty. Separation of families is inhumane and should not exist for any group. How do we create a system of support?

- The chair shared work of Ramsey County where now police officers have a public nurse hotline to call when faced with taking a child out of the home due to unrelated family situations.
- Jennifer Blanchard shared that we have funded our entire case management infrastructure paying for case management and posed whether those resources could be used for supporting families instead.
- Dr. Lee stated that she and Sen. Torres Ray were part of Commissioner Maria Gomez's advisory group which also worked on fixing the child protection system. Dr. Lee informed members that former Deputy Commissioner Anne Barry had a plan to improve DHS from twenty years ago that hasn't been fully acted upon.
- TaShonda Williamson mentioned that she met with child safety and permanency staff to learn about efforts around staff accountability in child welfare cases.
- Dr. Chomilo suggested that the council advise on policies being discussed with the lens of community.
- Lucas shared the council's capacity limitations and hope that the current structure with the workgroups can help do the analysis and work needed. Part of the council's hope is to expand its voice and power by being able to do more of that deep work.

DHS Internal Policies and Operations

Council member Kia Moua provided updates that the DHS internal policies and operations workgroup is working on and opportunities for council member involvement and council members weighed in with the following:

- Council was instrumental in pushing for DHS equity policy. The internal policy and operations workgroup is reviewing the policy with DHS and will engage all necessary individuals to get this done.
- Team for Retention and Employee Engagement (TREE) puts together affirmative action report. Kia sits on that committee as council member. Want to ensure that all DHS policies and processes are in parallel to each other and how policies can better align.
- There are opportunities to advance data disaggregation in DHS to better understand the needs of community.
- Some of the work that the council has done has led to the roles of equity directors and coordinators. Would like further discussion of the appointment of the equity assistant commissioner. For appointments, community engagement is not a part of that process, but there is precedent for involving communities. These are the types of conversations that we can have that impact the hiring of individuals who make decisions that impact millions of Minnesotans.
- Council member Dr. Rev. Jean Lee mentioned that Senator Hayden spoke of opposition by other legislators.
- Jean gave praise to previous Assistant Commissioners who made commitments to equity work.

Nicole announced sign up for topics workgroup to work more closely on priority issues for the council.

Open Community Space

- February 1st at Minneapolis Convention Center – Community Connections.

- Voting begins through absentee ballots on January 17th, 2020
- Health Services Advisory Council is looking for 1 community member; physicians from diverse backgrounds and communities to apply. Details will come in bulletin.
- March 9th is the Latino Legislative Day at the Capitol, program starting from 9:30-10:30am with legislative visits afterward from 11am-2pm. Possible intersection with the CECLC's legislative efforts.
- Community relations staff asked council members to read through email bulletins and requested individual profiles for the council contact list.
- Blue Ribbon Commission working sessions are scheduled through May; let Helly know if you need information.
- Dr. Lee stated that the information included to Council members in the council contact roster was incorrect and is not what is on her 6 page resume, or the 4 page resume she has shared with members previously. She asked all members to disregard and not make the information public. Community relations staff will update the roster accordingly.

The motion was made to adjourn the meeting by Alana Wright. It was seconded by Lucas Peterson. All in favor, the motion passed.

Next Meeting

Date: February 21

Time: 12:30-4:00

Location: Rondo Library, St. Paul, MN

Meeting Minutes: Cultural and Ethnic Communities Leadership Council

Date: 2/21/20

Minutes Prepared By: Lydia Pfluger

Location: Rondo Community Library, Saint Paul, MN

Attendance

- **CECLC Members:** Jean Lee, Kia Moua, Lucas Peterson, Russell Pointer, Danisa Farley, Serena Xiong, Elizabeth Taylor-Schiro, Mariah Norwood, Alana Wright, Maria Sarabia, Raie Gessesse, Marcia Bierschenk, Sarah Clyne, Maret Banks, Jenny Srey, Adesola Oni, Shannon Geshick, Andrew Morris
- **DHS Staff:** Helly Lee, Nicole Juan, Lydia Pfluger, Rebeca Sedarski, Commissioner Jodi Harpstead, Karen McKinney, Christa Spielman, Leslie Garcia, Tamir Elnabarawy, Crystal Fairchild, Diego Diaz-Rivero, Wendy Plager, Dan Pollock.
- **Guests:** Andrew Virden, Melvin Giles, Gina Smith, Kindra McGee, JoAnna Gallmon-Young, Karen Gray, Nora Hall

Decisions Made

Review/approve minutes from December and January meeting:

- 1st motion to approve:
- 2nd motion to approve:
- Minutes were tabled
- Council member Jean Lee had edits to the December and January minutes. The minutes were tabled.

Review/approve today's agenda:

- 1st motion to approve: Kia Moua
- 2nd motion to approve: Lucas Peterson

Action Items

Council member Jean Lee is to share her edits to the minutes with community relations staff to be incorporated into the minutes prior to the next council meeting.

Agenda

- 12:30 Welcome/Networking
- 1:00 Introductions
- 1:20 Review and Approve Meeting Minutes & Agenda
- 1:25 DHS Updates
- 1:55 Census 2020 – Andrew Virden, Director of Census Operation and Engagement
- 2:10 Integrated Care for High Risk Pregnancies (ICHRP) - ICHRP Team members
- 2:40 Workgroup Updates
- 2:50 Open Community Space
- 2:55 Announcements
- 3:00 Adjourn Public Meeting
- 3:15 CECLC Workgroup Time

Welcome

CECLC Chair Maria Sarabia welcomed everyone and the meeting was called to order with members present and quorum reached. The chair provided a land acknowledgement recognizing that the CECLC meets on the traditional land of the Dakota Peoples. Council members and guests went around the room and introduced themselves.

DHS Updates

Chief Equity Officer: Commissioner Jodi Harpstead introduced herself and expressed support for the council and her interest in attending council meetings quarterly. She then introduced Dr. Karen McKinney, Chief Equity Officer at DHS. Dr. Karen McKinney provided an overview of her personal and professional background and shared that the focus of her role at DHS will be to infuse equity, justice, and antiracism into the department and implement the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) throughout the agency to move the needle on inequities. Council members asked what the structure for this work will look like in relation to Equity Coordinators and Directors, noting that DHS operates in silos. Dr. Karen McKinney shared that she believes there are pockets within the agency where progress is being made in these areas and others that are far behind. She stated that she will work in collaboration with Equity Coordinators and Directors to advance equity. Council members asked Dr. Karen McKinney to use the council's expertise as a resource in these efforts. Dr. Karen McKinney stated that she is open to working with the council. Equity efforts will be focused internally in order to better impact communities.

Public Charge: Federal Relations Director Tamir Elnabarawy shared updates on the federal public charge rule. The rule is scheduled to go into effect on Monday, February 24th. DHS is working to provide information and basic messaging around the rule for individuals and communities to quell the chilling effect it is having. Tamir then shared a draft of a flyer that provides information about the public charge rule for feedback. Council members asked about the flyer being available in other languages. Tamir shared that the document is currently

only in English and DHS is working to get it translated into Spanish, Hmong, and Somali, but wanted to prioritize getting something out as soon as possible.

Equity Director: Christa Spielman shared her new promotion to Equity Director of Continuing Care for Older Adults (CCOA) Administration at the Department of Human Services. She extended thanks and gratitude to the council for pushing for the existence of these positions. Christa shared that she is excited about equity work, joining the equity committee, wanting to get involved, and making equity a greater priority in their respective areas.

Live Well at Home Grant: Assistant Commissioner of Continuing Care for Older Adults Dan Pollock shared that request for proposals are currently being accepted for [Live Well at Home grants](#) through the Aging and Adult Services Division. These grants are available to community organizations and tribal nations to develop and/or provide services for older Minnesotans to live and age in the community.

Census 2020

Minnesota Department of Administration Director of Census Operation and Engagement Andrew Virden presented on the 2020 Census and its impacts on equity, funding, and political power with an emphasis on how the census undercounts communities of color, immigrants, and low wealth communities. Andrew presented a flyer to the council which broke down the funding that Minnesota receives as a result of the Census as well as stories on how this funding impacts the lives of Minnesotans. Andrew then demonstrated the Minnesota 2020 Census Help Desk resource for individuals to get more information about the Census. Individuals can text questions to 662020 and will get a response texted back. Questions can be submitted in English, Spanish, Somali, or Hmong. Council members asked what they can do to help to give people the confidence that their information will be protected and alleviate fears. Andrew noted that the best for individuals to believe this is when they hear it from someone they know. The information is kept confidential for 72 years. Andrew encouraged members to help spread information about the Census and said he was open to answering additional questions. The Census count begins on April 1st

Integrated Care for High Risk Pregnancies (ICHRP)

Integrated Care for High Risk Pregnancies (ICHRP) is a collaborative of 5 organizations in Hennepin and Ramsey Counties that aims to create better integrated pathways and stronger partnerships to address African American high-risk pregnancies. The ICHRP's Advisory Council is applying to become a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. The purpose is to create a community-driven hub that addresses high-risk African American pregnancies.

Individuals involved in ICHRP gave a presentation to the council that provided an overview of the disparities that exist for African American women with regard to in birth outcomes and infant mortality. They provided background information on their work and logic model that outlines their efforts to address disparities in care

for African American women and support their ability to have healthy pregnancies, healthy babies, and improved relationships with health care providers. The group is also interested in making sure African American men are involved in health care.

Staff from Dynamic Involved Valued African American (D.I.V.A) Moms shared information about their work on this initiative. DIVA Moms is on one of the specific ICHRP initiatives that exists within Minnesota Community Care – one of the 5 partner organizations. D.I.V.A. Moms provides group prenatal care, home or community-based visits, drop-in support circles, case management, breast feeding support, and doula care to U.S. born African American women or women carrying Black babies.

The ICHRP initiative overall is trying to build something that is truly collaborative under a 501(c)(3) umbrella. Parts of the services these initiatives provide are free and they won't turn individuals down for services as long as it they can meet their needs with their available funding. However, the initiative is currently operating with limited funding. Community Relations Director Helly Lee asked presenters to share a little bit about their community-driven approach, their ability to focus on a specific population and how that is unique to the success of the work, and how they envision the work moving forward. ICHRP representatives noted that once a structure has been created, it can be tailored it to specific needs. They expressed the need for leadership to provide the resources and money so they can do what they need to do and trust them to be their own saviors and heroes for their community. There are many individuals who want to be in these positions providing these services to women, but there is not enough money. They noted that through this work there has been strengthened unions and partnerships.

ICHRP representatives noted that they will keep the council informed as they developed materials. Lastly, ICHRP representatives shared that individuals can call or text information to (651) 102-1116 about an individual to refer them to these services and they will work to find these individuals and get them connected to support.



The ICHRP Model -
Final.pptx

Workgroup Updates

- **Legislative/External** – Lucas Peterson shared that council members will gather after the meeting to discuss CECLC legislation.
- **DHS Internal Policies and Operations** – Kia Moua shared that the workgroup will be focusing updating the DHS Equity Policy and the CECLC's bylaws.
- **Topics/Issues** – Marcia Bierschenk shared that a meeting will be scheduled next week or the week after talk about projects from the DHS Business Solutions Office.

Members should contact Nicole if they want to be added to a specific workgroup.

