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# Commission to Study the History of the Uprooting of Black Communities by Public Institutions of Higher Education in the Commonwealth—Committee on Committees

November 20, 2024, at 1:00 p.m.

Virtual Meeting

<https://studies.viriniageneralassembly.gov/studies/720>

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The Commission to Study the History of the Uprooting of Black Communities by Public Institutions of Higher Education in the Commonwealth—Committee on Committees (the Subcommittee) met virtually with Delegate Jeion A. Ward, chair, presiding.<sup>1</sup> The meeting began with the election of Delegate Ward as chair and Dr. Maureen Elgersman Lee as vice-chair followed by an introduction of members and discussion. Materials presented at the meeting are accessible through the [\*Commission's meetings webpage\*](#).

### Discussion: Commission Subcommittee Options

Ashley Binns, Senior Attorney with the Division of Legislative Services and staff for the Commission, gave attendees a brief explanation of the purpose for which the Subcommittee meeting was convened, being the establishment of subcommittees to handle certain duties of the Commission, followed by a summary of comments provided by Commission member, Peter Blake regarding options for Commission subcommittees.

After some discussion, the Subcommittee decided on the following subcommittees:

1. Institutional Liaison Subcommittee
2. Subcommittee on Research and Analysis
3. Subcommittee on African American Displacement
4. Subcommittee on Compensation and Relief

The Subcommittee discussed the recommendations it would make to the Commission relating to the purpose for which each of the four subcommittees should be established and the type of work and duties each subcommittee should be directed to perform. The Subcommittee agreed that the Institutional Liaison Subcommittee should be responsible for conducting outreach with representatives of public institutions of higher education and coordinating and conducting ongoing conversations and collaborative efforts with such representatives of public institutions of higher education.

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<sup>1</sup> **Members Present:** Delegate Jeion A. Ward (chair), Dr. Maureen Elgersman Lee (vice chair), Delegate Karen Keys-Gamarra, Dr. Cassandra L. Newby-Alexander

**Members Absent:** Senator Mamie E. Locke

The Subcommittee agreed that the Subcommittee on Research and Analysis should be responsible for overseeing and coordinating research efforts and soliciting, organizing, and analyzing the research necessary for the work of the Commission. The members noted that it would be important to ensure that such subcommittee consists of a sufficient number of members to handle the amount and scope of its work. The Subcommittee also emphasized the importance of establishing a process for carrying out the work of the Subcommittee on Research and Analysis to ensure that the focus remains on the purpose for which the Commission was established and the timeline on which the Commission is working. Members also noted that the Subcommittee on Research and Analysis should also consider reaching out to and collaborating with students and faculty at institutions of higher education in carrying out its work.

The Subcommittee agreed to recommend to the Commission that the Subcommittee on African American Displacement be established for the purpose of identifying, conducting outreach to, and having conversations with individuals from African American communities that were displaced by public institutions of higher education for the purpose of documenting and ensuring that the work of the Commission is informed by the lived experiences and perspectives of such individuals. The members noted the importance of ensuring such conversations be conducted with an intention to understand the experiences of such individuals. The Subcommittee emphasized the importance of this work in ensuring that the work of the overall Commission remains balanced.

The Subcommittee recommended that the Subcommittee on Compensation and Relief be established to consider the various forms of compensation or relief that may be appropriate for African American communities and individuals that were displaced by public institutions of higher education. The members noted that such subcommittee should consider the various options for engaging in reparative justice to ensure that the work of the Commission in studying whether and what form of compensation or relief may be appropriate is not limited to financial compensation. The Subcommittee emphasized the importance of having discussions and soliciting input from affected communities and individuals to discern what forms of compensation or relief would be meaningful and impactful.

The members also discussed the importance of considering the interrelationships of each subcommittee, noting that while each subcommittee would largely work independently, the work of each subcommittee would be in furtherance of the same overall purpose of the Commission and the work of certain subcommittees would inform and be beneficial or crucial to the work of other subcommittees. As such, the Subcommittee agreed that the interrelationships between the work of each subcommittee should be considered in establishing the purpose and work of each subcommittee. Based on these considerations, the Subcommittee noted that the work of the Institutional Liaison Subcommittee and the work of the Subcommittee on Research and Analysis would likely be crucial to all or some of the work of each of the other subcommittees. The members also noted that the work of the Subcommittee on African American Displacement would likely be significant to the work of the Subcommittee on Compensation and Relief. Based on those considerations, the Subcommittee noted that the Commission should consider the sequencing of the work of each subcommittee to ensure that each subcommittee is able to utilize, benefit from, and build off of the work of the other subcommittees.

Finally, Delegate Ward noted some planning considerations relating to offering the recommendations of the Subcommittee to the Commission at the forthcoming Commission meeting before offering her closing remarks.



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For more information, see the [\*Commission's website\*](#) or contact the Division of Legislative Services staff:

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