Health Equity Advisory Commission Reset Committee Draft Minutes

Date: August 4, 2026

Present: Joanne Crawford, Mark Hughes, Monica Hutt, Kate Jerman, Sarah Launderville, Heather Michaud, Kirsten Murphy, Alison Segar, Diana Wahle

Agenda item	

Welcome, Introductions and Committee Charge	• The meeting began with greetings and personal exchanges. Mark explained the purpose of the newly formed Reset Committee:
	    o To "reset" HEAC's operations due to concerns about productivity and effectiveness.
	    o To develop a proposed reset plan for presentation to the full Commission on October 6, 2026.
	    o To realign HEAC's work with its statutory responsibilities, establish a clear operating framework, and develop a prioritized, accountable work plan.
	• Sarah commented that the timeline is tight, but she believes the work is doable if everyone contributes and stays on the timelines.

Statutory Responsibilities and Need for the Reset	• Mark reviewed the HEAC's responsibilities established under Act 33. He suggested the Reset Committee identify which responsibilities are currently being fulfilled, which are incomplete or inconsistently addressed, and which should become central elements to the upcoming reset proposal. • Sarah suggested the development of a plain language punch list to ensure work/statutory responsibility alignment. Joanne agreed, emphasizing the need for a shared, agreed-upon list to resolve recurring questions about what is truly within the Commission's purview. • Monica emphasized the need for a structured work plan to guide the commission's work rather than reacting solely to emergent issues. She said a shared understanding of duties can help ensure measurable progress.

	• Discussion about the challenges of staying focused ensued, noting statutory responsibilities are broad and many topics could fall under them. • Kirsten noted that while many activities of the commission could be connected to statutory responsibilities, the breadth of duties is large. She said the commission has only fully accomplished a small portion – the establishment of Kate's office – and significant work remains across other statutory areas. She recommended sharper focus within the statutory framework. • Joanne noted the tendency for the commission's attention to shift too easily. She suggested a plan of following selected priorities through to completion while maintaining some flexibility for critical emergent issues. • Mark suggested that a key deliverable for the October 6th meeting be a statute-to-reset and statute-to-workplan "crosswalk". There was consensus supporting this approach. • There was expressed support for work plans that contain concrete deliverables.
October 6 Reset Proposal	• The discussion focused on refining the reset proposal and components of the package intended for presentation to the full commission on October 6th. • Mark noted frustration within the Executive Committee around inefficiency and lack of progress, emphasizing that without addressing underlying organizational and programmatic challenges, the reset would be futile. • Sarah noted that commission members not involved in leadership may not be invested in the reset. She said they may just want to attend meetings and perform assigned work, which underscores the need for clarity and shared purpose in the reset. • Kirsten detailed reasons why Vermont is in a particularly precarious time around health equity work. She said there's been some rolling back of potential increased infrastructure in Vermont for equity work and for addressing disparities and she sees Act 33 and the HEAC structure as important infrastructure that should be leveraged during this reset. • Monica identified ongoing operational challenges. She said while member participation has improved, the commission still lacks clarity regarding responsibilities, priorities and process. She believes the reset should create a clear structure for actionable work aligned with statutory responsibilities.

	• Diana stressed the importance of orientation materials and understanding the differing constraints of commissioners representing various departments. She encouraged including Kate Jerman's ideas about orientation in the reset package.
	• Sarah emphasized that accessibility and plain language practices need to be built into commission processes so all members can fully participate.
	• Mark detailed additional challenges the reset should address, including:
	    o Inconsistent member participation and vacancies.
	    o Limited access to timely, disaggregated data.
	    o Lack of a repeatable process for reviewing state policies and programs.
	    o Limited whole of government engagement.
	    o Insufficient public reporting and accountability.
	    o Activities that are not consistently connected to measurable outcomes.
	• Components intended for inclusion in the October 6th reset proposal were reviewed, including:
	    o Reset rationale and current state assessment.
	    o Summary of HEAC's statutory responsibilities.
	    o Proposed HEAC reset charter.
	    o Governance and responsibility matrix.
	    o Prioritized 2026-2027 strategic plan.
	    o Whole-of-government policy and program review framework.
	    o Data, measurement, and accountability framework.
	    o Statewide equity assessment proposal developed with the Office of Health Equity and Office of Racial Equity.
	    o Community engagement, investment, and accountability framework.
	    o Staffing, funding, and administrative support requirements.
	    o Implementation timeline.
	    o Proposed motions and decisions for the full commission.
	• There was agreement that the proposed package is comprehensive, but that individual components do not need to be lengthy. The focus should be on clarity, classification, and ensuring that each component can be revisited and used to guide future work.
	• Kate Jerman noted the Health Department's ability to provide support around development of many components, i.e., strategic planning, with existing tools from other commissions being adapted rather than created from scratch.

	• Sarah recommended that all materials be provided to the full commission at least two weeks prior to the October 6th meeting to ensure adequate review time. • Kirsten suggested adding operational procedures as a component to the package, including establishing clear channels of communication for external inquiries, such as those from lawmakers. • Following discussion, there was expressed consensus that the proposed list of components was appropriate for inclusion in the October 6th package.