Open Community Space

- In reference to the council's efforts to advance their legislation this year to eliminate their sunset and make other policy changes, council member Dr. Lee restated the importance of telling legislators that the Council did more than get Equity Coordinators hired. She said giving them copies of the annual report would help. She passed around the previous year's legislation, SF 1561, which includes language to compensate the members and delete the sunset. The issue was tabled, and was instructed that issues regarding the current legislation be discussed in the workgroup.
- Dr. Lee said that the Council committed to supporting the Council on Minnesotans of African Heritage's Family Preservation legislation last year, and that the current council needs to continue the support.
- Dr. Lee restated that background information in the January council contact list was incorrect and needs to be retracted. Community relations staff relayed that information compiled for the council contact list was taken out of the application materials members submitted for the council. The contact lists were not made public, as they are intended for council member use only, to be able to connect with one another. Staff shared that information for Dr. Lee has been deleted in the contact list and will be included when she submits the information she wants shared.

Closing

Maria shared that it was encouraging to see the number of council members at the meeting and expressed her thanks to the presenters and guests for attending. She encouraged members to stay focused as they work to get the legislation passed to get the sunset language removed.

Next Meeting

Date: Friday, March 20

Time: 12:30 p.m.

Location: Rondo Community Library, St. Paul, MN

Meeting Minutes: Cultural and Ethnic Communities Leadership Council

Date: 3/20/20

Minutes Prepared By: Lydia Pfluger

Location: WebEx

Attendance

- **CECLC Members:** Kia Moua, Alana Wright, Jean Lee, Sarah Clyne, Maret Banks, Russell Pointer, Danisa Farley, Adesola Oni, Mariah Norwood, Anjuli Cameron, Raie Gessesse, Jenny Srey, Sheree Steele, Maria Sarabia, Elizabeth Taylor-Schiro
- **DHS Staff:** Helly Lee, Nicole Juan, Lydia Pfluger, Rebeca Sedarski

1:00 Welcome & Check-in

Council member Kia Moua welcomed everyone and provided an overview of logistics for the meeting, noting that the meeting will be short and traditional business will not be conducted, such as approving minutes. Council members who joined the meeting each shared how they were doing during these challenging times. Many council members shared that they are experiencing information overload related to COVID-19 and are taking things day by day. Council members are continuing try to provide support to those most vulnerable in the community. They also expressed distress with the discrimination that is occurring alongside the COVID-19 pandemic, and members are keeping these communities in mind as the work to address the pandemic continues.

With regard to services to communities, council members shared a numbers of changes, questions, and concerns relevant to DHS. Providers are working to shift treatment services for mental health, home visiting, etc. to telehealth or virtual visits, but there continues to be difficulty providing treatment and services during the pandemic. Many services in the community are also closing and shifting in order to comply with health and distancing requirements, however, there is difficulty in servicing vulnerable communities during this time of unmet need. Specific questions and concerns included a desire to have red tape cut for home care workers and support from DHS for things such as food, cash, transportation, as well as many other resources comminutes are running short on.

1:30 DHS Updates

Director of Community Relations, Helly Lee thanked members for joining the call during this difficult and challenging time. Helly noted that current events and responsibilities are taking a toll everyone and their communities and hopes that members are continuing to take care of themselves and one another.

Helly shared that the priorities at DHS are focused on responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. DHS and the External Relations team are getting lots of questions from counties, Tribes, providers, and communities and the department is working hard to address many of those questions at this time.

The External Relations team held a community call on Wednesday, with over 100 community and nonprofit agencies. Individuals from each administration within DHS shared how they are working to address COVID-19 and adapt services during this time of need. The team is hearing community questions and working to field them to get them addressed with the different business areas. Changes are occurring by the hours and the days. The Governor's press conference this afternoon will share announce an executive order that will affect DHS's efforts to address needs at this time. External Relations will continue to do open calls as they have updated information to share. These will be shared with council members when they are scheduled.

During the calls Wednesday, Federal Relations Director, Tamir Elnabarawy gave updates on federal changes that have occurred. Recently, two bills have been passed and there is a third is being worked on that is moving quickly. Additionally, any services to test or treat COVID-19 will not be considered a public charge. Tamir can share more of these updates during the next community call.

Council members asked if there were any updates regarding DHS licensing requirements related to youth placed out of the home. Helly shared that DHS does not have an answer to that concern yet, but will circulate an answer once it is received.

Kia thanked members for their patience with DHS and noted that she and the Community Relations team will let members know as much as they know when they have it. Helly will share executive orders and information as soon as they are announced.

If you have questions or receive questions about COVID-19 please share them with community.relations.dhs@state.mn.us so we can track them and share them across the agency. DHS is continuing to try and develop resources to community and spread information. Please visit <https://mn.gov/dhs/covid-19/> for updates.

2:00 Workgroup Updates

- Legislative/External
 - Nicole Juan shared that a lot of legislative efforts have been put on hold and that she will work with leadership to touch base once there is more information. Before the recent changes related to COVID-19, a lot happened with the CECLC legislation within the last month. There were 3 total hearings thus far - 1 in the Senate 2 in House. A good amount of council members attend the hearings and provided testimony, including a mix of council members who work in both the government and community, as well as the former CECLC Chair, Vayong Moua.

- Kia will continue to reach out to folks about testifying and showing up for support if/when needed. Kia expressed that the communication this year with the legislature has been the best she has seen so far in her time on the council. She shared that it is critical for the council to be as engaged as possible because if it is not passed the group will no longer be in existence.
- Council Chair, Maria Sarabia shared that she was going to meet with Representative Rena Moran before changes around COVID-19, but is hopeful she will be able to connect with her at a later time.
- DHS Internal Policies and Operations – Kia Moua, Raie Gessesse
 - Current items are on hold because of all that has been happening related to COVID-19. Leadership will work to get something rescheduled. Kia noted that she is proud of the work that the group has already done, including working to address some needed changes to the CECLC bylaws.
- Topics/Issues – Danisa Farley
 - During their last meeting, members discussed how they plan to proceed with future meetings. They tentatively decided that their meetings would occur on the first Wednesday of each month. At their next meeting, they intend to talk more about what they will work on as a committee
 - There was a presentation from the Business Solutions Office (BSO) in the last meeting. BSO staff shared information about the app they are intending to roll out to support individuals in accessing services and their intention to engage communities in this process. Council members were able to ask general questions on who the targeted users are for the app and how it would help or hinder certain populations. Danisa mentioned that she can share a more comprehensive report at a later date.

If you want to get involved in a specific workgroup let any of the workgroup members or Nicole know.

Open Community Space

Kia noted that workgroup chairs are currently testing out Slack as a way to communicate as an alternative to email. This group is going to keep trying for a communication method that works for all the council members.

Meeting Minutes: Cultural and Ethnic Communities Leadership Council

Date: 4/17/20

Minutes Prepared By: Lydia Pfluger

Location: WebEx

Attendance

- **CECLC Members:** Marcia Bierschenck, Sarah Clyne, Danisa Farley, Raie Gessesse, Shannon Geshick, Jean Lee, Kia Moua, Mariah Norwood, Adesola Oni, Lucas Petersen, Russell Pointer, Maria Sarabia, Elizabeth Taylor-Schiro, Sheree Steele, Tashonda Williamson, Serena Xiong.
- **DHS Staff:** Commissioner Harpstead, Brian Balk, Leslie Garcia, Helen Ghebre, Nicole Juan, Helly Lee, Karen McKinney, Verona Mitchell, Lydia Pfluger, Rebeca Sedarski, Nelly Torori.

Decisions Made

Review/approve December, January, February, March minutes as a package:

- 1st motion to approve: Jean Lee – with the understanding that tweaks to the language that have already been submitted will be made.
- 2nd motion to approve: Marcia Bierschenck

Review/approve today's agenda:

- 1st motion to approve: Jean Lee
- 2nd motion to approve: TaShonda Williamson
- The motion passed unanimously

Action Items

- Council members are to spread the word about the three vacancies on the council.

Agenda

- 1:00 Welcome and Land Acknowledgement

- 1:10 Introductions
- 1:30 Review and Approve Meeting Minutes & Agenda
- 1:35 DHS Updates
- 1:45 Discussion: The Impact of COVID-19 on Communities
- 2:00 Open Discussion
- 2:30 Commissioner Harpstead Comments
- 2:50 Recap
- 2:50 Close out
- 3:00 Adjourn

Welcome and Land Acknowledgement

Council Chair, Mara Sarabia began the meeting by acknowledging the challenging time that many are experiencing and expressed gratitude to members and guests for joining the meeting. Maria then provided a land acknowledgement.

“We acknowledge that we gather as the CECLC on the traditional land of the Dakota Peoples, past and present, and acknowledge with gratitude the Land itself and the People. We take to heart and commit through action to learn and honor the traditional cultural Dakota Values: Courage, Wisdom, Respect and Generosity.”

Council members and attendees introduced themselves and briefly shared how they feeling during this time and the struggles that are impacting them and their communities.

DHS Updates

Community Relations Director, Helly Lee, thanked members for all the work that they are doing in community during this time. DHS is working hard to relay all of the changes to services and programs that have been occurring as a result of COVID-19. Helly noted that she has been sending out many emails and that council members should not hesitate to reach out to her if they need clarification on any of this information.

Community Relations is continuing to work with Governor’s Office and members of other state agencies to share what they are hearing from communities, understand what information communities are missing, and develop coordinated and strategic messaging to communities.

Assistant Commissioner for External Relations, Roberta Downing, shared that she is moving on from DHS and recently accepted a position at the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis as Assistant Vice President for Policy in their Community Development area. Roberta thanked council members for all that they have done over the years for DHS on top of the work that they are doing in community. Roberta shared that she has appreciated being connected with community through the council and being present for the advancements that have occurred as a result of the council over her three years at DHS. In her new role, Roberta will continue working on poverty and economic inequity. Council members congratulated Roberta on her new position and shared that they were thankful that she is staying local and continuing to advance issues related to the mission of the CECLC. Maria stated that the council would like to be connected to the next steps related to this transition at DHS.

Community Relations Specialist, Nicole Juan, shared that the Community Relations team created a resources list related to COVID-19 based on feedback from council members. Nicole encouraged members to review the document, provide feedback on additional information that members would like, and share resources that should be included. This resource list is a draft and Community Relations will continue to work on it as it is useful for council members. Dr. Jean Lee asked for COVID-19 data on minorities to help reduce disparities.

Nicole shared that DHS is opening 3 council position vacancies for applications – including 2 community member positions and 1 DHS staff member position, and asks that council members spread the word for people in their networks to apply.

Discussion: The Impact of COVID-19 on Communities

Council members who work in the areas of health care, youth and family services, domestic violence, and philanthropy shared their perspectives on how communities are being impacted as a result of COVID-19.

