

**Virginia African American Advisory Board**  
**March 16, 2023**  
**University of Mary Washington**  
**11:30 AM- 4:30 PM**

**Present**

Dr. Cheryl Ivey Green – Chairperson, Rev. Cozy Bailey – Vice Chairperson, Van Wilson, Robert Barnette, Jr., Keren Charles-Dongo, Sheila Dixon, Toria Edmonds-Howell, Bill Cleveland, Princess Philomena Desmond-Ogugua, Tia Yancey

**Absent**

Cameron Patterson, Eldon Burton, Hope Cupid, Chris Sanchez, Monica Reid, Dr. Ingrid Grandberry Grant, Precious Muhammad, Joe Chase, Larry Boone, Tamara Walkerson-Dias, Clarence Neely

**Guest:**

Hon. Robert Moiser, Secretary Public Safety and Homeland Security

Travis Christian, Petersburg Chief of Police

Hon. Martin Brown, Chief Diversity, Opportunity, and Inclusion Officer

Gloria Senecal, Director of Board Administration, Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth

Justin Bell, Office of the Attorney General

**Members of the Public Present:**

Kent Ruffin, Director of the African American Heritage Association of Virginia

**Call to Order**

The meeting was formally called to order at 12:27 p.m. by Dr. Ivey Green.

**Minutes**

A quorum was not present to adopt the minutes.

**Agenda**

A quorum was not present to adopt the agenda. The meeting moved as followed:

**Chair Updates:**

Dr. Ivey Green welcomed the board and thanked those who could attend the governor's Black History Month reception. She also thanked Sheila Dixon for inviting us to Mary Washington. Dr. Ivey Green mentioned resuming our Black Table Talk in May 2023. And, as we prepare for the Governor's report, the board should be mindful of the timeline and continue to engage the community with conversations about committee topics. Later in the meeting, she provided us with a template to guide the board through their Black Table Talk Planning. Dr. Ivey Green would like the board to focus on survey results from the Youngkin Administration of community concerns. Concerns addressed in the survey would include gun violence, pre and post pandemic issues, affordable housing, and mental health. Dr. Ivey Green shared information she read in an article by the Richmond Justice who shared interviews around the spike in the homeless population. She encouraged us to meet in our committees and define issues of concern, and how we can initiate part of the solution.

### **Board Administration Update**

Gloria Senecal shared information regarding travel reimbursements, she is willing to help with completing the forms. She mentioned a Teams invite was sent to all board members as a central point to consolidate notes and information. She also shared a final reminder to update headshots and bios. They were due by last Friday, March 17.

Keren asked if you could provide another email address to the VAAAB Teams Group if you were already in another group by a specific email. Gloria said yes, you can provide another Gmail account to use in the VAAAB Team Group.

Keren also wanted to know if you are fine with your current headshot and bios on the website, do you have to change it? Gloria said that anyone that has not updated their profiles, she would use the same information.

### **Public Safety and Homeland Security Update**

Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security Director, Robert Mosier opened with a question of What is the Commonwealth doing, how do we begin to resolve issues or zero in on solutions to address a growing gun violence problem in our communities. Secretary Mosier invited Petersburg's Chief of Police to the meeting for remarks. Secretary Mosier stated he and Governor Youngkin are working hard to focus on gun violence in the Commonwealth. Secretary Mosier thanked the board for their collaboration and suggestions and the importance to listen to advisors and the people we serve. He shared that most of the gun violence is in the result of drug deals. And the Violent Crimes Taskforce will continue to provide support for Department of Corrections, Public Safety, and Intelligence. Secretary Mosier ensured that the Youngkin Administration is committed to change the direction of what happens in our cities. They have created processes to visit the highest violent crime areas of Petersburg, and talk to community members in areas to ask what resources they need. They visited areas deemed as hotspots where over 900 calls were made regarding gun violence. This then led to a partnership with the Petersburg Chief of Police, Travis Christian.

