



City of Milwaukee

200 E. Wells Street
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53202

Meeting Minutes AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE UNEMPLOYMENT TASK FORCE

**ALD. ASHANTI HAMILTON, CO-CHAIR AND ALD. TONY
ZIELINSKI, CO-CHAIR**

**Deborah Blanks, Sedgwick Daniels, Ald. Joe Davis, Joe Fahey,
Pam Fendt, Curt Harris, Wendell Harris, Ralph Hollmon, Carl
Jaskolski, Ossie Kendrix, Marc Levine, Arturo Martinez, Gerard
Randall, Michael Rosen, Tim Sheehy, Julia Taylor, and McArthur
Weddle**

**Staff Assistant, Joanna Polanco, 286-2366
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Tuesday, March 8, 2011

12:00 PM

Room 303, City Hall

Meeting convened at 12:20 noon

Members present:

*Ald. Hamilton, Ald. Zielinski, Ossie Kendrix, Arturo Martinez, Carl Jaskolski, Curt Harris,
Marc Levine, Pam Fendt, Julia Taylor, Ralph Hollmon, Wendell Harris*

Members Excused:

*Deborah Blanks
Joe Fahey
Tim Sheehy
Ald. Davis*

Members Absent:

*Gerard Randall
Sedgwick Daniel
McArthur Weddle*

Other individuals present:

*Mary Turk, Legislative Reference Bureau
Jim Carpenter
David Celata, Social Development Commission (SDC)
MPS Superintendent, Gregory E. Thornton*

1. Review and approval of the minutes of the February 15, 2011 meeting.

Motion by Mr. Martinez to approve the minutes as amended. There were no objections.

4. Discussion relating to the effect of the governor's budget plans in education.

Individual present:

Superintendent, Gregory E. Thornton

Mr. Thornton shared from his fact sheet dated March 2011, "Wisconsin's proposed

budget and the impact on MPS" answers to frequently asked questions to provide a framework to his presentation in addressing the task force today. (Exhibit 1)

After superintendant Thornton answered questions from members, Ald. Hamilton asked what can the task force do help in these efforts.

Mr. Thornton responded that he would ask the city to rethink its position around the sale of MPS buildings and also to take a look at the funding forms of categorical cuts; ways that we can build the community.

3. Discussion relating to a Summary of Public Comments submitted by the Social Development Commission.

Individual present:

Dave Celata - Social Development Commission (SDC)

Mr. Celata spoke on his Summary of Public Comments prepared by him back in December 2010. The document provided a breakdown of public comments submitted to the City of Milwaukee's Taskforce on African American Male Unemployment. From October 25, 2010 to December 12, 2010, the taskforce received a total of 121 submissions. The suggestions were grouped into large categories, the result of which are presented in the graph attached to these minutes. (Exhibit 2)

2. Discussion of previous Framework and Goals.

Ald. Zielinski suggested to have all subcommittee members report on their findings at the next task force meeting.

Mr. Hollmon would like to suggest considering outside individuals that will be able to contribute with knowledge and suggestions beneficial to the task force framework and goals.

Next meeting date will be Tuesday, March 29, 2011 at 12:00 noon

Meeting adjourned at 1:30 p.m.

**Joanna Polanco
Staff Assistant**

March 2011

Wisconsin's proposed budget and the impact on MPS *Answers to frequently asked questions*

Governor Scott Walker's proposed budget includes \$834 million in cuts to Wisconsin's schools and local governments. The budget has yet to be debated and adopted, but we know that our families and members of the community have many questions.

In the weeks ahead, Milwaukee Public Schools will analyze information related to the district's Fiscal Year 2012 budget. Our goal is to maintain quality programming while being fiscally responsible. We will develop a plan to move forward with next school year, and to continue to serve the families of Milwaukee.

What is the impact to MPS of the governor's state budget proposal?

MPS' initial calculations show a potential loss of \$74 million for next school year. This is our current estimate of what the district loses through reductions in state aid and the local tax levy, along with funding the governor proposes to eliminate for math teachers, school nurses, Advanced Placement Courses, the Children at Risk program, and other programs. The potential loss of funding compounds the problems. The district was already facing a shortfall of \$13.6 million for next year.



What is the impact to MPS students?