- Sheree Steele, Hope Care PCA, Inc. – Sheree shared how the current crisis and transitions have been difficult for Personal Care Assistant services. She shared that initially her organization did not have a lot of communication or direction from DHS on how to move forward with service delivery, and they had not received clearance to provide services over the phone. The network of provider agencies that she belongs to works to communicate issues that they are experiencing with DHS. However, this communication has not happened yet. Obtaining Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) has been extremely difficult and the organization was left to find these resources on their own. There is considerable struggle in ensuring staff and clients are getting PPE and hygiene products that are necessary to keep them safe. Providers in this field have encouraged staff to adhere to OSHA training. Staff are working to find quality information and get those resources to clients. Additionally, many buildings where clients reside are giving them pushback when PCA workers conduct visits. The organization is having to educate apartment facilities on how this could be a vulnerable adult issue. Sheree shared that she is thankful that those she works with are healthy and expressed gratitude for the workers who continue to show up and remain committed.
- TaShonda Williamson, The Link MN – The Link provides services in the areas of youth homelessness, juvenile justice, and Safe Harbor programming. These services are still considered essential. Majority of Case Managers are working from home and are in steady contact with clients through calls, texts, and videos. Staff are often making trips to stores for items that families need and delivering items to their homes. Staff are still able to connect with families, provide services, and incur additional expenses in order to continue to provide care for youth who have experienced trauma. Following CDC guidelines when coming in contact with youth. The organization is receiving lots of donations – including masks, food, and other items. Staff are picking these up and distributing them as soon as possible, especially fresh food items. Staff are also working to ensure that families are aware of resources as they become available.
- Sarah Clyne, Northside Funders Group – The Northside Funders group is a philanthropic collective in North Minneapolis. They are working to get resources out the door as soon as possible. Sarah acknowledged that there is a lot of privilege that exists in philanthropy, and entities often have a lot of money that goes unspent and many are finding this frustrating. The Northside Funders Group recently convened community

members to hear what their most pressing needs are and since created an emergency fund for businesses in North Minneapolis. The ecosystem in North Minneapolis is made up of a number of small business, many of which are hinged on owners' personal finances. The current crisis has caused many businesses to completely shut down as most can't pivot to virtual business. Foundations have more latitude to give to small businesses. The funding for small businesses from The Northside Funders Group is limited to business located in North Minneapolis zip codes. Applications are still open and the first round applications are being approved today. There is currently \$200,000 available now, and they are hoping to secure another \$150,000. Sarah acknowledged that the funding it doesn't go far, but is thankful that resources do exist for this group. In addition to funding, they are adding free technical resources in partnership with 5 organizations to support small businesses. It has been difficult for businesses to access anything under CARES Act. They are also working to connect partners to in legal advocacy for rent or mortgage relief.

- Danisa Farley, Violence Free MN – Danisa shared that working with victims and survivors of domestic and sexual violence during this pandemic is altering their ability to find safe havens. Some shelters are grappling with what to do if families have to quarantine as this may increase their vulnerability to violence. The individuals that typically live in crisis have to get through this current situation and then resume their "norm" after this crisis.
- Dr. Jean Lee, Children's Hope Intl/R&R Family Ctrs, and APAHC – The Housing Consortium – stated that like others, they are working to get more minorities certified as mental health and family healthcare people who could be reimbursed by insurance companies. They're also working on technology solutions in prevention and intervention of major diseases and COVID-19, and related legislation.

Council members expressed concerns about the racial disproportionality that exists around those who are providing the direct care service to vulnerable populations, such as in health care settings. They also shared that PPE is often not enough to protect individuals. If more protective resources were available, people would be and feel safer and more businesses and services could open up.

Council members then discussed their interests in beginning to have conversations about post COVID engagement. They mentioned looking forward to being proactive versus reactive, and that not everyone is going to go back to exactly what that reality looked like beforehand. Council members mentioned looking forward to strategizing to address disproportionality in their communities moving forward.

Commissioner Harpstead's Remarks

Commissioner Harpstead joined the meeting to provide an update on what she had been involved in related to COVID-19, recent DHS actions, and efforts being undertaken to address disproportionalities. She shared that she has been participating in many community, agency, and nonprofit calls to listen in on what is occurring. She expressed her appreciation for being able to be a part of the council meeting. She then discussed how DHS has worked hard to modify rules and regulations – totaling around 30. In conjunction with these efforts, Chief Equity Officer, Dr. Karen McKinney is looking at every one of DHS's decisions from an equity lens.

The department recently partnered with Minnesota Housing on an at risk populations work group to help improve the response for this population. The unsheltered population has been a priority. Hotel beds are

becoming available to support homeless individuals and help them be able social distance and staysafe. The state is doing what it can with PPE and they are working on sourcing opportunities to get more fabric masks into settings that need it. There is a list of providers who are in need of PPE and state agencies are working to get them the supplies necessary. Vulnerable populations are being targeted – including nursing homes or other care facilities. The work group is beginning to look at the overlap of this population with communities of color in order to have a more equitable response. Conversations around equity with the governor’s office have led to the creation of the Community Resiliency and Recovery work group lead by Commissioner Lucero of the Minnesota Department of Human Rights to examine equity during and after COVID.

Commissioner Harpstead is encouraging staff and leaders to imagine their biggest possibilities from this crisis - what can be learned from this and how do we ensure that things don’t go back to the way that they were? How can we continue to ensure at risk populations and communities of color continue to get attention? Commissioner shared the sentiment, “Never miss the opportunity to take advantage of a crisis.” She challenged council members to also imagine their biggest possibilities coming out of COVID.

Council members thanked Commissioner Harpstead for sharing the developments and efforts of DHS. They expressed their appreciation for leaders examining the data to see where there are intersections between race and vulnerable populations. Disproportionate impacts have been occurring in other states, and council members noted that they felt reassured that the state of Minnesota is making data driven decisions to reduce inequities. Council members expressed interest and excitement in serving as a resource as these developments continue. Council members hope communities will never be as at risk after COVID as they were before. Maria encouraged CECLC members to reflect on how they would re-envision human service based on the CECLC’s charge. Continuing to do things how they have always been done is out the window. The opportunity to make changes is now.

Council members, including TaShonda Williamson, Dr. Jean Lee, and Danisa Farley expressed interest in being a part of the discussed committees.

Work group updates

- Legislative/External – Lucas Peterson
 - Nicole shared that DHS is watching what is happening at the legislature. Most of the legislature’s work has been focused on COVID, and the CECLC legislation has paused. As Community Relations gets updates from DHS’s legislative team, they will send them along.
- DHS Internal Policies and Operations – Kia Moua, Raie Gessesse
 - The work group needs to reschedule to begin reviewing the CECLC’s policies and bylaws. Work group members look forward to starting this up again.
- Topics/Issues – Marcia Bierschenk, Danisa Farley
 - The work group needs to reschedule. Their previous meeting was cancelled due to everything happening with COVID. The work group will have an update in May.

Close out

Helly shared that appreciated the updates that council members provided and encouraged members to continue to reach out to Community Relations staff with questions and to share their work in communities. Community Relations is gathering lessons-learned from this to inform systems-change and welcomes reflections from CECEC members.

Maria thanked council members for attending the meeting and encouraged them to think about how the CECLC could inform next steps in human services change as flexibilities are occurring.

Meeting Minutes: Cultural and Ethnic Communities Leadership Council

Date: May 15, 2020

Minutes Prepared By: Lydia Pfluger

Location: WebEx

Attendance

- **CECLC Members:** Maret Banks, Marcia Bierschenck, Anjuli Cameron, Sarah Clyne, Danisa Farley, Shannon Geshick, Raie Gessesse, Jean Lee, Kia Moua, Mariah Norwood, Adesola Oni, Lucas Petersen, Maria Sarabia, Elizabeth Taylor-Schiro, Sheree Steele, Petronellah Thomas-Shanobi, Tashonda Williamson, Alana Wright
- **DHS Staff:** Commissioner Jodi Harpstead, Tamir Elnabarawy, Crystal Fairchild, Leslie Garcia, Susan Hall, Nicole Juan, Kate Kunitz, Helly Lee, Gertrude Matemba-Mutasa, Verona Mitchell, Krista O'Connor, Lydia Pfluger, Eric Ratzmann, Rebeca Sedarski, Devon Gilchrist

Decisions Made

Review/approve April minutes:

- Motion to approve: Jean Lee with inclusion of corrections she submitted
- Second: Lucas Petersen
- The motion passed.

Review/approve today's agenda:

- Motion to approve: TaShonda Williamson
- Second: Kia Moua
- The motion passed.

Action Items

Agenda

- 1:00 Welcome and Land Acknowledgement
- 1:10 Introductions
- 1:30 Review and Approve Meeting Minutes & Agenda
- 1:35 Chair Remarks
- 1:50 Blue Ribbon Commission Update
- 2:00 DHS Updates
- 2:30 Discussion: Biggest Possibilities
- 2:50 Workgroup updates
- 3:00 Adjourn

Welcome and Land Acknowledgement

Council Chair, Mara Sarabia began the meeting by providing a land acknowledgement to ground the meeting.

“We acknowledge that we gather as the CECLC on the traditional land of the Dakota Peoples, past and present, and acknowledge with gratitude the Land itself and the People. We take to heart and commit through action to learn and honor the traditional cultural Dakota Values: Courage, Wisdom, Respect and Generosity.”

Maria reminded attendees that is currently Ramadan is being celebrated and that May is Asian and Pacific Islander American Heritage month. She encouraged attendees to recognize the contributions these communities have made during this time. Maria acknowledged that there have been an increase in racist behaviors and actions towards the Asian community and indicated the council should stand in solidarity with this community and work to build partnerships to push for accountability.

Council members and attendees then introduced themselves before formally beginning the meeting.

Chair Remarks

Message to Council Members

Maria provided context to a message that she sent to council members a few weeks ago. Maria shared that message was to center the council’s purpose and ask members to remain in alignment with one another as the council legislation is being pushed through. All of our communities and our leaders are under pressure and she wanted to encourage solidarity.

Community Resiliency and Recovery Workgroup

Maria shared that she was invited to participate in the Community Resiliency and Recovery workgroup as an advisor on behalf of the CECLC. The workgroup was recently formed and the initial meetings have been focused on developing the group’s foundation. This workgroup was created by the Governor’s Office and is being led by

Commissioner Lucero of the Minnesota Department of Human Rights. The workgroup advisory consists of a variety of individuals from state government and from community with the purpose of addressing the equity impacts of COVID-19. Maria shared that her hope as chair is that this workgroup can tap other council members. She would like to see folks who are more connected to community be welcomed in the meetings.

Data on race and COVID was presented at the advisory group meeting. The initial findings are stark, and some of the data is posted on the MDH and DEED websites. There is racial disproportionality in COVID infections and the essential workforce. There is a desire for people's stories and the lived experiences of how COVID is impacting communities to be captured to contextualize the data. This is something the council can bring to this effort. Council members expressed concern over the message that the data around race and COVID could send. The intent is to show the disproportionality, however, it is allowing for the generalization that communities of color are more contagious to spread. People are trying to avoid communities of color as a whole. Those sharing this data need to provide the correct interpretation to ensure these findings don't lead to additional disparities.

Helly shared that she and the Chief Equity Officer at DHS are members of the workgroup. As the advisory groups were forming, DHS submitted names of council members who indicated interest in the work during the May meeting. Currently, there are already over 100 members advising this workgroup. Helly wants to ensure that the CECLC's voice is represented in these efforts and shared that she is thinking about how the CECLC can be engaged in this work and help to put stories to the data. Helly will continue to share updates with the council. Council members noted that they have expressed interest in participating in the workgroup, but were not told how people were selected or how to participate. Maria noted that during the meeting, she saw little representation of Black women; and she shared that she is willing to step down from her space on the workgroup if needed so council members representing other communities can share their perspective. Council members TaShonda Williamson and Dr. Jean Lee reiterated their interest in being involved in the workgroup. Dr. Lee said she had been sending information directly to Commissioner Lucero and Governor/Lt. Governor, some which were included in his Executive Orders. Her organizations have projects in prevention and intervention.

