

**NAACP Branch Meeting
March 2, 2022**

6:00 pm Members arrive on Zoom

6:03 pm Message sent in Chat that we will be recording this session

6:04 pm Zoom notice that this meeting is being recorded

6:05 pm Agenda sent in chat

6:07 pm President Dennis Powell opens meeting “Good evening everyone I am going to call this meeting to order. Please mute yourself so that as our presenters present, we won’t have any competition. And also, use the hand raising function and put the questions in the chat. Shirley will be handling the QA for the DA and Helen will be handling the QA for the other guests.”

6:08 pm DP: Let’s have a moment of silence and send our prayers and wishes to Ukraine who are just wreaking havoc from this mad man named Putin

DP: Because of our presenters we are suspending our committee reports because I don’t want to run too long this evening. Shirley, can you start us off?

6:09 pm

Shirley: “Good evening everyone. I’m always honored to present our District Attorney who took office in 2019 and has been committed to reform- prosecuting those who are labeled as dangerous yet showing compassion and putting into place preventative programming. She co founded the Massachusetts Political Women's caucus. Has been practicing law for 15 years . Our first woman DA in Berkshire County, Andrea Harrington.

6:10 pm - Tech issues with DA’s sound

6:13 pm

Andrea Harrington: “Thank you so much for that introduction and thank you for allowing me to speak with you tonight. I have a presentation that my office has prepared that I’ve been giving to different groups across the county. It’s really our effort to show to the community what it is that we’ve been doing with some real data and results. We have limited data capacity- which is emblematic across the country. I ask people to recognize that we are making the most of the tools we have at our disposal and are looking at better comprehensive data moving forward.”

6:15 pm

Andrea Harrington Screenshare

Presentation Entitled: “A Blueprint for Safety and Justice”

AH: “This is aspirational- we recognize that so much reform is needed. . . .”

*The following bullets are various high level notes from the presentation

Prosecution that Protects Safety and Justice

- A Smarter Approach to violent crime
 - Moving away from war on drugs and addressing violent crime
 - Gender based violence is the more prevalent issue
 - Hired detective to work on unsolved homicide cases
 - Implemented a domestic violence high risk team- we were the last county in the state to do so.
 - Book read of “No Visible Bruises”
 - Created a Special victim’s unit, which did not exist prior to me taking office
 - We have a new unit chief for Child Abuse Unit and we’ve added 2 prosecutors
 - There have been a decrease in the number of narcotics cases that have been indicted- we are looking for opportunities to keep people out of state prison. . . to allow them to go to programs (as they are not dangerous)
 - There is a myth that there is an increase in violent crime
 - Educating community on harm reduction and create policies nearby

Ending the criminalization of substance use disorder

- Went to Portugal to study how to take a public health approach to substance abuse
- We do not prosecute people for possession of drugs. Substance abuse is a public health issue not a criminal issue.
- VWA program expanding equity

Racial disparities in Massachusetts

- Black and AA makes up 6.5% of Massachusetts

We have a real problem with racial disparities here in progressive Massachusetts.

- Created a racial justice policy group - Tina Page, woman of color runs it
 - Training people in how they read police reports

- We have stopped over policy and over prosecuting low level offenses

From 2017 to 2020 we have gone from 31 to 63% of low level misdemeanor cases were dismissed \$87,579 a year to incarcerate someone at House of Corrections

- Combating Hate Crimes . . . We call them hate incidents because the hate crime statute is so narrow.
- Connected with Duke University on Plea Tracker project . We need to change expungement change- legislatively. We’ve only had 9 requests for expungement- its difficult to work with

6:55 pm

Q and A led by Shirley

Anthony Haynes: “What are the racial demographics of prosecuting attorneys in the Berkshire DA's office? How many are black?”

AH: "We do not have any Black prosecuting attorneys, we have 2 prosecutors of color. It's difficult to recruit here- Dr. Haynes please send students from Albany law school my way

Anthony Haynes: a question about the prosecution of drug possession. . .

AH: "We don't prosecute possession, we do prosecute sales. We don't have plans to stop that."

6:58 pm

Kelan O'Brien, comment in chat:

"It's interesting to hear that violent crime has decreased. It'll be interesting to hear how the Pittsfield Police Department justifies their incoming budget increase requests."

6:58 pm

Michael Vincent Bushey: "Are forced hospitalizations / residential schools included in all these incarceration data?"

AH: No

6:59 pm

Anthony Haynes:

"On your slide # 40, the number of incarcerated persons in Berkshire, how many of those are people of color?"

AH: "I don't have that information"

Anthony Haynes: "How much have you increased the number and rate of your investigations of police for officer misconduct over the past three years?"

AH: "It's a responsibility to investigate offers for criminal acts . We implemented our Brady Policy."

7:01 pm

Kelan O'brien: "Of the leadership team in the office, how many are people of color?"

AH: 1

7:01 pm

Kamaar Taliaferro: "Has your office identified any risk factors for crime specific to Berkshire County? And if so what steps if any is your office taking to proactively prevent crime?"

