Health Equity Advisory Commission Draft Meeting Minutes

Date: November 3, 2026

Attendees: Austin Beaumont, Jacquelyn Bendavid, Ana Burke, Ariel Carter, Joanne Crawford, Mark Hughes, Kate Jerman, Justin Kenney, Sarah Launderville, Jeffrey Mbarushimana, Alex McCracken, Song Nguyen, Breanna Sheehan, Katie Stetler, Diana Wahle, Sandi Yandow

Agenda item	Notes
Welcome and Introductions	• Sarah Launderville called the meeting to order at 12:34 p.m. • The meeting began with greetings and introductions.
Approve Minutes of October 6, 2026 Meeting	• Commission members reviewed the October 6, 2026 meeting Minutes and were invited to identify corrections or additions. No objections were raised. However, because the Commission did not have a quorum, the Minutes could not be formally approved. There was discussion about keeping the Minutes in draft form and approving them at a future meeting when a quorum is present.
Public Comment	• None.
Membership-Quorum Discussion	• Kate Jerman provided an overview of quorum requirements following clarification from the Secretary of State's office as part of the Commission's reset process and development of its Charter. • Kate explained that under Vermont open meeting law, quorum is based on a majority of total authorized membership, not just currently filled seats. • The Commission has 31 total seats, meaning 16 members must be present for a quorum and for the Commission to conduct official business. • The Commission currently has 18 seated members but does not consistently reach 16 attendees at meetings. • A quorum is required to conduct official business such as approving meeting minutes, voting on recommendations, approving the annual legislative report, and making decisions about the upcoming community grants process. • When a quorum is not present, the Commission can still hold discussions, share information and hear presentations but cannot take official votes.

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	• Although the annual report requires Commission approval, Kate confirmed that the report can still be submitted to the Legislature absent a quorum to satisfy statutory reporting requirements, but the report must acknowledge the number of members participating and the absence of an official quorum. • Commission members discussed strategies for increasing participation, including contacting organizations with vacant or inactive seats and encouraging them to designate representatives. • Commission members were encouraged to review the membership list and document outreach efforts to avoid duplicating contacts. • Breanna Sheehan agreed to contact the Commission on Native American Affairs and work to increase tribal representation. • Sarah Launderville reported ongoing communication regarding an existing membership vacancy, with Alex McCracken offering assistance. • Kate Jerman has contacted the Pride Center which currently has no staff but still has board members who could potentially fill the seat. • There was expressed support for establishing a more formal process to communicate with organizational leadership and agency commissioners regarding appointments, attendance expectations, and terms of service. • Breanna Sheehan raised a question about whether one individual can represent two organizations or membership positions. Kate Jerman will seek clarification from legal counsel on that. • Kate Jerman clarified that organizations specifically identified in statute designate their own representatives and the Commission is only responsible for approving at-large members. • Kate Jerman emphasized the importance of filling seats and engaging new members ahead of the community grants work anticipated in the new year. • There was discussion about tracking membership terms more consistently, with a goal of three-year commitments for organizational representatives. Under statute, at-large members serve one-year terms. • Kate Jerman confirmed that at-large members are full voting members and count toward quorum. • Diana Wahle asked if organizations that repeatedly fail to participate can be removed from the commission membership list. Kate Jerman and Sarah

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	Launderville explained that the list of designated organizations is established in statute and removing or replacing an organization would require legislative action. Because inactive organizations, including those that no longer operate, continue to count toward the Commission's total membership and quorum requirements, it was agreed that the possibility of pursuing legislative changes to address those challenges may warrant discussion at a future meeting.

Update from the Office of Health Equity	• Kate Jerman explained that the legislation establishing the HEAC also:
	  ○ Charged the Commission with the responsibility of setting up the Office of Health Equity.
	  ○ Allocated funding for an initial round of community grants.
	• With the Office of Health Equity now established, the office is preparing to develop the community grants process and address the administrative and contracting requirements associated with distributing the funds.
	• The goal is to develop the process in the spring of 2027 and distribute funding to communities during 2027.
	• Kate introduced Ariel Carter who will help design and manage the grants process because of her experience with grants, RFPs and related procedures. Kate noted that navigating state grant requirements involves many rules and processes, making Ariel's expertise particularly valuable.
	• Ariel expressed enthusiasm about working with the Commission and supporting its work.

Updated Integrated Workplan Discussion	• Mark Hughes provided an overview of the draft Integrated Strategic Workplan developed as part of the Commission's reset process. Mark explained that the workplan combines activities from the Commission's existing ("legacy") workplan with activities identified through the reset process, creating a single framework for organizing, tracking and advancing the Commission's work. • The workplan organizes activities into standing responsibilities, priority initiatives and emerging issues. Each activity includes detailed information such as intended outcomes, deliverables, responsible parties, community participation, timelines, performance measures, resources, potential barriers, etc.

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	• The Integrated Workplan and broader reset proposal have not been formally adopted because of ongoing quorum challenges. For now, members can continue reviewing and refining documents, but formal approval has to wait until the Commission can meet quorum requirements. • Breanna Sheehan praised the depth and usefulness of the workplan despite its complexity. She questioned whether the plan was intended primarily as informational or as a project management tool. She also requested clarification regarding how the workplan would be maintained, updated and approved. • Mark Hughes said the workplan should be the Commision's "North Star" and organizational framework for its work. He acknowledged that processes for managing the workplan have not yet been established. • Kate Jerman described the workplan as the most comprehensive effort so far to organize HEAC's priorities in one place. She acknowledged additional discussion is needed to clarify priority initiatives and establish agreement on the Commission's direction before final approval. • Song Nguyen commended the significant effort that went into developing the Integrated Workplan and suggested adding a legend defining the calendar quarters referenced in the workplan. She also recommended making it easier to identify where members will need to make decisions or provide input. This will help members understand when and how their participation is needed so they can engage more meaningfully with specific work items. • Song agreed to provide written follow-up suggestions. • Diana Wahle suggested more visibility regarding which populations are impacted by specific work items and better connection between activities and community outcomes. • Justin Kenney noted that current statewide population level outcomes and indicators have not been substantially updated since 2018 and suggested considering how impacted populations or "interest holders" could be identified within the workplan.

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	• Justin also recommended distinguishing between population-level outcomes and programmatic outputs and reviewing the terminology used for performance measures to improve consistency and clarity. • Jacquelyn Bendavid shared that, as a new member, she found the workplan overwhelming and had difficulty identifying how she could contribute. She expressed interest in becoming involved but requested additional orientation and support to better understand the Commission's work and opportunities to contribute. Mark acknowledged the need for stronger onboarding and offered for himself and Sarah to follow up with Jacquelyn to provide additional orientation and discuss opportunities for participation.
Legislative Report	• Sarah Launderville discussed preparation of HEAC's January 2027 report to the Legislature. • Sarah noted that past reports and 2027 draft materials are available on HEAC's SharePoint site. • Commission members were encouraged to review documents, add comments and contribute language to the report. • Quorum challenges were discussed as a potential obstacle to formally approving the report. If a quorum is not available to formally approve the report, the report may include language clarifying that it represents the work of participating Commission members rather than an officially approved Commission report.
Adjourn	• The meeting adjourned at 1:58 p.m.

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