Council members made note of the need for culturally specific and tailored messaging for specific communities encouraging them to follow the distancing guidelines. Council members shared that they can support the development of messaging and getting this information out to communities.

Blue Ribbon Commission Update

Krista O'Connor, DHS Health Care Administration (HCA) Strategic Development Director, BRC Project Lead provided an update on the activities of the Blue Ribbon Commission. Krista shared that the work of the commission is continuing and the final deadlines are remaining the same, despite the setbacks of COVID. Krista acknowledged that the aggressive timeline is not sufficient to do the necessary engagement work with the public, and the timeline has become even tighter in light of COVID. The community engagement plans with the contracted vendor have pivoted, and they are now looking at hosting virtual events and phone interviews based on feedback and vendor experience. There is also a public comment opportunity where anyone can submit written feedback that will be shared with commission members and combined into the finalized plan. The commission will review as many as strategies as possible by the October due date. Crystal Fairchild, HCA Equity

Director shared that her team has conducted an equity analysis for all 18 strategies that have been developed and have partnered with an external working group to obtain community feedback.

Council members mentioned that the comments for these strategies were submitted prior to the start of the pandemic, but COVID has brought forth additional opportunities for innovation in this area. Council members asked if there is ability and willingness to adjust the strategy elements as well as feedback and recommendations to incorporate the additional learnings from the pandemic. Crystal and Krista shared that they are incorporating additional equity considerations in light of COVID.

Dr. Jean Lee also expressed concerns over the continuation of cuts to services and the impact this might have on access and quality in service delivery. Krista acknowledged that much of the BRC work is still undone and has been impacted by COVID.

DHS Updates

Jodi Harpstead, DHS Commissioner

Commissioner Jodi Harpstead thanked members for allowing her time to speak at the meeting. She shared that Dr. Karen McKinney is also on the Community Resiliency and Recovery workgroup and represents the perspective of a Black woman. Dr. McKinney also observed during the meeting was that there were few black men in the conversation and this was brought up. The workgroup is making an effort to balance perspectives.

Commissioner Harpstead shared that DHS has offered to run the next BRC meetings due to the Minnesota Department of Health's focus on COVID. The Commission is working to finish up the strategies that they were working on all along and leaving the transformational strategies. Commissioner Harpstead noted that after all of this the state will probably need a COVID commission to address the challenges that are coming to light. She stated that she does not want to waste a once in a century crisis by not capturing what we can learn from it. Her biggest possibility is that the most at-risk populations before COVID will be less at risk after COVID. She shared that she and several other leaders have been invited to listening sessions in the community. These conversations have been very rich and helpful for their COVID response as well as their jobs in general; and she doesn't want to stop doing this once COVID is over. Commissioner noted that because they are taking a closer look at race she now is more aware of the issues, and she can use it to make informed decisions. State leaders have been looking at how race data is collected, and there is no state statute requiring the use of federal designations. Another concern is that there is a large number of instances where race is unknown, which impedes the ability to fully capture the trends.

DHS and the state is now starting to learn what their work will look like after COVID, and they are just now beginning to capture what that might mean for state agencies and DHS. There have been discussions around the long term costs of doing businesses as usual versus investing the time and resources up front to better capture how communities are being impacted and address these issues. The Commissioner noted that there has been a lot for leaders to think about.

Dr. Jean Lee and other meeting attendees expressed appreciation for state leadership's efforts to disaggregate the data and better understand the challenges and experiences of unique cultural groups in Minnesota. Dr. Lee

said their technical project they referred to during the April CECLC meeting can capture data. Legislation has been in process, and funding was going to cities, counties, tribes, and others; MDH is coordinating.

Devon Gilchrist, African American Child Well-Being Unit Supervisor, Children and Family Services Administration

Devon Gilchrist shared information on the creation of the African American Child Wellbeing Unit at DHS, which is intended to address the overrepresentation and disproportionate treatment of African American families in the child protection system. The framework and vision for this work is still being crafted, and he has a lot of ideas, but it is intended that this effort will support a system that is equitable for all children and families. The unit will be exploring how resources can be utilized better and work to promote sustainable and transformative change. Devon stated that the work will occur in strong partnership and engagement with stakeholders and community – the effort requires a heavy lift from multiple hands. Devon shared that his goal is to make MN a national leader in this work.

TaShonda Williamson asked Devon to share his thoughts on holding staff involved in the child welfare system accountable for the harms that have contributed to in the system. Devon shared that he is interested in a case review process so families can have their cases looked at if they feel there has been unfair treatment. All persons and systems have to be held accountable, and people should be expected to do their jobs and do them well. This new initiative at DHS will help counties to figure out how to improve their system and support staff.

Dr. Jean Lee also shared that other communities of color want equity in efforts regarding child well-being. The strategies of this initiative need to be inclusive of all minority children and families being served by DHS.

There was interest from council members on supporting the efforts of the African American Child Wellbeing Unit moving forward. These efforts and partnership will be further explored in the CECLC topics/issues workgroup.

Eric Ratzmann, County Relations Director, Interim Assistant Commissioner for External Relations

Eric Ratzmann introduced himself as the Interim Assistant Commissioner for External Relations. Eric noted that he honors and applauds all the work that CECLC members are doing. Eric shared his professional background and mentioned that he has considerable legislative and policy experience working with counties in Minnesota, as well as partnering with stakeholders. Eric noted that he and staff across DHS have learned a lot from recent events and the agency needs to do a better job of engaging with our partners and stakeholders. Eric encouraged and welcomed council members to reach out at any time, and shared that he has an open door policy.

Tamir Elnabarawy, Director of Federal Relations

DHS is pursuing every flexibility offered by the federal government in our SNAP program, including:

- **Online SNAP Purchasing Pilot:** USDA approved Minnesota's application to participate in its Online SNAP Purchasing Pilot. This will allow households to use their SNAP benefits for online food purchases with authorized retailers (which currently includes Amazon and Walmart). Benefits can't be used to cover delivery or service fees, but SNAP customers also have the option to order online with onsite payment

and pickup. DHS has begun implementing the pilot. System enhancements and testing (with the EBT vendor) will occur for approximately 3 weeks. Subsequent testing with Amazon and Walmart will occur for another week. If all goes according to plan, the public rollout could begin in early June.

- **E-SNAP:** Allows SNAP households who receive less than the maximum benefit to receive an emergency allotment to bring them to the maximum. Every state has been authorized to issue emergency allotments, and they are currently available in Minnesota.
- **P-EBT:** The Families First Coronavirus Response Act created the Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) program to assist families/children who are losing access to free or reduced-price school meals at school due to COVID-19. This will allow families to receive the benefit that these children would normally receive at school at home. DHS applied for P-EBT approval on April 27 and is still working though details with USDA – nothing has yet been approved.

DHS is also working with other agencies to ask USDA to extend additional flexibilities (including reporting requirements, recertification, etc.) in food assistance programs (including WIC).

The House of Representatives recently introduced what's being called the HEROES Act – it includes a number of provisions related to SNAP, including:

- \$10 billion to accommodate increased program participation and pay for flexibilities provided by the Families First Coronavirus Response Act
- Increases the SNAP benefit level by 15%
- Increases the minimum SNAP benefit to \$30 per month
- Suspends all work requirements for SNAP participants for the duration of the pandemic
- Prevents USDA from finalizing or implementing any of its administrative SNAP cuts
- Excludes Pandemic Unemployment Compensation as countable income in SNAP benefit calculations
- Allows the use of SNAP to purchase hot foods; and
- Extends Pandemic-EBT through the end of the summer (when schools were scheduled to reopen) and allows states to incorporate children who would have received meals through child care

The White House and Senate have signaled opposition to the bill, so it's unlikely that it will become law.

However, it provides insight into what House leadership will be advocating for as the next response package is developed. DHS is in communication with delegation staff in support of many of these provisions.

Dr. Jean Lee shared that there have been issues with community members using SNAP benefits at some stores as they only have certain options on their devices, which makes the benefits less accessible. Tamir mentioned that he will try and keep note of this within the piloting phase.

CECLC Council Positions

Nicole reminded attendees that there are 3 council position vacancies for applications – including 2 community member positions and 1 DHS staff member position. These applications are due by the end of the day. Nicole will send additional updates in a follow-up email.

Discussion: Biggest Possibilities

This conversation was tabled due to time limitations.

Work group updates

- Legislative/External – Lucas Peterson
 - There have been a lot of changes to the legislative session as a result of COVID-19, and subsequently, the legislation that the CECLC was seeking to pass. The language that was initially proposed is likely not going to be the ending language. The legislative session ends on the 18th. There was some pushback on the language to remove the sunset indefinitely, and the language that has been put forward in the omnibus in House and Senate bill is to have the sunset extended through June 2022. If this language is approved, the council will still exist. There is indication that the sunset extension will be approved. The council will need to strategize on how to remove this permanently in the future.
- DHS Internal Policies and Operations – Kia Moua, Raie Gessesse.
 - Recently a subgroup got together to review the CECLC bylaws and made recommendations on what should be changed. These suggestions are going to the larger workgroup soon. After this review, the changes will then be shared with all CECLC members to offer feedback and provide suggestions.
 - Another subgroup is looking at the DHS Equity Policy. The review and feedback process will be the same as that for the CECLC bylaws. Amending the equity policy is in collaboration with DHS. Therefore, there other voices from DHS that need to be included. This will be a longer process than that of the bylaws.
- Topics/Issues – Marcia Bierschenk, Danisa Farley
 - This group has chosen to meet on the first Wednesday of each month. They met with the DHS Business Solutions Office (BSO) at a previous meeting and would like to bring BSO to the full council to discuss and get feedback on their initiative. The group has yet to narrow down their title and specific focus area. They are interested in working with Devon and tackling child wellbeing issues.

Anyone interested in any of the workgroup meetings, who are not already on the emails for those workgroups, can connect with Nicole.

Close out

Meeting was adjourned at 3 p.m.

Meeting Minutes: Cultural and Ethnic Communities Leadership Council

Date: June 19, 2020

Minutes Prepared By: Lydia Pfluger

Location: WebEx

Attendance

- **CECLC Members:** Marcia Bierschenck, Shannon Geshick, Jean Lee, Kia Moua, Mariah Norwood, Adesola Oni, Lucas Petersen, Russel Pointer, Maria Sarabia, Elizabeth Taylor-Schiro, Sheree Steele, Petronellah Thomas-Shanobi, Rosa Tock, Tashonda Williamson
- **DHS Staff:** Deb Anthony, Sue Banken, Charlene Briner, Diego Diaz-Rivero, Leslie Garcia, Marissa Hinnenkamp, Nicole Juan, Charles Lawler, Helly Lee, Verona Mitchell, Gary Mortensen, Lydia Pfluger, Rebeca Sedarski

Decisions Made

Review/approve today's agenda:

- 1st motion to approve: Kia Moua
- 2nd motion to approve: TaShonda Williamson
- The motion passed.

Review/approve May minutes:

- 1st motion to approve: Kia Moua
- 2nd motion to approve: Marcia Bierschenck
- Motion to table: Jean Lee – edits need to be made
 - Moved to a vote - May minutes tabled
 - Chair noted that there will be a clear process established for editing minutes and approving the edited items. Chair and workgroup leads will take this back as a discussion point and report out to the full council.

