May 8th, 2025

Subject: Youth Empowerment Commission April 26th, 2025, Meeting Minutes

Staff Lead: Sean Hamner, Associate Program Analyst, Youth Empowerment Commission

Recommended Action

Approval of the April 26th, 2025, Youth Empowerment Commission Meeting Minutes.

Youth Empowerment Commission April 26th, 2025- Meeting Minutes

Agenda Item #1: Welcome

Review purpose of the meeting, agenda, and public comment process

Wednesday Pope, Chair, Youth Empowerment Commission

A. CALL TO ORDER: Chair Wednesday Pope called the meeting to order at 9:32am.

B. LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

Pope: I would like to begin by acknowledgment of the indigenous peoples of all the lands we are in today. While we meet in a virtual platform, we encourage you to find ways to support your local indigenous community. We at the Governor's Office of land and Climate Innovation join you all form Sacramento, California on unseated Nisenan and tribal land. Nisenan people have remained in relation to this land through ceremony, culture and stewardship since time immemorial. We'd like to acknowledge the Maidu people to the North, the Valley and the Plains Miwok people to the south of the American river and the Patwin Peoples to the west of the Sacramento River for the continued relationships with this land. We acknowledge that we are on the tribals land of the Sacramento Indigenous peoples.

C. REVIEW OF AGENDA: Executive Director Wallace reviewed the agenda as the following:
-   Welcome & Call to Order
-   Public Comments on matters not on Agenda
-   Strategic Planning Update and Workshop: Underlying Contradictions, Part 1
-   Strategic Planning Update and Workshop: Underlying Contradictions, Part 2
-   Strategic Planning Workshop: Underlying Contradictions Workshop
-   Next Steps for Staff Action
-   Adjournment

D. Remarks from Distinguished Guests: Chair Wednesday Pope

No remarks from distinguished guests.

E. ESTABLISHMENT OF QUORUM: Quorum Not Met; 08/13 Voting Commissioners Present

Commissioners Present:

1. Melany Acosta-Parra
2. Madyson Chung-Lee
3. Trevor Merrell
4. Jessica Mi
5. Giselle Morris
6. Wednesday Pope
7. Andrea Terrones
8. Jocelyn Weinstock
9. Sarah Yee
10. Adelina Ramirez

Commissioners Absent:

1. Raj Bhutoria
2. Shae Dellamaggiore
3. Aidan Lin-Tostado
4. Collin McCarthy
5. Avanti Ramraj

F.   PUBLIC COMMENT PROCESS

Commission Discussion:

No commission discussion on this agenda item.

Public Comment:

No public comment on this agenda item.

Agenda Item #2: Public Comment on matters not on the agenda

No public comments on this agenda item.

Agenda Item #3: Strategic Planning Update and Workshop: Underlying Contradictions, Part 1

* Joyce Chiao, Consultant, Abundance to share strategic planning update

Chiao: Update on strategic planning. During last meeting in March, we did a couple workshops led by Raven. Based on how that discussion went, folks wanted to go deeper rather than go across different workshops. Today's focus in more workshops. Focusing on that today means we'll start doing that synthesis analysis of workshop into a first draft to look at in May. The May, July and September meetings will be used to iterate those drafts and seek feedback. That will allow us to move back into initiative development and subcommittee development in September.

Tahara: Clarifying we are doing strategic directions workshops in May.

Wallace: Confirms that we are completing that in May and initial draft will be in July.

Chiao: Process will shift back. We will continue strategic direction in May, first draft in July, then strategic plan development through July to November.

Commission Discussion:

Wallace: Possibility labs will be joining us in Richmond in May for strategic planning process to present to commission. Team has identified some bills the commission should have eyes on. They are supporting us with the developing process and frameworks to look at policy with collective lens.

Tahara: Checks in commissioners if there are any revisions needed from the previous workshop at the March meeting in Imperial Valley. Landed on sevenpractical vision elements:

1. Strong civic responsibilities
2. Youth led policies
3. Universal basic needs
4. Powerful young government
5. Intentionally impactful partnerships
6. Youth creative development
7. Dynamic accessible education

The question we are answering in this workshop is: what is blocking us from moving toward our vision.

Chung-Lee: Barriers to access for youth led policies.

Pope: Uncoordinated spaces for youth in policies and policymaking.

Terrones: Inaccessible access to arts programs.

Pope: Not prioritizing funding for arts or creative programs.

Acosta-Parra: Arts are seen more as hobby rather than careers.

Tahara: Breaks commissioners to brainstorm 1-2 blocks for each element and share with commission.

