

Minutes of the

MEETING OF THE EQUITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, March 19, 2019

Committee Members Present: Nelima Sitati Munene, Francisco Gonzalez, Kris Fredson, Shirley Cain, Abdirahman Muse, Leah Goldstein Moses, Aarica Coleman, Metric Giles, Chai Lee, Tie Oei, Leslie Redmond, Mohamed Sheikh

Committee Members Excused: David Ketrosor, Tommy Sar, Sonya Lewis, Miah Ulysse

Committee Members Absent: Samantha Pree-Stinson

CALL TO ORDER

Committee Co-Chair Sitati Munene called the regular meeting of the Council's Equity Advisory Committee to order at 6:02 p.m.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

The agenda was moved by Cain and seconded by Coleman.

Cain proposed two typographical edits to the February 19, 2019 meeting minutes. The amended minutes were accepted, moved by Cain and seconded by Lee.

WELCOME THE EAC COUNCIL MEMBERS

Committee Co-Chair Sitati Munene welcomed the new Council Members to the Equity Advisory Committee and initiated introductions.

COUNCIL'S WORK ON ACCESSIBILITY

Tracey Jackson, Senior Manager, Office of Equal Opportunity; Guthrie Byard, ADA and Title VI Administrator, Office of Equal Opportunity provided an update regarding the Council's efforts on accessibility.

Committee members had the following comments and questions throughout the presentation:

- Do you know how many people at the Council identify as having a disability? Are there recruitment efforts underway?

Human Resources has metrics that they use to identify how many people disclose. We cannot ask people to disclose if they have a disability, so it is people feeling comfortable enough to self-report. It's always a work in progress: doing outreach into communities, ensuring the application process is accessible, that people feel that the Council is an accessible place to work. This is going back to making sure our facilities are structurally accessible and that our digital content is accessible so if someone is looking to apply they can actually submit an application.

- Do you utilize the State's 700 Connect Program?

Human Resources staff will discuss workforce diversity initiatives in the next presentation.

- MDH has done a lot of work in translating documents into different formats and may have many resources that we can utilize so we don't recreate the wheel.
- Why are some of the Council's facilities not ADA compliant? Were they grandfathered in? When the Council is providing funding for regional parks, is that their facilities are ADA compliant a criterion for funding? Why are they not

ADA compliant? As a part of this work is that something that will be considering when working with the Parks Implementing Agencies?

During Phase I, we will be evaluating both our buildings and support facilities as well. This will include Robert Street and Heywood buildings and public spaces. Conversations will occur around HRA and the Regional Parks in terms of what support we can offer and what accountability we can hold folks to ensure that they are accessible. It cannot just be transit-oriented, it needs to be all of the Council activities. This phase will also include our wastewater facilities because there are a lot of public tours at those plants as well as a review of parking lots. To address the first question about why this has not been done before now; this has been done in parts and pieces. A few years ago, there was an assessment of half of our park and rides. In the 90's there was an evaluation of our Environmental Services plants and Metro Transit garages. This time we will be conducting a robust and full review of some of those buildings. Correct, some of the buildings were grandfathered in because they were built before the implementation of the ADA so now it is ensuring that those buildings are compliant. Future work will make sure that as many of our bus stops as possible are compliant, in addition to what I mentioned about the parks and HRA work.

- It is recommended that you discuss these initiatives with our committee members, Tommy and David, as they are strong accessibility advocates.
- Do you have an advisory committee or board to advise this process?

Yes, this work necessitates a combination of internal and external advisory groups. To that point, under Title II of the ADA, the self-evaluation phase is required to have a public participation component. We are working with Communications and Marketing to make sure we are getting as much input as possible on the perceived accessibility or inaccessibility of all the work that we do so we can take that into account with the self-evaluation and the digital audit we are doing.

- It is recommended that staff look at resources from Olmstead Implementation Office.

Staff offered to come back and present updates as the work progresses. Sitati Munene agreed that would be helpful and emphasized that accessibility is one of priorities of the committee.

BUILDING DIVERSITY INITIATIVE

Marcy Syman, Director, Human Resources; Todd Rowley, Director, Talent Management and Learning and Organizational Development to discuss the Council's workforce diversity metrics and initiatives.

Committee members shared the following comments and questions throughout the presentation:

- There should be a program similar to Connect 700 for people of color and indigenous people.
- There is an event tomorrow with the Native Community and helping them get their resume into the system. It is recommended that the Council take similar approaches to recruiting Native people.
- It is important to have clear definitions of diversity and inclusion. If the Council does not have definitions, it is recommended that the Council develop them.
- It is alarming that there is no appeals process for candidates that do not pass minimum qualifications.
- It is important that the selection process be simplified and transparent. What happens post application is very cumbersome. If we want to get community members to get through, it's not accessible. It takes too long and may dissuade people from attempting to apply in the first place.