Agenda

- 1:00 Welcome and Land Acknowledgement
- 1:05 Chair Remarks
- 1:10 Introductions
- 1:20 Review and Approve Meeting Minutes & Agenda
- 1:25 DHS Equity Partnership
- 1:55 DHS Updates
- 2:15 Adjourn public meeting
- 2:15 CECLC Member Discussion
- 3:00 Adjourn

Welcome and Land Acknowledgement

Council Chair Mara Sarabia began the meeting by providing a land acknowledgement to ground the meeting and shared the CECLC mission and vision.

“We acknowledge that we gather as the CECLC on the traditional land of the Dakota Peoples, past and present, and acknowledge with gratitude the Land itself and the People. We take to heart and commit through action to learn and honor the traditional cultural Dakota Values: Courage, Wisdom, Respect and Generosity.”

Council member TaShonda Williamson then provided a statement acknowledging and honoring Juneteenth and shared Juneteenth’s history as the oldest nationally celebrated commemoration of the ending of slavery in the United States. TaShonda shared that the day has not received full acknowledgement from the government as a national holiday. Despite this, the day has been able to be celebrated year after year in community. She shared that Juneteenth is even more important and significant to community in the wake of the recent and senseless murder of George Floyd.

Chair Remarks

Message to Council Members

Chair Maria Sarabia shared that the council received a two year extension during the legislative special session. Maria encouraged members that now is the time to re-center, re-energize, and re-focus their efforts to spark systems-change and reimagine this work as we have been tasked to do by the legislature.

DHS Equity Partnership

Due to time limitations, Gary Mortenson and Deb Anthony from the Office of Strategy and Performance offered to return to a different council meeting so council members could use the space in their meeting to take care of

council business. Council members agreed to table this discussion and work out a new time for them to present either at a full council meeting or in one of their workgroups.

DHS Updates

Council members were sent an email from Nicole regarding a number of links to events happening related to Juneteenth, World Refugee Day, and Pride Month.

Charlene Briner, the new Deputy Commissioner at DHS overseeing External Relations, Legislative Relations, and Communications, introduced herself to the council and gave an overview of her personal and professional background. Charlene noted that she hopes to be an advocate for equity and mobilize the voice of communities in this role. Charlene closed by sharing that we don't do this work alone, we don't do it with partners and she is excited to work in partnership with the council. Charlene encouraged council members to share with her what they think she should know.

Council members thanked Charlene for sharing her story and her commitment to transforming systems and upholding equity.

Workgroup Updates

Topics/Issues Workgroup – The group is will meet on the first Wednesday of the month at 2:00 p.m. The group is also planning to meet with Devon Gilchrist in July. Workgroup members also noted that they hope to work together and find ways to move the group forward.

Internal Policies and Operations Workgroup – The group is continuing to review the DHS equity policy and the council's bylaws and will be setting up a workgroup meeting between now and the next meeting.

Legislative/External Workgroup – The council's sunset got extended for two years, although, many of the changes that the council had been seeking did not go through. The council will continue to advance the council's work during the 2021 legislative session.

Close Out of Public Meeting

Helly extended thanks to members for all the work that they have done in the legislative session and recognized that a lot was asked of the council. Members stepped up to support the legislative efforts and many other workgroup efforts on top of being so busy in their own lives.

CECLC Member Discussion

Council members then met in breakout sessions with their workgroups to have focused conversations on key council priorities and moving forward in 2020. Feedback shared in breakout sessions will be collected and compiled into a letter to be shared with the Commissioner. Council members discussed.

Discussion question: How can the Council lead to help ensure cultural and ethnic communities and families who experience DHS programs and services, as administered by counties to better achieve racial and health equity?



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Meeting adjourned at 3pm.

Meeting Minutes: Cultural and Ethnic Communities Leadership Council

Date: July 17, 2020

Minutes Prepared By: Lydia Pfluger

Location: WebEx

Attendance

- **CECLC Members:** Marcia Bierschenck, Anjuli Cameron, Sarah Clyne, Shannon Geshick, Raie Gessesse, Jean Lee, Kia Moua, Mariah Norwood, Adesola Oni, Lucas Petersen, Maria Sarabia, Sheree Steele, TaShonda Williamson
- **DHS Staff:** Jennifer Blanchard, Charlene Briner, Michaela Burton, Diego Diaz-Rivero, Leslie Garcia, Helen Ghebre, Devon Gilchrist, Susan Hall, Marissa Hinnenkamp, Jeffrey Jorgenson, Nicole Juan, Kate Kunitz, Helly Lee, Karen McKinney, Verona Mitchell, Lydia Pfluger, Wendy Plager, Rebeca Sedarski, Nelly Torori.
- **Community Members:** Karen Gray

Decisions Made

Review/approve today's agenda:

- Motion to approve: Kia Moua
- Second: TaShonda Williamson
- The motion passed.

Review/approve May minutes:

- Motion to approve: Lucas Petersen
- Second: Kia Moua
- Motion to vote to approve minutes: 11 yes, 1 no, and 1 abstain.
- The motion passed and the minutes were approved.

Review/approve June minutes:

- 1st motion to approve: Lucas Petersen
- 2nd motion to approve: Kia Moua
- The motion passed.

Action Items

- Council chair nominations – Timeline and instructions to be sent out
- Bylaw feedback – Revised bylaws to be sent out for feedback. Feedback
- Reach out to Nicole or Helly with questions regarding meetings with legislative members, the Blue Ribbon Commission report feedback session with Commissioner Harpstead, or the chair appointment process.

Agenda

- 1:00 Welcome and Land Acknowledgement
- 1:05 Introductions
- 1:15 Review and Approve Meeting Minutes & Agenda
- 1:30 Chair Remarks
- 1:45 DHS Updates
- 1:55 Workgroup Updates
- 2:10 Integrated Services Screening and Referral Engagement
- 2:55 Announcements
- 3:00 Adjourn

Welcome and Land Acknowledgement

Council Chair, Mara Sarabia began the meeting by providing a land acknowledgement to ground members and center together as a community.

“We acknowledge that we gather as the CECLC on the traditional land of the Dakota Peoples, past and present, and acknowledge with gratitude the Land itself and the People. We take to heart and commit through action to learn and honor the traditional cultural Dakota Values: Courage, Wisdom, Respect and Generosity.”

Chair Remarks

CECLC Values and Agreements: Chair Maria Sarabia spent time reviewing the CECLC core values and agreements. Council members had the opportunity to provide comments to the agreements or share additional feedback. Council members noted their agreement to the values and suggested that members continue to hold agencies accountable for disparities as well as each other to adhere to the agreements.

Leadership Transition: Chair Maria Sarabia announced that she will be stepping down as chair of the CECLC, but will continue her service on the council as a member. Chair Sarabia shared that she is excited to allow others the opportunity to lead in this work, and that the council needs the most bold and courageous leadership to harness the movement in community and to make progress towards destructing racial hierarchy in our systems.

Maria noted that DHS currently has some of the most receptive and responsive leaders, and the council should work to center itself and seize this moment. Maria’s last meeting as chair will be August 21st.

DHS staff thanked Maria for her leadership over the last year and reflected on the accomplishments her leadership has contributed to during her tenure. Helly recognized Maria for advancements that have occurred with the council during her time as chair; including efforts to establish council workgroups, review DHS legislative proposal drafts, and encourage advocacy at the Minnesota Legislature, among others.

Chair Appointment Process and Timeline: DHS Community Relations Specialist Nicole Juan shared the process and timeline for selecting a new chair. Interested individuals can nominate themselves or another member. Details and instructions were shared, and will be emailed to staff. Please reach out to Nicole with questions.

DHS Updates

Blue Ribbon Commission Meeting with Commissioner Harpstead: A calendar invite for a meeting with Commissioner Harpstead on Wednesday the 22nd has been sent to members. This meeting is an opportunity for council member to provide comments on proposed strategies for the Blue Ribbon Commission (BRC) draft report. Community Relations has also scheduled a preparatory call on Tuesday the 21st for those who have indicate they will participate in this meeting. The invite includes the final documents that the BRC is seeking comments on with notes to help guide members. Themes and points from this discussion can be used as a basis for drafting a formal public comment.

Workgroup Updates

Legislative/External Workgroup – Workgroup lead Lucas Petersen announced that Mariah Norwood stepped up to be co-lead of this workgroup. Lucas shared that group members met a couple times since the last council meeting to discuss the status of legislative items and consider what the council may want to begin working on. All of the leads from the three workgroups are planning to meet with Senator Hayden and Representative Moran to discuss the council’s legislation during this last session and begin dialogue on how the council and members may support one another as the council continues to seek removal of the sunset and pursue additional policy changes. Council members requested that members be provided the opportunity to join scheduled meetings with the legislators.

DHS Internal Policies and Operations Workgroup – Workgroup lead Kia Moua shared that workgroup members have been busy reviewing and updating CECLC bylaws, ensuring that the edits align with the legislation. The suggested edits will soon be emailed out to the full council to provide feedback. Workgroup members are also in the process of reviewing the Affirmative Action Plan at DHS. Equity policy edits have also been emailed out to council members for review. The workgroup is in the process of updating the language based on feedback, and they have an upcoming meeting to discuss the feedback that has been received.

Topics/Issues Workgroup – Workgroup lead Marcia Bierschenck shared that during the workgroup’s monthly meeting, members were also able to discuss expectations and follow-up on questions that were raised on the purpose of the workgroup. This workgroup is intended to be a place where members can take a deeper dive into specific issues of interest and provide feedback to staff at the department on these topics. The workgroup has an interest in child welfare issues and have begun conversations with Devon Gilchrist from the African American Child Wellbeing unit. The workgroup intends to hold space for these conversations at monthly meetings as these efforts develop.

Integrated Services Screening and Referral Engagement

Business Solutions Officer Jeff Jorgenson from the Business Solutions Office (BSO) at DHS thanked council members for being willing to meet with his team and discuss a potential engagement partnership. Jeff then provided information on the Business Solutions Office.

Sue Hall and Kate Kunitz from the BSO and Rebeca Sedarski from Community Relations presented an overview of the integrated services business model (ISBM), which is intended to provide all Minnesotans with access to a streamlined human service system. This is a collaborative effort between DHS, counties, Tribal Nations, and MNIT@DHS. As part of this initiative, BSO is working to envision and develop a screening and referral tool that helps community members better access human services. They shared the timeline for this effort as well as some initial research they have conducted and examples of what they envision this work may look like. DHS would like to engage the CECLC and the communities as this work continues, with a focus on engaging those who experience disparities within DHS services. This is an ongoing effort and there is the potential for continued partnership in this work.



ISBM Screening and Referral-commu

Council members shared initial thoughts and questions regarding this initiative and the screening and referral tool components. Topics included ease of use for community members (simplified wording, limited jargon), accessibility with regard to language and abilities, technology access considerations, and tracking and assessing people’s experience using the tool during its implementation. Presenters shared that this tool has yet to be developed, but that the concerns brought forth by CECLC members will inform its creation. Sue, Kate, and Rebeca expressed interest in engaging with council members as this is being developed and piloted, and asked council members to consider how they would like to be engaged in this work moving forward. They encouraged council members to continue to generate feedback on the work presented thus far, and noted that they would like to have CECLC members that are willing to review items and provide feedback as these efforts continue.

Announcements

Council members should continue pay attention to their email in the coming weeks for important and timely updates and items that need council member action.