[Commissioners take time to organize thoughts and identify blocks]

Blocks presented:

- Fragmented understanding of all organizations engaged in youth engagement
- Financial/ time barriers cause difficulty of entry civic spaces
- Labor market based social economy stigmatizing creativity
- Standardized education practices preventing equity
- Unclear centralized location for youth to find civic engagement resources
- Unclear commission partnership strategy
- Thinking about youth as isolated group
- Policymakers are not incentivized for youth wellbeing
- Age restrictions for holding office or internship positions etc.
- Pervasive political influence of private interest groups

- Disorganized/ disjointed community between youth organizations in state
- Low political efficacy leading to depleting interest in government

Tahara: Explains that they will pair identified blocks to find similar root cause.

Merrell: Proposes "labor market based social economy stigmatizing creativity" pairs with "pervasive political influence of private interest groups."

Terrones: Proposes "fragmented understanding of all organizations engaged in youth engagement" pairs with "unclear commission partnership strategies."

Merrell: Proposes "low political efficacy leading to depleting interest in government" pairs with "policymakers are not incentivized for youth wellbeing."

Acosta-Parra: Proposes "policymakers are not incentivized for youth wellbeing" may be better fit for "thinking about youth as an isolated group." Proposes "low political efficacy leading to depleting interest in group" pairs with "age restrictions for holding office or internship groups."

Mi: Clarifies that policymakers don't have right understanding or incentive to make policies that benefit youth.

Wallace: When we consider the wellbeing of youth, they are sustained by family and community structures.

Terrones: Unclear centralized location for youth to find civic engagement resources and financial/ time barriers causes difficulty to enter civic spaces. Barrier is that they are not able to practice civic engagement.

Tahara: Requests that commissioners present 4 different blocks**.**

[Commissioners take a few minutes to organize ideas.]

[Commission proposes "disorganized/ disjointed community between youth organizations" pairs with "limited adult supporters enabling youth led spaces."]

Merrell: Education system made for traditional students with standardized education practices.

[Sticky note on Mural says: Stigma surrounding profitable skills to not profitable skills paired with "labor market based on social economy stigmatized creativity" and "pervasive political influence of private interest groups."]

Tahara: What is this shaping to be about, what is the root cause.

Terrones: Conflicting political priorities.

Merrell: People's wellbeing should be placed below profitable skills. Assigning value based on how much they add to market vs. improve lives.

Ramirez: Low youth engagement levels in politics because youth do not feel welcome and the hostile attitude towards youth participation. Societal norms discourage youth participation.

Terrones: Budget priorities for budget cuts across school districts, budget cuts for arts programs, and disorganized association of current funds.

Weinstock: Clarifies universal basic needs for unfair inequitable access to education and health.

Merrell: Suggests it be added to well-being is below profitability group.

[In Mural, item "unclear coordination between legislators" moved under to "policymakers are not incentivized for youth wellbeing and youth as isolated group." Titled as "legislative mindset/ accountability."]

Ramirez: Named group as "education inequity" as one of the root causes.

Chung-Lee: Named group "disillusionment and disconnect of systems" as one of root causes.

Public Comment:

No public comment on this agenda item.

30 MINUTES LUNCH

Agenda Item #4: Strategic Planning Update and Workshop: Underlying Contradictions, Part 2

Wednesday Pope, Chair, Youth Empowerment Commission calls meeting back to order 12:06pm.

Tahara: Officially naming cluster groups come up with in Action Item #3 Workshop. Looking at one group informally named "Societal norms discouraging youth participation" as the starting point for discussion. Asks what is the block and what is it blocking.

Chung-Lee: Preconceived notions and structural prevents students at multiple levels of engaging.

Pope: Shares story about going into legislative hearings and the vast majority of lobbyists, legislators and staff who do not take youth seriously. The perception is that youth may not have experience and knowledge to offer. It is discouraging and youth are not motivated because there is a fear of those who do not want to hear from us.

Tahara: What is underneath the lack of willingness or not giving you credibility?

Pope: We assume young people don't have the same network or experience or connections so they can't possibly understand these systems. Youth do not feel qualified to be involved in these spaces because they've had experience with people who are older or have more education. For the time being we are still fighting against the stigma that we are ignorant kids.

Tahara: Clarifies that we are not finding solutions today. We are looking at what the root cause issues. Shares levels of discernment from simplistic to substantial: irritants, blame, lack of, issues, blocks, obstacles, and underlying obstacles.

Merrell: The people who are making the judgment that we aren't qualified are the same people who would gatekeep us out of those spaces.

Pope: If we continuously show up and represent, we can undo those judgements. A primary block I see is taking responsibility on all fronts.

Ramirez: Parents or guardians may be gatekeepers in allowing their children to be involved in youth activism. It may be seen as against cultural, religious or familial values.

Terrones: The gatekeepers don't know how to value the opinions of youth. The culture was not taught to value the opinions of youth. Considers who instills the value of youth opinion into current youth as they will one day be these adults.

Pope: Echoes the statement of parents and guardians as gatekeepers. Being youth is a culture, being homeless is a culture, being a foster is a culture; there are many cultures and we are a massive collection of cultures.

Tahara: What is the core block? Is it perceptions? Is it the culture itself?