Chief Christian presented a holistic approach in the area to provide wrap around services and replicate them around the state. They felt this model would overwhelm the system, so they intend to treat the mental health related crimes and not criminalize them. This then led to discussion:

Dr. Ivey Green asked if the holistic approach would impose effort to have gun control laws in place not just for families of the offenders, but for all the families involved. Secretary Mosier stated enforcement laws are subject to have those put into place, but they have not reached comparative language for the Commonwealth. Keren mentioned in gun crimes, one component to not overlook is suicide among young children. As a community our children are dying. She stated that they are holding children accountable for using fire arms, but not the adults that they get them from. The children detained at this level have not developed mentally. She felt that children are children- especially under the age of 18. She indicated that our duty is to protect children and elderly. Chief Christen agreed with Keren and would also like to focus on adult accountability. He said that they need to focus on the purchaser of firearms. He shared that some cases are weapons purchased by women for their boyfriends and then report stolen if tied to violent crimes. Rev. Bailey stated some statistics of Petersburg and said that Virginia has some of the toughest gun laws in America. He wanted to know what was done to reduce the homicide rate in the area. Secretary Mosier shared that recruiting and visible presence for service played a role and by officers ready to assist and respond. Chief Christian mentioned other accolades that played a role in their operation success such as

providing resources, crime reduction, supporting veterans and the environment. Blight has been removed to secure safety and the State Police came to support with investigations and forensics. Since this partnership, they have seen impact and reduction of homicides and assaults. This provided a sense of hope in the community. However, they could not have done this without the help of State Police because of the shortage in law enforcement. With this community initiative, people feel more likely to call and report criminal acts. They have had an increase with over 30,000 calls to police. They commend the parents and kids that are faced with crime issues and taking the action to call authorities. Rev. Bailey responds-so there is a shortage. Chief Christian says everyone has a shortage, we did not have enough people to respond without partnering with the State Police. Rev. Bailey asked if the calls were high based on the area. Chief Christian replied that it depended on the environment to where the calls were from. Some of the areas were able to support the calls in their area. Princess Philomena Desmond Ogugua stated that gun violence is not only in our area. This is an epidemic. She offers stricter gun laws and restrict gun buyers. She suggests prevention and intervention programs in Petersburg. She feels that unemployment, social media and mobile phones plays a large factor in crime. She also feels domestic abusers should not be allowed to have guns. Additionally, Keren shared that wrap around services should be for the whole family-through housing, childcare, elderly care and housing security. Dr. Van Wilson, of Brightpoint Community College has resources to share. The college has over 15,000 students and 600 employees- he offered to extend support with continued conversations. Dr. Ivey Green closed the discussion with asking how do they plan to replicate services to other areas of the Commonwealth and where are the resources come from? Secretary Moiser shared that he would send budget and information regarding the Blue Line initiatives and invited the board to Petersburg for real time examples and updates (Gloria sent a follow up email with information). Dr. Ivey Green stated that this is the year of pushing solutions and deliverables and we are looking forward to updates. Secretary Moiser and Chief Christian then left the meeting.

### **Diversity Discussion**

On behalf of the board, Rev. Bailey greeted Chief Diversity, Opportunity and Inclusion Officer, Mr. Martin Brown. Rev. Bailey led the conversation with the importance of the role in diversity with a focus on equity. He then asked Chief Brown how was he was enjoying his appointment so far and what were some of the highs and lows of his role. Chief Brown stated it was good to be at the table and acknowledge the importance of this role at any table. He shared that the Black History standards in education has posed concern from an objective point, so now more information and questions around Black History are in SOL's. He shared that these are actions that take place by this role being at the table. Rev. Bailey asked why is this role important in having part in that immersion, more or less, why did this role run into that area. Chief Brown responded by sharing the accuracy of Black History is important and the correct narrative must be shared. He shared an excerpt from current taught history in SOL's about Ft. Monroe is where the first Africans landed in 1619. But they should evolve the teachings and share that Africans arrived before that then. And he elaborate on the importance of sharing the untold stories to all. Rev. Bailey asked Chief Brown what he considered the most important aspect of his job. Chief Brown responded that part of his responsibility is recognizing where we have been limited and release those freedoms to those and inspire the opportunities to make change. He compared the struggles to a double edge sword for challenges and opportunities. He aspires to see more people from diverse backgrounds in senior positions. With that change he feels this will produce unlimited resources. Rev. Bailey questioned with all the people involved in the work of DEI, why was the title and language changed from equity to opportunity. Chief Brown stated that terms can limit the discussion which undermines the goals; if goals are completed then the terminology will turn. He says equal opportunity but not equal outcomes is not equal. And equal opportunity is not defined as equality nor the semantics of the term. He