Meeting Minutes: Cultural and Ethnic Communities Leadership Council

Date: August 21, 2020

Minutes Prepared By: Lydia Pfluger

Location: WebEx

Attendance

- **CECLC Members:** Marcia Bierschenck, Anjuli Cameron, Sarah Clyne, Jean Lee, Kia Moua, Adesola Oni, Russell Pointer, Maria Sarabia, Elizabeth Taylor-Schiro, Jenny Srey, TaShonda Williamson, Alana Wright, Serena Xiong, Rep Deborah Kiel, Rep Rena Moran
- **DHS Staff:** Deb Anthony, Kari Benson, Charlene Briner, Michaela Burton, Marvin Davis, Diego Diaz-Rivero, Leslie Garcia, Marissa Hinnenkamp, Nicole Juan, Helly Lee, Vimbai Madzura, Lydia Pfluger, Wendy Plager, Rebeca Sedarski, Nelly Torori
- **Guests:** Karen Gray

Decisions Made

Review/approve today's agenda:

- 1st motion to approve: Alana Wright
- 2nd motion to approve: Kia Moua
- The motion passed.

Review/approve July minutes:

- 1st motion to approve: Marcia Bierschenck
- 2nd motion to approve: Kia Moua
- Move to table and include proposed amendments to delete the Chair's reference an email, but not the remarks in total: Jean Lee
- 2nd motion to table: TaShonda Williamson
- The motion was taken to a vote. The motion to table the minutes passed via voice vote. The minutes will be tabled until the September meeting so members have time to review and discuss amendments.

Action Items

- July minutes including amendments will be sent to members. These should be reviewed before the next meeting.
- Nicole will send Equity Partnership meetings to members
- Let Nicole know if you would like to be involved in the anti-racism workgroup at DHS or would like to be involved in a leadership role for the topics/issues workgroup

Agenda

- 1:00 Welcome and Land Acknowledgement
- 1:05 Introductions
- 1:15 Review and Approve Meeting Minutes & Agenda
- 1:20 Equity Partnership
- 1:35 Chair Remarks
- 1:40 Final Voting & Results of Chair Election
- 1:45 DHS Updates
- 1:55 Workgroup Updates
- 2:10 CECLC Bylaws
- 2:55 Announcements
- 3:00 Adjourn

Welcome and Land Acknowledgement

Council Chair, Mara Sarabia began the meeting by providing a revised land acknowledgement provided by a council member.

“Every community owes its existence and vitality to generations from around the world who contributed their hopes, dreams, and energy to making the history that led to this moment. Some were brought here against their will, some were drawn to leave their distant homes in hope of a better life, and some have lived on this land for more generations than can be counted. Truth and acknowledgment are critical to building mutual respect and connection across all barriers of heritage and difference.

We begin this effort to acknowledge what has been buried by honoring the truth. We are standing on the ancestral lands of the Dakota People. We want to acknowledge the Ojibwe, the Ho Chunk and the other nations of people who also called this place home. We pay respects to their elders past and present. Please take a moment to consider the treaties made by the tribal nations that entitle non-Native people to live and work on traditional Native lands. Consider the many legacies of violence, displacement, migration, and settlement that bring us together here today. And please join us in uncovering such truths at any and all public event.”

- Provided by Shannon Geshick, Executive Director Minnesota Indian Affairs Council



Equity Partnership

DHS Office of Strategy and Performance, Human Services Performances Management (HSPM) team staff Gary Mortenson and Deb Anthony presented an overview of the Equity Partnership to the CECLC and requested feedback on how they would like to be involved in this work. The Equity Partnership initiative started in 2019 to improve the lives of people of color and American Indians by advancing equity and eliminating racial and ethnic disparities in Minnesota. The partnership currently consists of DHS county staff across Minnesota who come together bi-monthly in partnership to align and grow the equity work across the DHS, county, and Tribal service continuum. Their 2020 strategic objectives are to grow and mature the equity partnership towards becoming an established organization; align equity initiatives, tools, and trainings across the MN Human Services system to create a culture of equity; and develop a system to require the participation and use of tools and training resources. Smaller action teams have been established to make progress on these larger objectives. The partnership is looking to include more Tribal and community stakeholder representation. Members were asked if/how they would like to work together with the Equity Partnership to move this work forward, what the Equity Partnership can do to keep the CECLC and other organizations informed about this work, as well as how the partnership can align with other equity initiatives across the human services system.

Council members shared that they would like for there to be multiple seats at the table available for CECLC members, and they would like to have shared power and decision-making in the partnership. Members also expressed interest in seeing the partnership be involved in assessing staff's equity competency levels. Gary shared that the partnership operates with these principles and that it is open for a number of members to join – there is no formal process to become a part of the partnership. Gary will extend the invitation to Nicole to share with members.

Representative Rena Moran asked staff from the HSPM team what tangible work has been done around addressing equity since the legislative creation of this team. Gary shared that they have been engaged in this partnership, cultural competency trainings, implementing the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) with counties, and have worked with county partners to identify data. Gary noted that the infrastructure is not set up to measure and assess disparity data across all of the counties and Tribes, and there is not a clear agreement about how to quantify or define a disparity in order to measure it across Minnesota's systems. The HSPM team was spending a lot of time working with counties to determine metrics, and they have since pivoted to engaging in culture and systems change efforts. Rep Moran noted that she is interested in seeing change and for there to be a focus on outcomes as there are often many conversations about work to address disparities, yet there are policies and procedures still in place which perpetuate them.

CECLC members shared that it is also important to examine how disparities creating huge costs in across our systems. Members are interested in supporting the development of solutions and they have qualitative ways of knowing that can complement this work.



equity_partnership_
CECLCpresentation_

Chair Remarks

Maria Sarabia shared final remarks to CECLC members as council Chair. Maria encouraged members to remain focused, unified, and organized as a council as members work to collaboratively to challenge systems of oppression and racial hierarchy. Maria noted that she has tried to instill shared power in her leadership as Chair, and hopes that this can continue with new leadership. Council members and DHS staff thanked Maria for her leadership.

Final Voting & Results of Chair Election

Two CECLC members, Jean Lee and TaShonda Williamson applied to be the next Council Chair, following Maria Sarabia's resignation. CECLC members were sent their application materials and a poll to vote for the new Chair. CECLC members who had not yet voted to elect a new chair were provided the opportunity to vote during the meeting. The final CECLC election results were then shared with the group. 32 invitations to vote were sent out, 22 individuals voted. Council member TaShonda Williamson was elected as the new CECLC Chair. The next steps will include Community Relations notifying the Commissioner of CECLC members' recommendation for the appointment of TaShonda Williamson as the CECLC Chair. The Commissioner will then make the appointment, and the newly appointed Chair will take over responsibilities at the September CECLC meeting.

Community Relations Director Helly Lee and Deputy Commissioner Charlene Briner congratulated TaShonda and thanked Jean and TaShonda for offering their leadership to serve as Chair. TaShonda thanked Maria for her leadership and expressed gratitude to council members for electing her as Chair. TaShonda noted that her election is a great honor, and she looks forward to the opportunity to serve the CECLC as Chair.

DHS Updates

CECLC Bulletin: Helly reminded council members to read the CECLC bulletins, as there are important updates and upcoming benefit changes that may impact communities – including [recent changes to SNAP recertification](#).

CECLC Membership Appointments: There are 2 vacant seat on the council, 2 community representatives and 1 DHS staff representative. Over 30 applications were received for these positions. Review panels made up of DHS staff and CECLC members selected 3 individuals for appointment to the council. Community Relations is in

the process of getting these recommendations through to the Commissioner. The intent is to have the new members join the September meeting.

Community Relations Director Transition: Helly Lee announced that she will be leaving DHS. Her last day will be August 31st. Helly shared that she is very proud of what has been accomplished with the Community Relations team and the CECLC during her tenure. Helly assured members there is support for advancing this work using an antiracist lens at DHS. Council members and attendees thanked Helly for her time and service as the Community Relations Director.

Deputy Commissioner Charlene Briner shared remarks regarding Helly's departure, and noted that her leadership and approach to community engagement has been an asset to DHS. Charlene will be providing support to the Community Relations team and the CECLC during this transition, and will keep the CECLC informed when there is more information. Charlene affirmed that community engagement is more of a priority now than ever at DHS, and that leadership is committed to working alongside the council to engage in transformative change.

Workgroup Updates

Legislative/External Workgroup – Lucas Peterson, Mariah Norwood (Update provided by Kia Moua)

- This workgroup is currently in the process of meeting with legislators for the 2021 session and exploring possible Senate partnerships.
- Group leads will notify members of the next scheduled meeting.

DHS Internal Policies and Operations Workgroup – Kia Moua, Raie Gessesse

- This workgroup has been working to update the CECLC Bylaws, which were sent to members for review.
- This workgroup has also been working on revising the DHS Equity Policy with DHS. Any interested CECLC members who want to be involved in this effort should let Nicole know.
- Additionally, workgroup members have been meeting with DHS staff regarding the Affirmative Action Plan. Every state agency is required to submit a plan to Minnesota Management and Budget. Council members have provided a significant amount of feedback regarding what they believe to be missing from the plan.
- As a DHS staff member, Kia has been involved in leading a workgroup as part of the anti-racism initiative across DHS. The workgroup is interested in having a CECLC member participate in this work. Any members who are interested should let Nicole know.

Topics/Issues Workgroup – TaShonda Williamson, Danisa Farley

- This workgroup is continuing to meet with Devon Gilchrist regarding the African American Child Wellbeing Unit at DHS. Devon has provided updates on hiring staff for this work, as well as updates on the initiative. CECLC members inquired about whether or not they could be a part of interview panels for these positions.

- Let TaShonda know if you have additional ideas for what topics to explore within DHS, how to move this work forward, as well as if you would like to have a leadership role in this workgroup.

CECLC Bylaws

Council member Kia Moua led a discussion regarding the updates that have been made to the CECLC Bylaws before moving to approve the bylaws. The bylaws have not been updated since 2016. Language was edited to have the bylaws better align with the CECLC legislation, add duties to the council, as well as change and include other important items. These changes have come out of conversations between 2019 and 2020 from council members. The revised bylaws were sent out at the end of July and members were asked to review and provide edits by August 10th, and be prepared to vote during the August meeting.

Review/Approve Bylaws

- 1st motion to approve bylaws: Maria Sarabia
- 2nd motion to approve bylaws: Kia Moua
- Move to approve bylaws as proposed and ask the internal DHS operations/policies workgroup to take up amendments from members: Jean Lee
- Members engaged in discussion regarding amendments that were not submitted by the deadline, as well discussed whether ex-officio members should vote on the bylaws. Representatives Deborah Kiel and Rena Moran abstained from participating in the vote.
- The motion to approve the bylaws as initially proposed was taken.
- The bylaws were approved on an 8 to 3 vote.

Announcements

Meeting Minutes: Cultural and Ethnic Communities Leadership Council

Date: September 18, 2020

Minutes Prepared By: Lydia Pfluger

Location: WebEx

Attendance

- **CECLC Members:** Marcia Bierschenk, Foua Choua Khang, Cratè Darden, Shannon Geshick, Raie Gessesse, Jean Lee, Kia Moua, Mariah Norwood, Adesola Oni, Lucas Petersen, Russell Pointer, Maria Sarabia, Sheree Steele, Elizabeth Taylor-Schiro, TaShonda Williamson, Alana Wright, Rep Tina Liebling, Rep Rena Moran
- **DHS Staff:** Lisa Bayley, Charlene Briner, Michaela Burton, De Anna Conover, Diego Diaz-Rivero, Leslie Garcia, Jodi Harpstead, Marissa Hinnenkamp, Vimbai Madzura, Karen McKinney, Verona Mitchell, Lydia Pfluger, Christa Spielman

Decisions Made

Review/approve today's agenda:

- Motion to approve: Jean Lee
- Second: Sheree Steele
- The motion passed.

