

Committee of the Whole (2) Report

DATE: Tuesday, December 10, 2024

WARD(S): ALL

**TITLE: UPDATE AND PROPOSED GOVERNANCE: REIMAGINING
BLACK FUTURES IN VAUGHAN: 2024-2031 ADDRESSING
ANTI-BLACK RACISM ACTION PLAN**

FROM:

Michael Genova, Deputy City Manager, Strategic Initiatives

ACTION: DECISION

Purpose

To update about efforts to begin implementing key actions of the April 2024 Council-approved Reimagining Black Futures in Vaughan: 2024-2031 Addressing Anti-Black Racism Action Plan (ABR Action Plan) and to seek approval to transition the Special Advisory Committee on Anti-Black Racism to an expanded Standing Advisory Committee on Addressing Anti-Black Racism as proposed in the ABR Action Plan.

Report Highlights

- In April 2024, Council-approved the *Reimagining Black Futures in Vaughan: 2024-2031 Addressing Anti-Black Racism Action Plan*. The contents of the ABR Action Plan were informed by a Special Advisory Committee, along with residents, stakeholder organizations and community leaders who shaped the objectives, key actions, and accountability measures.
- Addressing anti-Black racism is a key priority in the Council-approved Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy and multi-year action plan. The ABR Action Plan further aligns with the strategic priorities of the City's 2022-2026 Term of Council Service Excellence Strategic Plan.
- To support staff from across the corporation in advancing the ABR Action Plan, in June 2024, a matrixed Inclusion and Community Outreach business unit representing staff from across the corporation was established.

Report Highlights continued

- In August 2024, staff from the Inclusion and Community Outreach business unit began working with departments to identify projects for action and implementation.
- Effective governance through a Special Advisory Committee consisting of community thought leaders was vital to informing, developing and ensuring the successful passage of the ABR Action Plan. Looking ahead to 2025, the Special Advisory Committee is recommended to transition and expand into a new Standing Advisory Committee on Addressing Anti-Black Racism with the existing Special Advisory Committee members appointed to the Standing Advisory Committee.

Recommendations

1. THAT the Standing Advisory Committee on Addressing Anti-Black Racism be established for 2025;
2. THAT the draft Mandate and Terms of Reference for the Standing Advisory Committee on Addressing Anti-Black Racism be approved;
3. THAT the existing seven (7) public members of the Special Advisory Committee on Anti-Black Racism be offered appointment to serve on the Standing Advisory Committee on Addressing Anti-Black Racism; and
4. THAT City staff be directed to undertake a public recruitment for the remaining vacancies on the Standing Advisory Committee on Addressing Anti-Black Racism for 2025, with meetings to begin thereafter.

Background

The City of Vaughan recognizes that anti-Black racism is perpetual, pervasive and systemic in Canada, and that an effective strategy is required to challenge anti-Black racism in all its forms. Addressing anti-Black racism is a key priority in the Council-approved Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy and multi-year action plan. The ABR Action Plan further aligns with the strategic priorities of the City's 2022-2026 Term of Council Service Excellence Strategic Plan.

Vaughan Council approved the City's Reimagining Black Futures in Vaughan: Addressing Anti-Black Racism Action Plan 2024-2031 during the April 22, 2024, Committee of the Whole (2) meeting. Community engagement was central to the action plan's development, and this eight-year action plan provides key actions for supporting diverse Black communities within the City's jurisdiction. This critical city-building strategy was

developed with Black residents, leaders, community groups, organizations, and businesses.

Effective governance through a Special Advisory Committee consisting of community thought leaders was vital to informing, developing and ensuring the successful passage of the ABR Action Plan. Moving forward, the Special Advisory Committee is recommended to transition into a new Standing Advisory Committee on Addressing Anti-Black Racism with the existing Special Advisory Committee members appointed to the Standing Advisory Committee. In doing so, critical institutional knowledge will be safeguarded by these existing members toward future ABR Action Plan project management efforts.

The vision, perspectives, and recommendations informed by the Special Advisory Committee and all residents, stakeholder organizations and community leaders involved in developing the ABR Action Plan shaped the objectives, key actions, and accountability measures. The City wishes to use this staff report update as another opportunity to recognize the members of the Addressing Anti-Black Racism Community Engagement Action Plan Project Special Advisory Committee further. The Special Advisory Committee, comprised of seven diverse Black community members, serves as a critical governance arrangement that provides guidance and assistance on the various components and phases of the development and content of the action plan, in addition to advancing the plan's implementation. The Special Advisory Committee members include Dr. Jacqueline Getfield, Shernett Martin, Cecil Roach, Jumol Royes, Olamide Sadare, Dr. Elizabeth Sinclair, and Gary Thompson.