Major Reset Work Areas	• The discussion focused on reviewing, discussing and assigning preliminary leaders for proposed work areas. The purpose was to identify who would take initial responsibility for drafting proposals related to each work area for presentation to the full HEAC at its October 6, 2026 meeting. These assignments represent leadership for proposal development only, not implementation of the work itself. The following work areas were reviewed:
	  o Statutory alignment and current state assessment.
	  o Governance, operations, and accountability.
	  o Strategic workplan development.
	  o Whole-of-government policy and program review.
	  o Data, measurement, and public accountability.
	  o Statewide equity assessment with OHE and ORE.
	  o Community engagement, investment, and accessibility.
	  o Staffing, funding, and implementation support.
	  o October 6 presentation and decision package.
	• **Statutory Alignment and Current State Assessment**
	  o This work involves crosswalking statutory responsibilities and current HEAC operations, including unfinished commission work and annual report recommendations.
	  o Mark volunteered to serve as preliminary lead for this area.
	• **Governance, Operations, and Accountability**
	  o This work involves defining roles for the full commission, co-chairs, work groups, and partner offices, establishing decision making, agenda development, accountability and reporting processes.
	  o Kate agreed to serve as preliminary lead for this area.

	• **Strategic Workplan Development**
	  o The strategic plan will ultimately prioritize all of the listed work areas over time.
	  o Kirsten volunteered to lead this area.
	• **Whole-of-Government Policy and Program Review**
	  o This work involves proposing a consistent process for reviewing state policies, programs, budgets, rules, and practices.
	  o Sarah volunteered to lead this area.
	• **Data, Measurement and Public Accountability**
	  o This work involves establishing principles, indicators, baselines and reporting mechanisms.
	  o Mark volunteered to lead this area, with Diana offering to serve as a supporting contributor later in the year due to busy August and September months.
	• **Statewide Equity Assessment with OHE and ORE**
	  o Discussion focused on proposing a scope and methodology for a statewide assessment in coordination with the Office of Racial Equity and the Office of Health Equity.
	  o Clarifications were made about assessment goals and overlap of this work area with the whole-of-government work area.
	  o No preliminary lead was assigned, discussion remains open.
	• At this point in the conversation Kate raised concerns about assigning all work areas simultaneously given limited capacity. She recommended sequencing tasks by quarter to avoid overwhelming members.
	• Concerns and the value of sequencing were acknowledged. Mark emphasized that prioritization will occur in the strategic work plan and today's exercise is simply identifying the full scope and assigning initial lead responsibility to ensure progress. He also clarified that leads are only responsible for drafting proposal components and not executing actual work before October 6th.
	• **Community Engagement, Investment, and Accessibility**

	○ This work focuses on compensation frameworks, establishing methods for meaningful community participation, and grantmaking. ○ Monica volunteered to lead this area. • **Staffing, Funding, and Implementation Support** ○ This work covers staffing, funding, legal issues, communications, accessibility, and administrative support. ○ No preliminary lead was assigned, the committee will revisit. • **October 6 Presentation and Decision Package** ○ This work involves preparing the written proposal, presentation, motions and supporting materials. ○ Kirsten volunteered to lead this area.
Public Comment	• None.
Strategic Workplan and Statewide Equity Assessment	• Mark introduced the need to revisit and refine a strategic workplan, acknowledging that the current workload feels overwhelming and "bigger than us right now." He acknowledged the importance of developing an approach that is straightforward, engaging, and sets the commission up for success. • Kate raised the question of who will be responsible for drafting the legislative report that is due January 1. She suggested aligning the strategic workplan with the report could support the report by clearly identifying priorities and needed resources. Mark agreed and suggested adding the report to upcoming meeting agendas, incorporating existing frameworks and parking lot items. He stressed the importance of the revised workplan serving as the commission's central accountability tool. • Mark outlined workplan elements including statutory authority, the problem or disparity being addressed, intended outcomes, deliverables, responsible leads, supporting partners, community participation, timelines, measures of success, required resources, risks/barriers, staffing status, and next actions. He posed questions regarding maintenance and update frequency of the workplan, identifying risks/delays, and how progress will be reported to the full commission and public.

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There was discussion as to whether there should be one overarching workplan or two separate workplans:

a “reset” workplan to get the commission aligned and reorganized; or
a “boots-on-the-ground” workplan for operational tasks and priorities.

There was consensus that the workplan should be updated regularly and visible at meetings rather than hidden on the SharePoint site.

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<td>Planning Schedule, Assignments, and Deadlines</td>
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The discussion focused on upcoming scheduled meetings and expectations related to planning work.
August 13

Clarify HEAC-OHE roles, available support, governance questions, and assessment coordination.
This will be a smaller meeting attended by Kate, Sarah and Mark.

August 17

Review the reset charter, current state assessment, operating framework, and preliminary work plan.
This will be an Executive Committee regular meeting.

Some members expressed concern that the agenda is overly full and needs streamlining. They discussed simplifying, consolidating, and prioritizing tasks so the work becomes manageable.
Kate encouraged using a process to balance interest, capacity, and actual willingness of members to take on work.
Monica suggested that work area leads should aim to produce brief materials (“a couple of paragraphs”) by September 1 that reflects their thinking on their assigned areas in order to avoid overproducing.
September 1

The Reset Committee will meet again on September 1. By that date, it is expected that a draft consolidated “Reset Proposal” will exist, combining initial input from all leads. This document will become the foundation for work through September.

Three weeks of structured activities will follow, leading toward the October deliverable.
October 6

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	○ Full HEAC meeting to present the Reset Proposal and gather commission and public feedback. • Kate reminded the group the Executive Committee meetings must be public and warned according to requirements if substantive business (beyond logistical matters) is discussed.
Closing Commitments	•
Adjourn	• The meeting adjourned at 2:31 p.m.