Review/approve July and August minutes:

- Motion to amend July & August minutes with earlier amendments Dr. Jean Lee sent to staff: Jean Lee
- Motion to approve July and August minutes as initially proposed: Lucas Peterson
 - Second Sheree Steele
 - The motion passed 4-2.
- Motion to amend July and August minutes and bylaws with amendments Dr. Jean Lee sent to DHS staff and members
 - Second: Shannon Geshick
 - Discussion:
 - Shannon Geshick, MIAC Executive Director, and other staff of state council of color and the Ombudsmen for Families regularly attend meetings and have been considered voting members in the past. The law and legislative intent gives them priority as voting

members. Both Representatives Moran and Liebling (author and co-author of the CECLC, respectively) were present and voted in the meeting.

- Shannon expressed concerns with the minutes from the last meeting regarding the voting authority of ex-officio members, and was upset if the American Indian voice was being taken away.

Action Items

- Let Nicole know if you are interested in being a co-chair for the topics/issues workgroup or the legislative workgroup

Agenda

- 1:05 Introductions and Welcome new Members
- 1:15 Chair-elect remarks
- 1:30 Review and Approve Meeting Minutes & Agenda
- 1:45 DHS Updates
- 1:55 Workgroup Updates
- 2:10 Announcements
- 2:15 Adjourn Public Meeting
- 2:30 – 4:00 CECLC Training

Introductions and welcome new members

Council Chair TaShonda Williamson welcomed members and attendees to the meeting and expressed her gratitude for being elected as Chair. TaShonda announced the new CECLC members – Cratè Darden (DHS member position), Foua Choua Khang (Community position), and Amanda Koonjbeharry (Community position). New council members present at the meeting introduced themselves. TaShonda then provided land acknowledgement.

Chair-elect Remarks

Council Chair TaShonda shared remarks to center the council, as well as shared the vision and mission of the council. Information regarding Roberts Rules was presented and the process for voting on items was shared – including that votes will now be tallied. TaShonda then shared a quote from Dr. Martin Luther King’s “The Other America”, and recognized council members as being talented individuals and leaders in efforts to eliminate disparities.

DHS Updates

Community Relations Interim Director: Deputy Commissioner Charlene Briner introduced De Anna Conover as the interim Community Relations Director at DHS. De Anna has worked within the state enterprise for a number of years in the area of equity-centered leadership development and employee and community engagement. De Anna shared that she is excited to step into this role to continue supporting and uplifting the work of the council and community engagement at DHS.

Agency and Policy Updates:

Charlene: MIAC was great in making sure DHS connected with tribal partners to get information out on the recertification process around cash programs. In recognition of National Recovery Month, Governor Tim Walz has proclaimed September as Recovery Month to increase understanding of mental and substance use disorders, raise awareness about [available resources](#) and celebrate the gains made by people living in recovery.

DHS Employees of Color Discussion: Charlene acknowledged the Star Tribune article which detailed concerning experiences of people of color and indigenous individuals at DHS. Charlene noted that the article highlighted that DHS has a great deal of work to do with regard to culture and equity, and the agency is working to name and address these problems and have conversations to change this reality.

Council members expressed concerns that there are not clear accountability steps if the department is not adhering to anti-racism plans. They also expressed concerns that there are not measures to monitor the hiring and retention of people of color. Commissioner Jodi Harpstead shared that DHS is working on putting together a hiring and retention plan, some initial components of which have been shared with council members. Commissioner Harpstead noted that they have not yet developed the accountability components yet, but they are in the works. Council members noted that there should also be accountability for racist actions of staff and management, and engaged in discussion surrounding authority of DHS management's ability to take action. Council members requested reports of disaggregated data to members for review, and shared that similar requests for data have been made, but not fulfilled. Charlene noted that DHS can work with CECLC members to fulfill this request.

Council members engaged in discussion around possible cost-saving measures at DHS and expressed interest in reviewing and exploring the Equity Partnership activities and outcomes. DHS leadership and state Representatives expressed interest in engaging in further discussion on these topics.

Council members also expressed interest in the CECLC leadership team and Chair having regular meetings with Commissioner Harpstead, Dr. Karen McKinney, Charlene Briner, and De Anna Conover so CECLC members can be in regular connection, set priorities, and be prepared to leverage their time effectively in public meetings.

Workgroup Updates

Chair TaShonda asked workgroup co-leads to recommit to their roles, and for individuals who are interested in being a co-lead to express their interest. Lucas Petersen stepped down as a co-lead of the Legislative workgroup, and there is now a co-lead opening.

Danisa Farley recommitted to the co-lead role for the Topics/Issues workgroup. Petronellah Thomas-Shanobi expressed interest in stepping in as the second co-lead for this group.

Raie Gessesse and Kia Moua are continuing as leads of the DHS Internal Policies and Operations workgroup. If more than one individual is interested in the co-lead positions that are vacant, the workgroups will vote. Dr. Jean Lee expressed interest in the co-lead position for the Legislative workgroup. Workgroups are now meeting the first week of each month. A poll will be going out to each workgroup to figure out which day works best for members.

Legislative/External Workgroup – Mariah Norwood

The workgroup recently met with Rep Moran. Meeting attendees will bring these discussions to entire workgroup and then will bring them to the full council.

DHS Internal Policies and Operations Workgroup – Kia Moua, Raie Gessesse

The workgroup has been working in collaboration with DHS to make changes to the Equity Policy as well as hold discussions with DHS on recruitment, retention, and other internal issues within the agency.

Topics/Issues Workgroup – Danisa Farley

This workgroup has been meeting with the African American Child Wellbeing unit at DHS. They have also been discussing the CARES Act funds that are coming available to assist communities.

Bylaw discussion

Internal Policies and Operations workgroup members reviewed the CECLC bylaw changes and new elements. Council members engaged in discussion surrounding bylaw edits, noting that some of the suggested changes from council members would require legislative changes. Jean noted that further discussion is warranted on the bylaws.

Announcements

TaShonda shared that the council has a meeting with training organization to conduct a customized leadership training for CECLC members. Hopefully the proposal will be available for everyone to view soon.

Dr. Jean Lee shared that today is the first day of voting for the presidential election, and encouraged members to vote and connect with their networks to get out the vote.

Meeting Minutes: Cultural and Ethnic Communities Leadership Council

Date: October 16, 2020

Minutes Prepared By: Lydia Pfluger

Location: WebEx

Attendance

- **CECLC Members:** Marcia Bierschenk, Foua Choua Khang, Cratè Darden, Danisa Farley, Raie Gessesse, Amanda Koonjbeharry, Jean Lee, Kia Moua, Mariah Norwood, Adesola Oni, Lucas Petersen, Russell Pointer, Maria Sarabia, Elizabeth Taylor-Schiro, Petronellah Thomas-Shanobi, TaShonda Williamson, Alana Wright, Rep Tina Liebling, Rep Rena Moran, Anjuli Cameron
- **DHS Staff:** Lisa Bayley, Charlene Briner, Michaela Burton, De Anna Conover, Beth Dansie, LaRhae Knatterud, Vimbai Madzura, Dr. Karen McKinney, Verona Mitchell, Lydia Pfluger, Rebeca Sedarski, Christa Spielman, Nelly Torori
- **Guests:** Karen Klinzing, Jim Martin, Lorea

Decisions Made

Review/approve today's agenda:

- Motion to approve the agenda with removal of footnote #2: Jean Lee
 - No second
- Motion to approve agenda as initially presented: Petronellah Thomas-Shanobi
 - Second by Danisa Farley
 - The motion passed 14 to 1
- Point of clarification: Jean Lee. Jean Lee asked the Chair if the approval of the agenda with the footnote included supports a revote of what was voted on in the September meeting. Chair TaShonda noted that the footnote provides clarification of the process.

Agenda

- 1:05 Introductions and Welcome
- 1:15 Review and Approve Agenda
- 1:35 Chair-elect Remarks

- 1:55 DHS Updates
- 2:00 Workgroup Updates
- 2:10 Announcements/Community Open Space
- 2:20 Adjourn Public Meeting
- 2:30 – 4:00 CECLC Training

Introductions and welcome

Council Chair TaShonda Williamson welcomed members and attendees to the meeting, shared mission and vision of the council, as well as grounded members with a land acknowledgement.

Chair-elect Remarks

Council Chair-elect TaShonda Williamson shared that the May-July minutes have been updated with technical changes and do not require a vote of the council. It was determined, however, that more discussion is needed before the August and September minutes come before the council. Council members can expect to see those minutes for approval on the November agenda. Minutes from the previous meeting will try to be shared with council members on the first week of the month so members can review and provide suggested edits before the monthly meeting.

TaShonda announced that there are going to be upcoming meetings with legislative staff and leadership at DHS within workgroups. Dates of these upcoming meetings will be shared with council members so that those who are available can join. It is important that council members show up in large numbers, and TaShonda noted that she would like to have at least two members present in those meetings to have a pulse on the work that can be brought back to the full council.

Council members have discussed wanting to review and provide input on DHS' retention plan, disaggregated HR data, as well as internal discrimination policies and complaint procedures. DHS is working to make that happen. These discussions will occur in the Internal Policies and Operations workgroup initially and then will be brought back to the full council.

CECLC Training Proposal

The CECLC leadership team discussed having a training for council members. TaShonda reached out to the organization, CharterSource, based on prior experience working with this organization. A customized board governance and leadership training proposal for the council was put together by CharterSource and was sent to members along with the meeting materials this month.

Karen Klinzing and Jim Martin from CharterSource shared the proposal with council members as well as their experience training boards. The training is split into two phases to support council members in being effective in serving on the council and working together. Phase 1 covers information about the roles, responsibilities, liabilities, and opportunities for council members. Phase 2 covers workgroup governance strategies and capacity

development. TaShonda shared that the training is intended to help instill confidence in the council to accomplish their charge and support members in working together.

Representative Tina Liebling noted that the CECLC is a unique council and asked whether there is content specifically tailored for this group. She also asked if the facilitators have a background in diversity, inclusion and cultural sensitivity. CharterSource representatives shared that their organization also conducts diversity, equity, and inclusion training, and that they see the mission of their work is to support commissions in being as effective as they can. It was also asked whether there was information about strategic planning in the training. CharterSource representatives shared that governance strategies content includes information about setting strategic objectives.

Participants asked whether there are other alternatives to working with a contracted vendor to provide training. DHS staff shared that there are various areas within DHS that can and have offered to provide training to the council – such as the legislative staff and the legal department. Some participants noted that the CECLC was established to provide oversight and accountability to DHS, therefore, it may get complicated for the council to receive training from the institution there are trying to provide accountability to. Council members asked if proposals from other organizations have been solicited – particularly from BIPOC organizations. At this time the council has not consulted with other vendors.

Council members and DHS staff agreed to abstain from voting on this proposal and explore options. The funds that are available for the training do not have to be spent until the end of the fiscal year.