The potential impacts on our children have our staff, city leaders and community members worried. More than 82% of MPS students live in poverty; almost 20% require special education, and 9.8% are English Language Learners. The district serves more African American and Hispanic children than any other district in the state. Many students struggle daily with hunger and have no access to health care, explained Superintendent Gregory Thornton, who recently told the Milwaukee Board of School Directors and an audience of MPS families, "The governor's plan causes a disproportionate amount of hurt to our young people."

Does the district still have access to federal stimulus money that could help plug the gaps?

No, the money will not be available. The \$81.1 million in stimulus money (ARRA, IDEA funds) the district was awarded two years ago will expire soon. MPS used this one-time allotment as bonding authority for capital projects (improvements, maintenance) and also to fund programs such as professional development for staff, parent involvement and class-size reduction teachers.

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What could the massive budget shortfall mean to MPS and its students?

There is still so much we do not know. We are re-calculating the district's budget proposal, which is due in late April to the Board of School Directors for its deliberation. We may have to ask principals to re-do the budgets they had already submitted. We are looking at a number of options, including elimination of some programs and services, and making cuts to transportation.

Will schools be closed?

The district will consider school closures along with other options for addressing the funding shortfall. Even before the governor's proposal, many principals told the district their budgets forced them to cut staff or eliminate programs such as art or physical education. New, deeper cuts could cause the district to recommend closing schools that are under-enrolled, or that cannot afford enough staff, so that children can be served in settings that allow the district to provide a full range of educational options.

Will there be layoffs?

MPS must become a smaller, leaner organization in order to meet budgetary targets. Layoffs are a real possibility. We cannot project the number at this time. We will communicate any projected staff impacts once all the school budgets are reviewed again, program adjustments are considered, and the proposed budget is ready for the Board to deliberate. The Board makes all final determinations.

The governor's budget calls for a lifting of the caps on voucher school enrollment and the income limits on parents who participate. How will this impact MPS?

It is not immediately clear, though MPS anticipates a negative impact, most obviously through the potential loss of more students. The real problem remains the "funding flaw" that has Milwaukee taxpayers picking up more than a third of the cost of each voucher student, even though no voucher students can be counted for the purposes of state aid.

Could selling vacant buildings make the MPS budget picture any brighter?

The district has a number of vacant properties it has listed as surplus and is open to selling. Our strategy to date has been to reoccupy the buildings with students the district can count for state aid purposes. We have also sought redevelopment opportunities. We will continue to pursue the best offers, but the real estate market appears slow to rebound in today's economy, and we cannot rely on the sales of buildings off-setting what will likely be a long-standing budget challenge.

The governor said that districts can make up for the loss in state aids through the employee contributions to pensions and healthcare that are in the budget repair bill. Will that be true for MPS?

There would be no immediate impact on MPS because the district has contracts in place with almost all of its employees. Most of the contracts expire in June 2012, but the district's largest union, the teachers' union or MTEA, signed a contract in September that

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runs through June 2013. The district could consider asking the unions to reopen their contracts if circumstances warranted that action.

Do MPS employees pay anything to their pensions and health insurance now?

By August 1, 2011, all district employees will contribute to their health insurance. This was something critically important to the Administration and Board of School Directors and something that was accomplished along with health plan vendor and design changes.

As for pensions, some MPS employees are in the same pension system that covers City of Milwaukee employees, and some are covered under the Wisconsin Retirement System. MPS employees participating in the City pension plan who were hired after January, 2000 pay a 1.6% pension contribution. All other employees currently do not contribute toward their pension. The City Attorney issued an opinion that the state's mandate on City pension contributions would apply to MPS employees. Specifically, for employees currently not governed by labor contracts, employee pension contributions would commence the day after the legislation becomes effective. For employees covered by labor contracts, the obligation to make pension contributions would be determined by their labor contracts until those contracts expire.

What can I do to make my voice heard on cuts to funding for public education?

Consider connecting with your state representatives or state senators as they deliberate the governor's proposed budget. You could check out a web site that has resources for supporters of public education, and lists local events. The site is at

<http://ilovemypublicschool.com/> We ask you to consider being part of the MPS budget process. There will be opportunities for the public to provide input. Look for the MPS FY12 budget calendar online at the following link:

<http://mpsportal.milwaukee.k12.wi.us/portal/server.pt/doc/74707/05+Budget+Calendar+FY12-LJ.doc>

What message does Superintendent Gregory Thornton have for MPS families and students?

