

**NEW YORK STATE COMMUNITY COMMISSION ON REPARATIONS REMEDIES
Business Meeting Minutes
Monday, December 16, 2024**

Location: Rochdale Ballroom, 169-65 137th Avenue, Jamaica, NY 11434

Members Present: Commissioner Dr. Seanelle Hawkins, Commissioner Dr. Deborah Jenkins, Commissioner Dr. Ron Daniels, Commissioner Lurie Daniel Favors, Esq., Commissioner Jennifer Jones Austin, Esq., Commissioner Timothy Hogue, Commissioner Linda Tarrant-Reid Commissioner Linda Brown-Robinson (attended via Zoom)

Member Excused: Commissioner Dr. Darrick Hamilton

I. Call to Order and Welcome Remarks and Greetings

The business meeting of the New York State Community Commission on Reparations Remedies (NYSCCRR) was called to order by Chair Hawkins at 4:47 p.m. She thanked Senator James Sanders, Jr. and welcomed all the attendees. Chair Hawkins noted that the Commission, being appointed by Governor Hochul on December 19th, was nearing its one-year anniversary - the official swearing in being July 30, 2024. All the Commissioners were then given an opportunity to introduce themselves.

Chair Hawkins acknowledged wanting to provide gratitude to Governor Kathy Hochul for her leadership in establishing the Commission. She also recognized Senator, President Pro Tempore and Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins for her unwavering leadership, Assembly Member Carl Heastie for his commitment to the work that the Commission is doing, Senator James Sanders and Assemblywoman Michaelle Solages for sponsoring the Reparations legislation. She also acknowledged the hard working team in the Office of General Services, Bradley Allen, Tunisia Wright, and Paige Erin with special thanks to Pier Duncan, NYSCCRR's Interim Operations Manager.

II. Approval of Minutes

Chair Hawkins requested a motion to approve the minutes from NYSCCRR's first Public Hearing held in Buffalo, NY on November 12th, 2024.

Motion: Commissioner Jones Austin moved to accept the November 12th minutes.

Second: Commissioner Jenkins seconded the motion.

Vote: The motion was moved and carried by unanimous vote.

III. Update on the work of the Commission

Chair Hawkins provided the community with an update on a timeline of the work that the Commission has done, since its inception, that included having conducted four business meetings

and two public hearings, inclusive of today. The commencement of weekly meetings with OGS and the Executive Committee whose members consist of the Chair, Vice Chair Commissioner Jenkins, Secretary Commissioner Tarrant-Reid and Treasurer Commissioner Jones Austin. Additionally, the Commission's website was launched serving as a platform to provide up-to-date information on Commission business, opportunities for public engagement and Commission job postings. The website can be accessed at: www.ny.gov/reparations

A. Executive Director Update:

Chair Hawkins announced that through a search conducted by OGS, the Commission interviewed candidates for the Executive Director position and selected Dr. Makini Chisolm-Straker. The final phase in the hiring process will hopefully happen by January 2025. The Chair acknowledged Dr. Chisolm-Straker's presence at the meeting.

B. Update on Other Open Positions:

Chair Hawkins announced that a subcommittee has been formed to identify subject matter experts whose duty will be to provide testimony at Public Hearings that will inform the community about the impact and harms of slavery across New York State. The Chair also reported that the Commission has created position descriptions and contractor opportunities for an audio/video firm, a research historian, research analyst firm, and communications/marketing company. The Chair mentioned that an open call for RFPs and RFQs can be found on the Reparations website at: www.ny.gov/reparations

Chair Hawkins noted the challenges the Commission faces in the hiring and contracting processes given the mandates of NYS government's requirements in hiring personnel and firms which has impacted greatly on the speed of hiring much needed staff and professional services. The Chair noted that the hiring of the Executive Director took almost three months with final approval still pending.

Chair Hawkins expressed the Commission's gratitude for the support of the NYS Governor's Office and the NYS Legislature and indicated the need for at least six months additional time to complete the Commission's work.

IV. SUBJECT MATTER EXPERT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY UPDATES:

Commissioner Jenkins reported on the work of the subcommittee, which is comprised of Commissioner Ron Daniels, Commissioner Lurie Daniel Favors and herself. The committee has met seven (7) times to discuss and recommend subject matter experts submitted by Commissioners to testify at public hearings. A rubric was created to identify subject matter experts who will be selected to participate in the public hearings. Commissioner Jenkins noted the important work the committee was doing and her belief that the subject matter experts will provide

the valuable information that the Commission needs to support its findings on the harms and impact of slavery, as well as recommendations for remedies for the resulting harms.

V. Discussion. Workgroups to Assist Commission

Commissioners Daniel Favors moved that the Commission adhere to the decision made at the Commission meeting on October 1, 2024 regarding work groups and the vote by the Commission to not work with such groups and adhere to the reparations legislation. Commissioner Favors also suggested that since the vote was final and the absence of work groups being included in the legislation that this topic should no longer be revisited.

Motion: Commissioner Daniel Favors moved the motion.

Second: Commissioner Jones Austin seconded the motion.

Vote: Five yeas, the motion was carried.

VI. Attendance Policy Discussion

Chair Hawkins requested that the Attendance Policy discussion be tabled for the next meeting due to the policy not being provided to the Commissioners for review at today's meeting.

VII. Other Business

Chair Hawkins invited Assemblywoman Michaelle Solages, who is a sponsor of the reparations bill to address the audience.

Commissioner Jenkins expressed her concern for the public who are not or cannot be in attendance to have an opportunity to provide their testimony in other ways, by having mechanisms in place for those to also be added to the official record.

Chair Hawkins agreed, but expressed concern that the Commission does not have the capacity at this time to facilitate that process. The Chair noted that the current RFQ for a communications firm will include that component for community engagement.

Commissioner Jones Austin noted that the hiring of the Executive Director and support staff to administrate and coordinate the work of the Commission will enable the Chair to focus on other work of the Commission.

Chair Hawkins acknowledged Assembly Member Anderson's presence and she was then given an opportunity to speak. (Please clarify, Assemblymember Anderson's first name and affiliation)

Chair Hawkins announced that a January meeting had not been confirmed and that the February Public Hearing will be in Albany during the Annual Black, Hispanic and Asian Caucus Weekend, February 13-February 16, 2025 and the March meeting will be held in Rochester.

Chair Hawkins adjourned the business portion of the meeting at 5:49 p.m. allowing for a five-minute recess before the commencement of the public hearing.

The public meeting of the New York State Community Commission on Reparations Remedies (NYSCCRR) was called to order by Chair Hawkins at 5:58 p.m.

Chair Hawkin recognized Councilwoman Nantasha Williams and gave her an opportunity to speak.

Our Local History Presentation

Chair Hawkins began the public hearing with a presentation by Our Local History, an organization with a mission is to provide support, empower students and community members with a tool to engage their own local history of civil rights through inquiry, equity and civil action. The presentation was presented by Kesha James, a co-director of Our Local History, and Justin Murphy, Communications Coordinator.

The meeting proceeded without a break, moving directly into the public comment portion, where members of the Queens community were invited to share their thoughts on the topic of reparations.

VI. Public Comment