DHS Updates

Deputy Commissioner Charlene Briner shared that the Minnesota Legislature has approved a supplemental budget and bonding package that addresses immediate funding needs for DHS and gives DHS a bit of relief as the agency continues to develop the next two-year budget. Governor Walz is expected to sign the measure. The \$16 million approved this week, coupled with the savings already realized from the measures announced last month, addresses the budget gap for Direct Care and Treatment (DCT) for the rest of the fiscal year, which ends on June 30, 2021. The Legislature also approved \$13.3 million to support personal care assistance (PCA) services in the state during the COVID-19 pandemic. This does not mean DHS won't have budget challenges in the future, but provides some breathing room and prevents having to take drastic steps at this time.

Charlene also shared that DHS has retention and recruitment data ready to share with CECLC members, and staff are looking forward to sharing this within the workgroup.

Interim Community Relations Director shared that DHS recently held its yearly Slice of Autumn professional development training as well as Equity Week, which included a series of training sessions for staff. Community Relations staff are working on the CECLC legislative report and Equity Review. The Business Solution's Office Screening and Referral team is still looking for members to provide feedback on their initial screening tool, please reach out to Nicole if you would like to be involved.

Chief Equity Officer Dr. Karen McKinney shared that Commissioner Harpstead is thinking hard about taking up efforts to declare racism a public health emergency. When an emergency is declared then there needs to be a response, and there is often access to funding. However, this declaration has to mean something, it can't just be

those words. The commissioner needs thoughtful words, insights, and suggestions regarding this. She would be grateful if CECLC members could offer their thoughts and ideas. Council members initially shared that DHS should look to declare racism a health and human services emergency as it puts the response more into the purview of DHS. Council members noted that they are aligned with this and can offer support to DHS.

Workgroup Updates

Legislative/Policy Workgroup – Mariah Norwood, Jean Lee

The workgroup is working to move forward and update the CECLC legislation for 2021 and tie it in with DHS legislative proposal deadlines. The workgroup is strategizing on how to ask for funding and are exploring options for a chief author of the bill in the Senate. They are looking to have DHS legislative staff, as well as Jean Lee, provide training on the legislative process to workgroup members. DHS will keep the workgroup updated on the legislation that they are working on so council members can provide feedback. The workgroup is also planning to ask the councils of color to see what they are working on for the upcoming session and how they can provide support. The next meeting is scheduled for November 11th from 4:30-5:30 and is with Rep. Moran. It has been proposed to change the name of the workgroup to “Legislative and Policy Committee”. Mariah has stepped down from her position as co-lead. This position is now open and Mariah will continue to serve through this transition.

DHS Internal Policies and Operations Workgroup – Kia Moua, Raie Gessesse

The workgroup was not able to meet last month. Looking to set a time to meet moving forward.

Topics/Issues Workgroup – Petronella Thomas Shanobi, Danisa Farley

The workgroup met with Housing and Support Services on a project that will be presented to the full council in November. The workgroup has also been in contact with the DHS Business Solutions Office on the screening and referral project. This is still ongoing and as noted earlier, we are looking for volunteers to participate in a focus group on the BSO project.

Announcements

There are several vacancies for board positions with the Secretary of State’s Office. The Governor’s Office Young Women’s Initiative is also seeking applications.

Meeting Minutes: Cultural and Ethnic Communities Leadership Council

Date: November 20, 2020

Minutes Prepared By: Lydia Pfluger

Location: WebEx

Attendance

- **CECLC Members:** Marcia Bierschenk, Sarah Clyne, Cratè Darden, Danisa Farley, Raie Gessesse, Shannon Geshick, Amanda Koonjbeharry, Jean Lee, Kia Moua, Mariah Norwood, Lucas Petersen, Dr. Russell Pointer, Maria Sarabia, Petronellah Thomas-Shanobi, Sheree Steele, TaShonda Williamson, Alana Wright, Rep Tina Liebling
- **DHS Staff:** Matt Anderson, Charlene Briner, Nathan Chomillo, De Anna Conover, Valarie Cooke, Beth Dansie, Diego Diaz-Rivero, Mariah Hinnenkamp, Dr. Karen McKinney, Verona Mitchell, Lydia Pfluger, Rebeca Sedarski, Nelly Torori

Decisions Made

Review/approve today's agenda:

- Motion to approve the agenda: Jean Lee
- Second: Russell Pointer
 - Motion to amend the agenda to include a closed executive session for council members immediately following this vote: Raie Gessesse
 - Second: Mariah Norwood
 - The amendment passed (14 yes)
- The amended motion passed. (14 yes)

Agenda

- 1:05 Introductions, Welcome, and Land Acknowledgement
- 1:15 Chair-elect Remarks
- 1:30 Review and Approve Meeting Agenda
- 1:40 Closed Executive Session
- 4:30 Meeting Adjourned

Chair-elect Remarks

Council Chair-elect TaShonda Williamson welcomed members and attendees to the meeting.

TaShonda shared that she has worked with Community Relations and council members to establish workgroup meetings on set days during the first week of the month. TaShonda was in contact with members individually and workgroup dates and times have been set based on feedback from members.

During these check-ins, TaShonda and council members also discussed participation in the CECLC focus group with the Business Solutions Office, asked members if they were aware of BIPOC organizations to conduct CECLC leadership development training, and discussed members' interest in vetting these vendors. Additionally, TaShonda asked for feedback regarding how members felt about council operations and activities, as well as if they had any suggestions for how the council could operate more effectively. TaShonda expressed appreciation to members for connecting with her. TaShonda acknowledged that there has been some contention within the council, and she looks forward to working through this together in order to achieve the council's objectives.

TaShonda reminded council members that the council operates using Robert's Rules. She will continue to implement these rules in order to avoid overlapping discussions and to ensure time is being used effectively. TaShonda asked that members address her before speaking in order to obtain her go-ahead.

TaShonda shared her desire to meet with Deputy Commissioner Charlene Briner and Commissioner Jodi Harpstead on a regular basis to ensure alignment between CECLC and DHS and to have offline time to discuss concerns and successes regarding this partnership.

TaShonda expressed appreciation to DHS staff and council members for their leadership and expertise.

Executive Session

Council members transitioned into an executive session which they remained in through the duration of the meeting.

Meeting Minutes: Cultural and Ethnic Communities Leadership Council

Date: December 11, 2020

Minutes Prepared By: DHS Community Relations Staff

Location: WebEx

Attendance

- **CECLC Members:** Marcia Bierschenk, Anjuli Cameroon, Sarah Clyne, Cratè Darden, Danisa Farley, Shannon Geshick, Raie Gessesse, Amanda Koonjbeharry, Kia Moua, Mariah Norwood, Adesola Oni, Dr. Russell Pointer, Maria Sarabia, Sheree Steele, Petronellah Thomas-Shanobi, TaShonda Williamson, Alana Wright, Rep Tina Liebling
- **DHS Staff:** Charlene Briner, De Anna Conover, Beth Dansie, Diego Diaz-Rivero, Roger Ehresmann, Vimbai Madzura, Dr. Karen McKinney, Verona Mitchell, Lydia Pfluger, Rebeca Sedarski, Christa Spielman, Linda Sutton, Nicole Juan
- **Public Attendees:** Dave Hoang, Jean Lee, Kia Whittier

Decisions Made

Review/approve today's agenda:

- Motion to approve agenda: Alana Wright
 - Second: Danisa Farley
 - The motion passed.

Review/approve meeting minutes:

November 2020

- Motion to approve: Sheree Steele
 - Second: Mariah Norwood
 - The motion passed.

October 2020

- Motion to approve: Kia Moua
 - Second: Dr. Russell Pointer
 - The motion passed.

September 2020

- Motion to approve September minutes without proposed changes: Sarah Clyne
 - Second: Marcia Bierschenk
 - The motion passed. 10 yes. 1 No. 1 Abstain.

Review/approve CECLC legislative proposal language:

- Motion to approve: Dr. Russell Pointer
 - Second: Petronellah Thomas-Shanobi
 - The motion passed. 14 yes. 2 Abstain.

Agenda

- 1:05 Introductions and Welcome
- 1:15 Chair-elect Remarks
- 1:30 Review and Approve Meeting Agenda
- 1:35 DHS Updates
- 2:10 Workgroup Updates
- 2:30 Community Open Space/Announcements
- Review and Approve Meeting Minutes (September, October, November)
- 2:50 Adjournment of Public Meeting
- 3:05 Legislative Training
- 3:30 DHS Legislative Policy Discussion

Chair-elect Remarks

Council Chair-elect TaShonda Williamson welcomed members and attendees to the meeting and shared a land acknowledgement. Tashonda expressed appreciation for the opportunity and willingness of council members and DHS to work together towards an anti-racist culture.

TaShonda shared the expectations for council members written in the CECLC Bylaws. Council members are expected to attend monthly meetings, have no more than 3 absences, and participate in at least one workgroup. Council members should let Nicole and TaShonda know if they will be absent for a meeting.

DHS Updates

Affirmative Action

Connie Jones and Zecharias Hailu were unable to make the meeting due to scheduling conflicts. DHS is prepared to share the data requested by council members and is committed to presenting this to the council in the near future to obtain feedback.

Community Relations Updates

Interim Community Relations Director De Anna Conover expressed gratitude for the work of the council in 2020 and is looking forward to partnering with members in the coming year.

Community Relations is working on the annual CECLC legislative report. There will be upcoming opportunities for council members to review and provide input on sections of the report.

Deputy Commissioner Charlene Briner shared that she will be leaving DHS at end of year, and expressed appreciation for her time at DHS and her involvement with the council.

Workgroup Updates

There are multiple workgroup leadership vacancies. There are 2 vacancies for the DHS Internal Policies and Operations Workgroup. Cratè Darden and Sheree Steele have expressed interest in filling these vacancies. There are also 2 vacancies for the Legislative and Policy Committee. Mariah Norwood, Elizabeth Taylor-Schiro, and Lucas Petersen have expressed interest filling these vacancies. Members of these workgroups will have the opportunity to decide on co-leads at their next workgroup meetings.

Date and times for the workgroup meetings will occur on the first Wednesday each month.

- Topics & Issues – 2:00 pm – 3:00 pm
- Internal Policies and Operations – 4:00 pm – 5:00 pm
- Legislative Policy and Operations – 5:00 pm – 6:00 pm

DHS Internal Policies and Operations

This workgroup will be involved in the procurement processes with DHS staff for selecting a vendor to provide a leadership development training to CECLC members.

Topics & Issues

This workgroup is working to refocus their energy and determine interests and priorities for 2021. Co-leads are seeking input on this from workgroup members. Please respond to requests for input. Recently, the workgroup met with staff from the Business Solutions Office to provide feedback of their efforts to roll out an online tool to connect individuals to services.

Legislative and Policy Committee

This workgroup recently held a meeting with DHS legislative staff to review the CECLC legislative proposal, which is based off of last years' proposal. Workgroup members approved the proposal during the workgroup meeting.

The full council reviewed and voted on the proposal during this meeting.

Community Open Space/Announcements

Council member Mariah Norwood will be moderating a conversation hosted by the American Public Health Association titled [“Climate change and health equity: Tribal challenges and actions”](#) on December 15th.

The Minnesota Legislature will be holding a special session on Monday December 14th to discuss a number of issues and relief efforts for Minnesotans.

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) has two funding opportunities available to support diverse media outlets and community organizations to develop culturally relevant and linguistically appropriate messaging and outreach to communities regarding COVID-19. See [MDH’s COVID-19 Contracts for Diverse Media Messaging and Community Outreach page](#) for more information.