A meeting of the Special Advisory Committee took place on October 24, 2024, with the City's new Inclusion and Community Outreach business unit staff. Members provided insights and further reiterated the need for ongoing public engagement efforts to advance in the implementation of the objectives, key actions and accountability measures embedded within the action plan. Another meeting of the Special Advisory Committee took place on November 28, 2024, where a draft of the recommendations of this report were presented for feedback. Members were also briefed on a public recruitment communications campaign, in addition to City efforts to advance initiatives outlined in the ABR Action Plan including economic development.

With Council's approval of the ABR Action Plan, this guiding document enters a critical implementation phase. This comprehensive, enterprise-wide plan requires the support from staff across the corporation to ensure the initiatives enclosed in this document are resourced, project managed, actioned on and implemented effectively.

The April 2024 Council-approved ABR Action Plan spans eight years or two Council terms, containing three pillars aligning with the Term of Council Strategic Priorities with approximately 23 Objectives, 58 Key Action items and accountability measures. Specifically, the three pillars of the ABR Plan are:

- Pillar 1: Service Excellence and Accountability
- Pillar 2: Active, Engaged and Inclusive Communities
- Pillar 3: Economic Prosperity and Job Creation

To support staff from across the corporation in advancing the ABR Action Plan, in June 2024, a matrixed Inclusion and Community Outreach business unit representing staff from across the corporation was established.

Following a public recruitment, in September 2024, a Manager, Inclusion and Community Outreach joined the corporation to oversee the Inclusion and Community Outreach business unit.

The Manager, Inclusion and Community Outreach oversee the Inclusion and Community Outreach business unit. This role is helping guide the implementation of several main Council-approved documents, including the ABR Action Plan, in addition to the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan 2022-2026 and the 2023-2027 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.

Leveraging existing budget, the following positions were also created to support in the advancement of the ABR Action Plan, and the entirety of the City's Inclusion and Community Outreach mandate:

- Senior Advisor, Engagement (Inclusion and Community Outreach)
- Project Lead, Workforce Equity and Inclusion
- Economic Development Officer
- Recreation Lead, Events

In August 2024, staff from the Inclusion and Community Outreach business unit began working with department staff to identify projects for action and implementation in 2025.

Beginning in August 2024, the City's Senior Leadership Team members were asked to complete an Implementation Assessment Form. The Implementation Assessment Form is meant to help the corporation identify which projects in the ABR Action Plan program

departments will be responsible for helping implement. Inclusion and Community Outreach have led internal department-specific workshops to aid this effort further.

Collectively, these efforts continue to help the Inclusion and Community Outreach begin prioritizing ABR Program initiatives for 2025. A working group of Vaughan City staff will be established to help advise on implementing these 2025 ABR Program priority initiatives. A new Standing Advisory Committee on Anti-Black Racism, consisting of external stakeholders, is also expected to be established in early 2025 to inform the City's efforts and provide vital strategic counsel for the ABR Program.

In September 2024, the Inclusion and Community Outreach team further presented updates on transitioning the ABR Action Plan into a program for implementation during meetings of the Senior Leadership Team—Executive and Senior Leadership Team.

Previous Reports/Authority

April 16, 2024, Committee of the Whole (2) – [Reimagining Black Futures in Vaughan: 2024-2031 Addressing Anti-Black Racism Action Plan](#)

Analysis and Options

Looking ahead to 2025 and throughout the Council term, governance, like the formation of the new Standing Advisory Committee, will be critical to ensure community leaders can continue to inform City's staffs efforts to implement the ABR Action Plan.

The Council-approved ABR Action Plan calls for establishing a new Standing Advisory Committee on Addressing Anti-Black Racism to help fulfill the mandate of “*nothing for us, without us*” and to ensure engagement, accountability, and communication remain paramount to the City's efforts. To this end, the agendas for the Standing Advisory Committee meetings will be informed by the ABR Action Plan Staff Working Group to be established in 2025.

This new Standing Advisory Committee will build off the existing work and governance model of the current Special Advisory Committee. Specifically, on the Standing Advisory Committee, the ABR Action Plan reads:

- *“It is recommended that the City forms a Standing Advisory Committee (SAC). This committee will advise Vaughan Council on issues faced by diverse Black communities*

and provide oversight and consultation on the implementation of this action plan. The SAC will help ensure all administrative processes and decisions are informed by a comprehensive understanding of community needs and aspirations. This proactive approach not only ensures inclusion and fairness, but also strengthens public trust and accountability. It is recommended that the committee be provided with an honoraria recognizing lived and learned expertise.”