Pope: Fear is one factor.

Merrell: Fear of change.

Pope: Shift of control; if we widen the power that is available to people and loss of control.

Terrones: Going back to fear. There is a fear of redesign and structural rigidity. The commission can use our platform to facilitate that design.

Merrell: Echoes that people are rigid and like to have consistency. Maybe in this circumstance because we are young people and feel like the target but it could be any other group.

Pope: Historic stereotypes lead to cultural apathy and resistance to change and structural rigidity. It's supposed to be a collaborative effort.

Tahara: [Presents "historic stereotypes lead to cultural apathy, resistance to change and structural rigidity" as the working block title.]

Ramirez: Wanted to add that these systems weren't made to operate with youth perspectives in mind.

Terrones: Culture discourages youth participation through systemic attitudes and governance. The belief that we've always don't it like that. This is blocking a systemic redesign that encourages youth participation.

Pope: System precedence is important as the historical aspect is a prominent issue.

Terrones: The core beliefs are more biased than stereotypes. Stereotypes exist whether the policymakers believe the stereotypes.

Pope: Bias would be the most appropriate.

Wallace: What are the actions from these biases. Discrimination is more of an action. I encourage you to think about what that bias' cause is.

Acosta-Parra: Assumptions or narratives of youth.

Torrenes: Unchecked assumptions. Is it intentional?

[**"**Historic precedents and unchecked assumptions hinder a systemic redesign that encourages and values youth participation" is completed as first cluster block.]

[Moving on to next cluster titled "disconnect and disillusionment of system."]

Chung-Lee: Lack of connection and collaboration between nonprofit organizations, within schools, between teachers or students and between youth leaders.

Pope: Community is discouraged because of efforts shut down by individuals in these marginalized communities. Fear of discrimination.

Chung-Lee: Competition between organizations and having to vie for similar student demographics. They may lose on potential growth because they have similar goals.

Merrell: As much as we believe we share the same goal, there is a barrier that can pull people apart due to competing over funding or resources.

Terrones: Under resourced youth living in communities are focused on surviving day to day rather than practicing civic engagements.

Pope: Organizations should consider monetary compensation for youth to participate. Youth may lack resources such as travel or money to connect to systems or may miss work or school if participating.

Wallace: Encourage to be mindful of language used and moving forward to using plain language to maintain accessibility.

Pope: Youth disappointment to not participate in these system opportunities.

Chung-Lee: Create collaboration between education and community organizations.

Terrones: Competition for resources and disconnected collaborations promote disengagement.

Ramirez: Discourages disillusioned youth.

["Competition for resources and disconnected collaboration creates disillusionment and discouragement for youth" becomes agreed upon block title for this cluster.]

Break for 10 minutes

Tahara: [Breaks commissioners into groups to name the remaining clusters. Mi, Morris and Yee had to log off.]

Terrones: Profit driven systems enforce materialistic policies overshadow youth civil liberties and decent standards of living.

Weinstock: Misallocated funding channels are not prevalent to youth education and civic engagement.

Ramirez: Adult dominated spaces have an absence of accountability that dismisses youth input and an imbalance of power.

Tahara: [Introduces activity for commissioners finished with previous naming of clusters while others complete. Activity includes answering questions to "release valve" and propose solutions.]

Terrones: Accountability measures are unclear in legislature**.**

Tahara: [reviews underlying contradiction titles agreed upon by group.]

Public Comment:

No public comment on this agenda item.

Agenda Item #5: Strategic Planning Workshop: Strategic Juncture Analysis

Tahara: Introduces the previous 8 questions to prime for strategic direction workshop next meeting. The purpose is to come up with solutions and fix what has been identified.

Pope: Considering timeline to come up with solutions including individual terms of commissioners, the commission sunset date, the next legislative season, etc.

Terrones: No accountability for elected officials. Policies that hurt youth are passed to then youth suffering consequences. Programs cut that could benefit youth.

Tahara: Sustainability and growth of YEC.

Weinstock: Desire to achieve sustainable youth-driven policy reform. Amplifying youth voices in policy through accessible platforms. Strong partnerships with communities.

Merrell: Reform current education systems. Apply pressure top public officials and partisan organizations.

Terrones: Work with administrators to identify funding streams.

Tahara: Defunding government agencies will worsen inequities. Negative impact of curriculum censorship and criminalization of student activism.

Public Comment:

No public comment on this agenda item.

Agenda Item #6: Next Steps for Staff Action

Pope: Asks if there are any identified items for staff action.

No proposed steps for staff action.

Wallace: Coming prepared with recommendations and have a clear charge for legislation. Consider input from stakeholders that provided tangible action-oriented steps.

Terrones: Echoes sentiment and asks about a prep document for next meeting to prepare.

Wallace: Thanks for recommendation and we will look into a solution.

Agenda Item #6: Adjournment 2:53pm