AH: "Because we are a rural community. Our biggest prevention effort is around high risk initiative"

7:03 pm

Barbara Palmer: "I read that there was a 48% increase in domestic violence calls at the Freeman Center in 2021. Are you seeing a similar increase in charges?"

AH: "Some of the referrals come from the fact that advocates are referring to people more and people are taking more advantage."

7:04 pm

Darcie Sosa: "Can you briefly explain what a Brady list is?"

AH: "A list of officers that we have determined - we have to disclose to the offense because when we rely on witnesses- they can always be cross examined on their bias or truthfulness. Our list of officers- where we have to disclose to the defense."

7:02 pm

Kelan O'Brien: "Do these demographics on this slide specifically show full-time, permanent staff, or does it include interns and others who are not permanent employees?"

AH: "Full time permanent staff. . .I really want to start tracking the demographic info for people my office contracts with all well we are working on implementing that."

Shirley: Any other questions? Thank you for your time and information

7:07 pm

AH: "Thanks for having me, please send questions. Or if you want to meet with me. Let me know what your concerns are! I hope this is the beginning of the conversation."

7:07 pm

DP: That was excellent. You know we didn't have this type of communication in the past with the district attorney's office and it's great to be able to have a conversation and to see the transparency of what the office is involved in. So thank you for that Shirley.

7:08 pm

DP passes to Helen Moon

7:08 pm

HM: We have a few guests here with us today that are presenting on some ballot initiatives We want to raise support for.

7:09 pm

HM; start with Leila and Terry;

Leila here from Massachusetts not for Sale

We are a campaign organizing to beat Big Tech (uber and lyft)

Gig economy has increased- uber lyft, door dash

Drivers are classified as independent contractors- makes them vulnerable

7:14 pm

Terry

7:23 pm

HM: NEEAC endorses this bill

Do we vote yes or no?

VOTE NO

7:27 pm

HM: any other questions? Ok moving on to Kendra from Fair share amendment

Kendra:

Recognize that I'm coming after lots of information

Here on behalf of Fair Share Amendment

Constitutional amendment that increases the tax on incomes of over \$1 mil nby 4 percent.

Public education and transportation

20,000 folks in commonwealth earn more than \$1

7:38 pm

People in Pittsfield have put together a petition to have city of pittsfield sign it

7:39 pm

HM: Questions?

7:40 pm

DP: Thank you to presenters. Excellent information that we CAN take action on.

Thank you Helen for asking the question - do we vote yes or no?

Massachusetts Not For Sale is a NO campaign! Thank you again for having us

7:41 pm

DP: Welcome David Detmold

7:42 pm

David Detmold: "3 years ago NAACP berkshires allowed me to make a presentation about the state flag and seal - in support of changing the white supremacist seal which has been Protested by Native American leaders for past 50 years. It's on every document, patrol car, it's everywhere. . it's a memorial of genocide- it should've been done away with 400 years ago. Windsor is the only town in Berkshire county who has taken initiative. My ask is to get a resolution before the Pittsfield city council. Thank you!

7:47 pm

DP: Questions?

Erica: I'm really glad David is working on this initiative. . etc

7:48 pm

Al Blake: totally support Dave's initiative. . Great Barrington should do this . . .

It's great to hear that everyone enjoyed our presentation along with Kendra's on Fair Share. If anyone has any questions, feel free to reach out to me anytime:

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7:50 Pm

DP: Want to announce that for our April meeting we have a fantastic presentation on the study that Kamaar and Dr. Jones sneed have done on redlining - that's going to be the presentation at the April meeting. We will extend the invitation to people within our community that need to hear this work

7:52 pm

DP: any announcements?

Shirley: School resource conversations
5-6 pm We'll send info out tonight.

7:53 pm

Marge- congratulation Kamaar

Dp: want to congratulation Kamaar AND Sabrain who received the excellence on the hill award

7:55 pm

Anything on radar?

7:56 pm

Wendy Penner: Was anything said about the war in Ukraine

DP: Yes, we included Ukraine in moment of silence

7:57 pm

Don Lathrop-the stand out still occurs every thursday. We'll be there tomorrow at 5 pm. No matter the weather.

HM: want to point out Michael Vincent Bushy's chat

The School Committee will be voting on the continued existence of the virtual academy, which had been a great asset to a lot of marginalized students. any support expressed either at next wednesday's meeting or to the committee by email would be really appreciated.

http://www.pittsfield.net/district_info/school_committee/school_committee_members

7:59 pm

DP: Emphasis shirley remarks about SRO officers

Anyone else?

8:00 pm

Linda: "I'm sorry but where's the data that says that the virtual school has helped these marginalized students?"

He can pull some data and get it to you

Linda- I would like to see the data

8:02 pm

Diane Wortis

Light plug - March 13th - free tickets for low income

DP: On Sunday- free event at Colonial
Wanda Houston and Rufus - Black Legacy Project-

https://www.theblacklegacyproject.org/events?mc_cid=6c01621389&mc_eid=98d9536faf

8:04 pm

Motion to adjourn?

Erica motion to adjourn

Shirley seconded

DP: Thank you everyone and be safe