



INTER-OFFICE COMMUNICATION

DATE: May 31, 2018

TO: Theo Lipscomb, Sr., Chairman, Board of Supervisors

FROM: Nicole M. Brookshire, Executive Director, Office on African American Affairs

Cc: Marcelia Nicholson, Vice-Chairwoman, Jason Haas, Supervisor

SUBJECT: File No. 18-271 (Informational Report – Equality of Access to Milwaukee County Aquatic Facilities)

REQUEST

At this time, no request is being made by the Office on African American Affairs, this report is informational only.

BACKGROUND

The Office on African American Affairs (OAAA) was created in 2016 via resolution (15-636) with the following objectives: the examination and definition of issues central to the rights and needs of African Americans; recommendations for changes in programs and laws that disparately impact African Americans; development and implementation of policies, plans, and programs related to the special needs of African Americans; and the promotion of equal opportunities for African Americans.

As noted by the Chairman's letter dated March 7th, additional guidelines include (but are not limited to) promoting equal opportunities for African Americans and reviewing county legislation or regulations that would affect the African American population.

In accordance with these policy guidelines, OAAA has been requested to review and analyze the equality of access to Milwaukee County's aquatic facilities, and provide policy recommendations to the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors for addressing any disparities that the office identifies.

In addition, to provide an explanation of the processes the office has established, or plans to develop, for the review and evaluation of policy decisions or legislative requests by the Administration or the County Board, in accordance with the objectives and charge of OAAA.

REPORT

Equality of Access to Milwaukee County's Aquatic Facilities

In March of 2018, OAAA reached out to Park's and the Comptroller's office to request additional community-wide data including a list and map of all aquatic facilities that are open to the public in Milwaukee County, the cost of attendance of each facility, and the hours each facility is open. As well as,

specific data which includes attendance data for each individual Milwaukee County operated pool. To date, OAAA has received Milwaukee County attendance data for 2016 and 2017; the community-wide data on rates and hours of operation; and three (3) maps: all aquatic facilities with an overlay of poverty data and data percent Black/African American (Please see enclosures).

To best gauge if racial inequities exists, OAAA evaluated the data on aquatic facilities, those solely owned and operated by Milwaukee County as well as the surrounding swim facilities that reside within the Milwaukee County footprint. When solely considering Milwaukee County facilities, the data provided highlights potential concerns in the accessibility to an aquatic site, for communities of color and individuals with disabilities. When overlaid with the data provided by the Comptroller's Office in coordination with the Land Information Office there are 17 other aquatic sites that offer 'open swim' to the public, and are located on the Northern side of Milwaukee County (North of I-94). The breakdown of the 17 Northside locations are: 2 municipals, 14 school district/rec division, and 1 nonprofit (Hoyt). These locations are noted on the enclosed map and are in addition to the 3 Milwaukee County aquatic facilities (Noyes, Schulz, and Washington). In contrast, the map also highlights aquatic sites on the Southern side of Milwaukee County (locations South of I-94). The data confirms 10 Milwaukee County aquatic facilities and 10 school district/rec division pools. Quantitively, 20 aquatic facilities on the Northside of Milwaukee County as compared to 20 aquatic facilities on the Southern side of Milwaukee County. These totals do not include the additional 18 privately owned pools located across Milwaukee County. The privately held locations have 8 being located on the Northside versus 10 on the Southside.

The majority of 'other' aquatic facilities located within the County geographic footprint, are available to the community at large, and have entry rates which are lower than Milwaukee County; deep well indoor and outdoor pools. The entry fees to visit another public facility ranged from no cost (\$0) to eight dollars (\$8); whereas Milwaukee County entry fees range from three dollars (\$3) to seven dollars and seventy-five cents (\$7.75). However, in comparison, County facilities for swimming have longer hours of availability when compared to other public aquatic facilities (limited hours open to the public). Secondly, when evaluating accessibility, it is important to think about accessibility for all constituents, especially those who have limited mobility. Milwaukee County has several aquatic facilities which do not provide ADA accommodations.

In looking at the compiled information, equity disparities were found if solely only considering Milwaukee County aquatic facilities. From a larger scale, encompassing all facilities open to the public the inequitable access declines. In addition, the above analysis confirms a need to engage with community partners for resident feedback (on access needs) but to also consider collective collaboration with other municipalities and organizations (school districts and recreation departments) when determining future aquatic related decision making. For example, it may make sense to consolidate resources with other local entities to ensure access (via extended hours and affordable rates) to all Milwaukee County constituents. In an initial outreach by the Comptroller's Research Division, MPS Recreation would be open to furthering this discussion with the Park's department.

MOVING FORWARD

As outlined by file #15-636, OAAA was created to review all policy and legislative decisions and make recommendations to the County Executive and County Board. It has become clear that this review method, solely, will not address or resolve the 'root causes' of racial inequities in Milwaukee County. Due to OAAA's staff size, fiscal limitations, and the County's ongoing challenge of receiving increased shared-revenue (from the State of Wisconsin), it is cost prohibitive to create an internal process for the office which would require the review of every policy decision and legislative requests. As part of OAAA's long-term vision to eradicate racial inequities, the Office has reached out to national

organizations (Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE), Policy Link, etc.) and jurisdictional peer offices (City of Madison, Dane County, Grand Rapids, Michigan, etc.) to ascertain racial equity 'best practices' from around the country. Addressing these racial inequities should not be the burden of African American constituents, People of Color, or OAAA solely – but collectively should be civil servants, elected officials, and administrators; those who make and implement these inequitable policies.

- The office is currently developing a countywide Racial Equity Action plan that will develop long-term solutions. The plan would speak to prioritizing racial equity, to implement practices of being the Community Thought-leader on Racial & Equity “Authentic’ Inclusion, and to Build Strategic Alliances, while speaking to Accountability, Integrity and Respect, as part of our work culture and daily activities. It is imperative to highlight the strong community push to drive a collaborative effort across all units of government; at the local, regional, state and federal levels. Creating an inclusive Racial Equity plan starts at the top and must include all elected officials.

In seeing that Milwaukee County is number one nationally (across a number of indicators) for racial disparities, OAAA’s effort to drive racial equity training as part of the first phase of the plan will require urgency and strong support from the County Board and County Executive, as the plan is a cultural shift in how government currently operates – a move from being reactive to proactive. The plan will allow OAAA (with the support of an internal Racial Equity CORE team and larger external Racial Equity Taskforce) the ability to implement trainings and policies to ensure that all decisions are made with a Racial Equity lens.

This report is informational only. In response to the March 7th letter from the Chairman, the Office on African American Affairs is making the following recommendations.

- Milwaukee County implement countywide Racial Equity trainings to be completed by all county employees and elected officials by 2019 (year-end).
- Implement a ‘pilot’ Budget Equity Assessment Tool for FY 2020; a tool which includes a general set of questions to guide departments and elected officials in assessing how budget requests benefit and/or burden communities, specifically communities of color and people with disabilities; addressing unintended consequences of fiscal decisions.
- As outlined by file#15-636, OAAA should devise strategies to address public policy concerns of the African American community through partnerships. Recommending authorization by County board to provide OAAA an exemption of the travel ban. Thereby, allowing the office (staff) the ability to forge long-term partnerships, site visits, racial equity shadows/trainings. Using the partnership experience to implement equitable policies and procedures including but not limited to Budget Equity Assessment Tools.
- Milwaukee County Board Representation as part of the internal Racial Equity CORE team, as well as participation in the fiscal budgeting process, to ensure representation of all constituents in decision making.



Nicole Brookshire
Executive Director, Office on African American Affairs