acknowledge that definitions mean something, but there are things you can do to suffice the terminology. Rev. Bailey replied the word is equity, not equality. Keren shared the reason equity is important is because we cannot separate our stories. We should not have to keep fighting for an advantage but have an equal playing field. And this is not the case in our experiences currently, some schools have computers for every child and underserved schools are sharing computers. The word equity for Keren is a pledge from the government for our community. She feels African Americans need the knowledge of our history. And that is where equity comes into play for the unequitable students. Bill Cleveland shared the importance of mentors for youth in reading, math and writing. He shared a story about Fredrick Douglas and the importance to take time to work with students to increase all of skill levels. He feels that to have equal opportunity, you have to have the basics. Rev. Bailey stated that he is not sure if we will ever agree to opportunity over equity. And he asked with legislation, what is the statue of measurement for the outcomes, quantitative or qualitative. Chief Brown answered that the One Virginia Plan will be similar in size and sculpt, but different in approach as far as the vision, mission and deliverables. And he posed the question of how to define success. He shared some will define success in several ways, how do you define the number of crimes vs the number of guns off the street, in diversity- the number of African Americans in entry level positions vs senior positions. Who determines the success, it depends on the approach. Rev. Bailey replied that is for the creator of the strategic plan for qualitative and quantitative measures to provide the expectations and the deliverables. Princess Philomena shared the importance of teaching the African American and African history on and before 1619. Chief Brown stated that those components where not in the SOL's but they are now. Princess Philomena shared the importance of telling her history as this will helps in protecting her tribe from Nigeria. She shares this history not to dilute minds of others, but to share the importance of history. Bill Cleveland responded by sharing Black History facts and suggested reading the book *Setting the Record Straight American History in Black and White*. Dr. Ivey Green is in hopes of great pieces in the new document. She wants to be sure that the plan will hold those accountable by reading the guide. And she is hopeful to find common ground of the new report compared to the last one. She stated that this change will contribute to a disservice to the Commonwealth and those who had already developed a plan. She shared that it was some good thought and time put into the plan, and the community was excited to see movement in administration. Chief Brown replied there is consensus of desire to advance diversity and equity and opportunity. Rev. Bailey suggested that the plan should be constructed that the content could be understood and used as a framework and strategic plan. He stated that the content of this plan will reflect how this administration operates, and their will be lingering questions of DEI. Chief Brown replied that the end goal is not to eliminate DEI but increase the opportunities. He assured that the plan will adhere to the code of legislation. Dr. Ivey Green then calls for break.

### **Committee Work Time**

Rev. Bailey called to order and charged us to breakout into committees.

### **Committee Reports**

- Education: Dr. Van Wilson -Called the chair Dr. Ingrid Grandberry Grant they spoke about issues around mental health. They shared it is across many aspects of what is going on in the school system. Resources are in the suppose budget. But where does the money go in terms of teacher, students, nurses and ect. They spoke on topics related to the following.
  - How teachers are leaving the field
  - Transparency in reporting- statistics are just samples and not capturing on the whole story
  - Not language, but content in the class room

- How do we get beyond COVID
- How can we tap into retired educators
- How do we address salaries to support teacher's families
- Continue to monitor the dollars from the State
- Certification and making sure for all and provisional licenses get to certification
- Threat assessments. How many schools are doing them? Metal detectors do not solve the problem
- Let's give the governor a chance to fail. He want to see lab schools.
- Table talks in June early-not June 22
  - Hot Topics:
    - Accreditation
    - Retention
    - Mental Health
    - Assess to Post Education
    - Superintendent Talks
- Late school cycle for registration and process

Office of Attorney General, Justin Bell asked if Dr. Grandberry Grant could reach out to him about the governor. Rev. Bailey loved the idea of all of the topics, but he provided guidance to focus on 3 or 4 suggestions or considerations. He also shared that committees should contact Gloria for committee meeting time.