Dr. Thornton thanks families and students for their patience and their commitment. "We will be ready when the first day of school rolls around again next year, and the schools will offer quality programs that educate children," said Dr. Gregory Thornton. "The children will always be our primary focus."

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Believe it!

Achieve it!

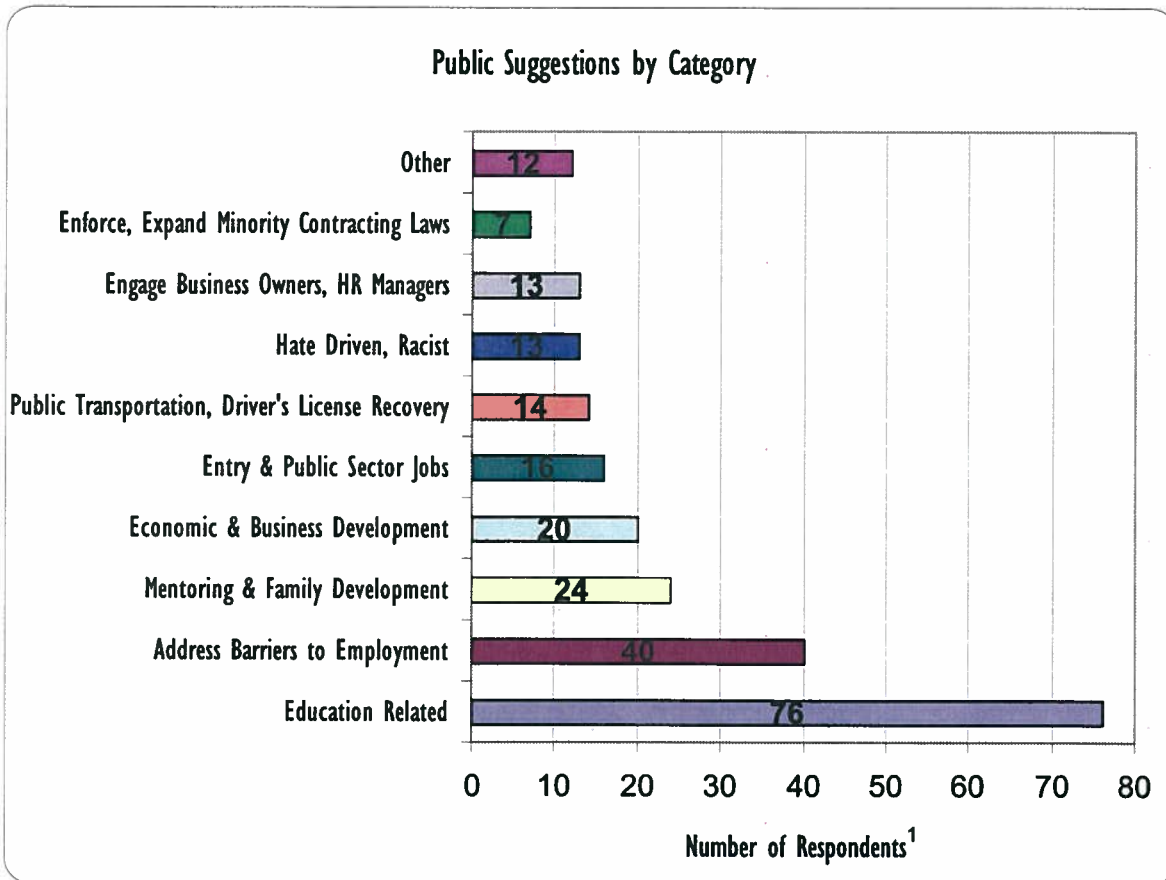
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Summary of Public Comments
African American Male Unemployment Taskforce
Prepared by Dave Celata, Social Development Commission
December 20, 2010

This document provides a breakdown of public comments submitted to the City of Milwaukee's Taskforce on African American Male Unemployment. From October 25, 2010 to December 12, 2010, the Taskforce received a total of 121 submissions. These suggestions were grouped into large categories, the results of which are presented in the graph below.