- It is recommended that the Council examine the job posting language. This is important in presenting as a welcoming and attractive organization to work for. For an organization that has been around for 50 years, language was often written for a White male workforce.
- The Council should be tracking legacy hires. The Government Alliance for Race and Equity (GARE) has resources and information about this. Legacy hires often exclude people of color. If we aren't tracking, we can't be sure.
- We should be making sure that position descriptions are matching what candidates would actually be doing in their job.
- In the three years I have been on this committee, I really haven't seen that many POCs outside of the Office of Equal Opportunity. It is recommended that the Council look at barriers for the managers and compare to agencies out of state to see what others do because Minnesota has the worst disparities.
- The retention numbers for POCs is alarming. Why do POCs leave the Council? Is it the culture? Do they feel they are left out? Because there are no opportunities for advancement? We need to clearly examine this.
- The Council is traditionally viewed as a male-dominated organization. We need to look at ways to change that narrative.
- It is recommended that when metrics and data, that staff present raw numbers along with the percentages, so I can share the information with communities. Please have both actuals and percentages because it helps with transparency.

Throughout the presentation, Committee members requested the following supplemental information from Human Resource staff:

- Council definitions for diversity and inclusion
- Current Council inclusion efforts
- Throughout the PowerPoint, provide raw numbers in addition to percentages
- Disaggregation of POCI staff and position classifications (e.g. labor versus management)
 - Percentages and raw numbers of American Indian managers
- Disaggregation of POCI staff by full-time and part-time
- Information about legacy hires and tracking
- Additional information about turnover by demographic and type of separation
- How the Council compares to other state agencies
- Disaggregation of women by race
- Disaggregation by race of the intern to full-time hires
- Information about outreach and recruitment activities specifically for Native Americans and other underrepresented groups

HR staff will follow up with the committee to provide this information.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN REVIEW

Committee Co-Chair Nelima Sitati Munene initiated a discussion of the Council's Comprehensive Plan Review Process to evaluate whether the EAC would like to provide a recommendation.

Sitati Munene stated the Comprehensive Plan Review process is a topic the committee historically has been very interested in. In January, staff presented about the Council's role in receiving and reviewing comprehensive plans. Recently, Sitati Munene received a call from the Housing Justice Center raising a concern that the City of Minneapolis has a need for affordable housing; however, they have not included in

their comprehensive plan how they plan to address this need. Housing is a priority for the committee this year, and so she is bringing the issue to the committee for discussion.

Sitati Munene invited Aaron Berc, Jewish Community Action, to provide remarks. Berc stated that no community in Hennepin County has identified a way to address the shortage for housing and it is important to make sure that the Council is doing everything it can to give communities the tools to address the need for affordable housing and to hold them accountable.

Libby Starling, Deputy Director of the Community Development, offered some context about the issue. Absolutely, there is a need for the lowest income households. There is also the reality that cities do not have the tools to tackle the need for affordable housing on their own; therefore, including it in the comprehensive plans would be setting them up to fail. Starling discussed that the Council has the authority to review the plans on housing for completeness and consistency, but there has been a past legal ruling that it is the cities' responsibility to follow through on their plans for housing. When there are concerns about the contents of the comprehensive plans, the most effective strategy is to engage the cities themselves because the Council itself is not fully able to hold cities accountable especially for the housing plan according to state statute and the legal ruling.

Coleman said that while it is understood that cities cannot do it alone, cities figure out how to address challenges when they want to. Cities know how to work with philanthropic organizations. People are being pushed out of the city into the first ring suburb, and then further. The Council should add language that strongly encourages cities to find tools to address the need for affordable housing. There will be changes in developers only when they see an opportunity coming down the pipe.

Redmond stated it is very problematic that the Council perpetuates disparities. The Council has a lot of power and does not leverage it to promote equity and justice. The Council does not use its leverage to influence the things it could. The Council could do better and should do better. If we don't, we will see a Minnesota with worse disparities than we have seen. It is recommended that we look proactively; and especially, when it's reactive you should definitely act when we bring this forward. We have the opportunity to be on the side of justice.

Cain moved to make a recommendation that the Met Council in reviewing and approving local comprehensive plans, follow the statute under the Metropolitan Land Planning Act, the Council's Local Planning Handbook, and what is stated in MSP Thrive 2040 in terms of equity, and take into consideration issues of gentrification and displacement.

Gonzalez seconded.

The motion passed unanimously.

RESERVED TIME FOR EAC DISCUSSION

There was not sufficient time for this agenda item.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Sitati Munene had several announcements for the committee:

- Reminder that the application for the four community member EAC vacancies is now live. Please send to your networks! There are two at-large vacancies and two district vacancies open: District D and G. Yolanda sent out the link to the application; you can also find the application on the Council's website. The priority deadline for applications is March 29. Early to mid-April applications will be reviewed and candidates will be interviewed. It is expected that the Council will approve appointments by the beginning of May. If you have any recommendations for recruitment, let staff know.

Can current EAC members who are serving at-large seats but live in Districts D or G assume the seats and we could instead fill four at-large seats? It may be easier to fill at-large seats than district seats.

Staff will find the answer to this question.

- The Standing Committee is changing the meeting date and location. They will be meeting via conference call the Tuesday following the regular EAC meeting. As always, if you are interested in participating in Standing Committee, let me or Yolanda know, and we will forward you the calendar invitation.
- Reminder that our new E-Share site is up and running. This site will be a resource for committee members – it will contain items such as EAC governance documents, past agendas and handouts, and contact information. In addition, members will be able to share information, articles, resources, etc. with each other. Yolanda sent instructions on how to access and use the site. If you have any difficulties, let her know.
- Please fill out the post-meeting survey. It only takes a few minutes complete, and your feedback is really useful. Yolanda will send the survey link.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:02 p.m.

Yolanda Burckhardt
Recording Secretary