- Health and the Environment: Princess Philomena proposed a hybrid town hall or an interactive town hall in Petersburg. She share the following topics:
  - Gun violence and health
  - Prevention strategies
  - Strong legislation, gun check
  - Community training
  - Healthcare disparities
  - Equity at service level
  - Underserved population- teenage mothers
  - Increased rate of diabetes juvenile, type 2, talk about diet and exercise in schools
  - Navigate the system of assistance
  - Retraining the mindset of issues in the system
  - September 28 or October 7 in Petersburg
  - Reach out to retired doctors, to new doctors

Rev. Bailey announced that if the board would like any state officials to attend a committee meeting to contact Gloria. He also shared that for a follow up of today's discussion, the board can research other state gun laws and compare to Virginia Laws to stimulate conversation.

- Small Black Owned Businesses: Toria Edmunds-Howell shared an update:
  - Focused on next Black table talk in Fredericksburg or Prince Williams, Dumfries date TBA
  - Aim for Thursday and location TBA determines of number of guests and building/ Zoom

- Continue from last year's panel session topics of
  - Short coming s of PPP Loans
  - What has been done since then
  - Contracting and innovation in the space
  - Representative from Trade and Commerce
  - Metropolitan Business League
- SWAM workshop information

Toria will share a template from last year's flyer to the board for future use of Black Table Talks.

- Public Safety and Criminal Justice: Rev. Bailey shared that he and the Chair will share suggestions of this committee offline. He ensured the work of the committee will continue when we hear from the community.

### **Continuation of Strategic Planning**

Dr. Ivey Green shared the following – a reminder to send committee notes to Teams for upload. Schedule a committee meeting soon and to prepare for the upcoming report. We have a goal to complete in September. And future goals to leave working documents from previous years, so when we come to end of term, we leave something to new members. Our strategic process should be in place for year 1, 3, and 5 goals. We cannot be complacent, and we have go beyond administration and personalities in order to move forward. Chair check-ins are important. At least two commit meeting planned outside of this meeting. Remember we can have 4 committee meeting in the year. We should continue to engage whether it is through listening sessions, events, community awards, scholarships, or initiate student art or writing that speaks to our advocacy of our community. These could be added bonuses in our annual report. This board is designed to provide Leadership and capacity – resiliently to provide information for new board members. Leadership will change, leave something in place to move forward. Elevation community interest with Table Talks to disseminate, and receive information. Utilize our statewide board credibility, build relationship with key community members and share resources. Legacy and accountability – be sure record are in order. Leave history for others who want to know or come back. Reminder of five business days for meetings notes. Develop relationships beyond differences and communicate. Share with our community what we accomplished to give us presence. Look for events and conferences in our community. Lastly, think about any gaps that we can build upon our strategic visions.

Mr. Robert Burnett, President of NAACP announced a VA State Conference at the Omni Hotel October 26-29. Please contact him for more details. Dr. Ivey Green mention a board member initiating a Juneteenth celebration or Black History Month Celebration and opened the floor for any ideas. Princess Philomena echoed Dr. Ivey Green in which we should host something separate from the governor's mansion. And she loved the idea of recognizing children that are doing well. Justin Bell shared an example of engagement from the Latino Advisory Board. They gave an award for a contest. That said, Rev. Bailey and Princess Philomena will collaborate to host an event for Black History Month. In the last remarks from Rev. Bailey he stated we did not have a quorum today. Without a quorum we cannot vote. We were invited to apply to this board with an inclination of meeting in person. Please so you your best to attend meetings if possible.

**Public Comment**

Dr. Ivey Green greeted Chantel Lewis, a private citizen who wanted to make sure to agree or disagree of what is being taught in our schools. The governor is making preparations to eliminate AP African American Studies course. This decision excludes out history and can impact our children. She would like us to think about that statement and she will wait to hear our feedback. She wants to know the board's position in the governor's multiple attempts to erase our history from our schools. We also heard from Eduardo Lopez, a former VAAAB Board member. He also shared his thoughts on the governor's take on removing AP African American Studies and wanted to take a public stance on this decision. And he shared his thoughts on the importance of equity in DEI. Lopez is eager for a response and action towards this decision. And he plans to attend a meeting in person. Dr. Ivey Green acknowledged and thanked them for their comments.

**Closing remarks and announcements**

Dr. Ivey Green gave closing remarks- we look forward to a quorum in our next meeting on Thursday, June 12 at the Gloucester Institute. Gloria asked us to hold the entire day to meet. We may have an opportunity to meet sooner for fellowship prior to the meeting.

The board adjourned at 4:08pm.