¹Note that the total number of suggestions listed in this graph is 240. The Taskforce received comments from only 121 members of the public. However, many comments discussed multiple ideas and were therefore counted under more than one category.

The categories presented above are intentionally broad to illustrate the basic pattern of public comments. In the succeeding sections, each broad category is analyzed in more detail and specific suggestions are given.

Education Related Suggestions

Comments related to education, job training, and basic skills were by far the most prevalent among public comments. Most comments that centered on education were general and simply stated a need to improve educational outcomes for African American males. Within this category, a number of ideas were proposed:

- (1) Focus on basic skills by ensuring all individuals can read, write, and perform basic mathematics at a proficient level;
- (2) Provide on-the-job training and other skills training programs—including a focus on green and emerging industries;
- (3) Enhance early childhood education;
- (4) Teach trade and technical skills within public schools and make programs at MATC more accessible through new pathways;
- (5) Increase parental involvement in schools and their children's education;
- (6) Conduct a complete reform of Milwaukee Public Schools.

Barriers to Employment

Barriers to employment is a broad category, that includes,

- (1) Soft skills training;
- (2) Provide social services to assist with criminal records, child support, housing, and financial support during training;
- (3) Remove legal barriers to employment created by criminal records;
- (4) Enforce anti-discriminatory laws;
- (5) Provide enhanced transitional services for ex-offenders;
- (6) Better connect African American males to job opportunities.

Most suggestions under this category focused on ex-offenders and the impact of a criminal background on one's employment prospects. But the need to wrap supportive services around the long-term unemployed was also made clear.

Mentoring & Family Development

One of the more specific categories was mentoring and family development. Comments in this category focused on three needs:

- (1) Provide young African American males with positive role models;
- (2) Help "reengage" adult African American males with the traditional family structure;
- (3) Use the media to create positive messaging for African American males.

Economic & Business Development

Suggestions under this category focused mostly on the need to create and support more African American owned businesses within Milwaukee's central city. The principal method proposed for developing new businesses was through micro-finance; the principal method proposed for supporting existing businesses by subdividing public contracts and/or facilitating group bids. A common theme under this category was that African American businesses would be the most likely to hire African American males.

Also under this category, the need to stimulate business development within green and emerging industries was proposed. These comments stated that if Milwaukee could expand its economic base with new industries, it would assist the entire community—including African American males.

Entry & Public Sectors Jobs

The need to create pathways to long-term employment was highlighted by multiple comments. Specifically, respondents proposed three community needs:

- (1) Make more entry level jobs, in industries with employment ladders, available to African American males;
- (2) Create and support more transitional jobs programs modeled on the WPA;
- (3) Make a conscious effort to employ more African American males in city government and through city contractors.

Public Transportation & Driver's License Recovery

8 out of 14 comments under this category focused on the need to assist African American males with recovering and maintaining their driver's license. Several respondents highlighted the need for a valid driver's license in order to get and maintain a job.

6 out of the 14 comments discussed in the need for more public transportation options within Metro Milwaukee.

Hate-driven, Racist

A number of comments were overtly racist and were obviously not intended to provide a productive public discourse. User IP addresses were submitted with each comment. When the most blatantly racist IP addresses were entered into a public IP search engine, respondents were scattered throughout the continent (including individuals residing in New Hampshire, Maryland, Georgia, California, and Canada). Interestingly, *none* of the most blatantly racist comments were submitted from the Milwaukee area.

Engage Business Owners & Human Resources Managers

Two specific ideas were proposed under this category:

- (1) Engage more business owners within the ranks for the Taskforce to gain their insight into how to increase African American male employment;
- (2) Provide training and education to human resources professionals with the intention of removing the "gate keeper" barriers to employment for African American males.

Enforce & Expand Minority Contracting Laws

These suggestions focused on the need to analyze, monitor, enforce, and/or expand the City of Milwaukee's use of minority contractors—specifically its use of African American males that are residents of the city. Respondents under this category place the city's contracting practices as a direct method for addressing African American male unemployment.

Other Suggestions

The final category is a miscellaneous collection of suggestions including,

- (1) Improve neighborhood conditions;
- (2) Reduce public assistance programs;
- (3) Replicate programs from peer cities;
- (4) Reduce nepotism in the public sector;
- (5) Address homophobia;
- (6) Create boarding houses with supportive services.