Similar in principle to other advisory committees, like the Accessibility Advisory Committee, the following governance framework is proposed for the Special Advisory Committee on Addressing Anti-Black Racism: Membership will consist of up to ten (10) members and one (1) Member of Council who will serve as chair. Meeting dates will be determined at the first meeting of the Committee and at the call of the Chair. Like other City of Vaughan advisory committees, the Standing Advisory Committee on Anti-Black Racism will be in place for the remainder of the 2022-2026 Council Term.

A public recruitment is expected to take place in early 2025. The following qualifications will be considered for appointing members to the Committee:

- Lived experience of members from the Black community, with an emphasis on intersectional aspects of identity
- Subject matter expertise in diversity, equity, and inclusion matters
- Experience working on teams, with community groups, boards or organizations.

Community participation is vital to the success of the implementation of the Anti-Black Racism Action Plan. In addition to maintaining representation by the current seven members of the existing Special Advisory Committee, who will help ensure institutional knowledge and knowledge transfer remains with the expanded Standing Advisory Committee, additional City staff and representatives of diverse groups would be invited to attend meetings as needed to provide expertise related to a specific project.

As part of the Council-approved directive recognizing the community members' significant contributions, it is proposed to provide a \$125 honorarium to each Standing Advisory Committee public member. This mirrors the honorarium arrangement set for the Special Advisory Committee.

Please see Attachment 1 for the proposed Mandate and Terms of Reference draft. Please note, the Guiding Principles in the Terms of Reference are based directly on feedback from community consultation and priorities emphasized by them.

Financial Impact

There is no budgetary impact to the recommendations in this report. The proposed honorarium for members of the Standing Advisory Committee on Anti-Black Racism will be funded through the existing operating budget.

Operational Impact

The establishment of a Staff Working Group and a Standing Advisory Committee on Anti-Black Racism will assist the Inclusion and Community Outreach team in better identifying ways to align existing budget, staffing, and resourcing with future business planning and staff performance goal-setting. In doing so, the intention is to ensure better integration of the ABR Action Plan key actions into the work plans of staff and departments. The City's existing committee structure provides further opportunities for public reporting on the progress of the ABR Action Plan.

Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations

The ABR Action Plan provides an opportunity to engage other area municipalities and stakeholder organizations further to help inform the City's efforts to implement the 58 key activities. Benchmarking the work of different organizations will be critical, and the City is well-positioned to share further insights and analysis in the development of the April 2024 ABR Plan with other municipalities committed to undertaking similar initiatives.

Furthermore, as implementation efforts continue to 2025, where possible, City staff will take part in conferences and serve on intergovernmental and stakeholder working groups that all seek to provide further knowledge and resources that can be used as part of the project management efforts and reporting to the Standing Advisory Committee on Addressing Anti-Black Racism and the additional reporting to Vaughan City Council.

Conclusion

Work has been undertaken to advance the ABR Action Plan from its April 2024 approval, including the establishment of a new matrixed Inclusion and Community Outreach business unit, the successful public recruitment of a new Manager to oversee the business unit, and a realignment of budget and staffing resources to support actioning on and project managing the key activities identified in the plan. City staff are further working toward identifying critical projects to be actioned on for 2025.

However, City staff recognize that progress on the ABR Action Plan must remain top-of-mind daily. To ensure this progress is undertaken, transitioning the existing Special Advisory Committee into a new, expanded Standing Advisory Committee on Addressing Anti-Black Racism will ensure that community thought leaders are empowered to inform, engage and provide the necessary feedback to City staff before City staff present further updates to Vaughan City Council for review, consideration and implementation.

For more information, please contact: Rouya Botlani, Manager, Inclusion and Community Outreach (rouya.botlani@vaughan.ca).

Attachments

1. Draft Mandate and Terms of Reference: Standing Advisory Committee on Anti-Black Racism
2. April 22, 2024 - [Reimagining Black Futures in Vaughan: Addressing Anti-Black Racism Action Plan 2024-2031](#) (PDF)
3. April 26, 2022 - [Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy and multi-year action plan \(2022 – 2026\)](#) (PDF)

Prepared by

Michael Genova, Deputy City Manager, Strategic Initiatives
Rouya Botlani, Manager, Inclusion and Community Outreach
Tricia Campbell, Project Lead, Inclusion and Community Outreach
An Nguyen, Project Lead, Inclusion and Community Outreach