

## Minutes of the

### MEETING OF THE EQUITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, December 18, 2018

**Committee Members Present:** Edward Reynoso, Nelima Sitati Munene, Tie Oei, Leah Goldstein Moses, Jennifer Munt, Aarica Coleman, Shirley Cain, Harry Melander, David Ketroser, Miah Ulysse, Ruthie Johnson, Sonya Lewis, Metric Giles

**Committee Members Excused:** Leslie Redmond, Samantha Pree-Stinson, Mohamed Sheikh, Tommy Sar

**Committee Members Absent:** None

### CALL TO ORDER

Committee Co-Chair Sitati Munene called the regular meeting of the Council's Equity Advisory Committee to order at 6:09 p.m.

### APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

The agenda was moved by Coleman and seconded by Oei.

The meeting minutes from October 16, 2018 and November 13, 2018 were moved by Cain and seconded by Coleman.

### LIVABLE COMMUNITIES ACT GRANT JANUARY AGENDA ITEM: OVERVIEW OF HANDOUT

Libby Starling, Deputy Director, Community Development, and Paul Burns, Manager, Livable Communities, provided a brief preview of the upcoming January agenda item and handout material in preparation for the January discussion. They will return for the January 15 EAC meeting to get the committee's feedback on the Livable Communities Act fund distribution for 2019. Distributing the Livable Communities Act Grant is one of the key responsibilities of the Community Development Division. Additionally, it is one of the few discretionary grant programs that the Council administers.

Libby and Paul discussed several areas where they are seeking input from the committee: incorporating community voices in project selection; incorporating community voices in the project development process; and promoting equitable development. In preparation for January, staff posed the following questions:

- Is including representatives from Community-Based Organizations serving underserved populations on the Livable Communities Advisory Committee the optimal way of including community voices in our project selection process or is there a better way?
- If yes, then could the Equity Advisory Committee assist us with recruiting individuals who could serve on the Livable Communities Advisory Committee? Our ideal would be candidates who have had some experience contributing to the designs of development projects.
- How can we encourage cities and developers to conduct earlier and more effective neighborhood engagement? Does the Committee have ideas to help better promote the use of Livable Communities Act funding to support engagement efforts?
- Are there other ways that we could or should be using the Equitable Development Scorecard in our application review cycle? More broadly, how could and should the Council use Livable Communities Act funds to more effectively encourage equitable development?

Committee members had the following comments and questions:

- Can it be a requirement to conduct community engagement?

What staff are trying to avoid is applicants just checking the box that they did engagement. How can the Council ensure that engagement is real and meaningful? Staff have seen a few projects that have conducted quality community engagement and they are rewarded on the scoring process. The Council is trying to promote projects that have done quality community engagement to encourage others to follow suit. In addition, there is a pre-development fund that can help with the grant application process; staff are encouraging organizations to use that funding for community engagement.

- The time commitment to serve on the Livable Communities Advisory Committee is 70-90 hours from September through December? If committee members are not compensated, this would pose a huge barrier. The time commitment would be a huge burden on a community-based organization. Can you compensate the individuals?

We have not been able to; this is one of our institutional challenges.

- Most of the effort is towards affordable housing, is there any funding for accessible housing?

The grant has been heavily focused on affordable housing. During the scoring process, more points are awarded to projects that go above and beyond the building code accessibility minimum. However, despite the incentive, staff haven't typically seen projects go above and beyond the minimum requirements.

## **EAC 2019 WORK PLAN UPDATES**

Sitati Munene and Reynoso reported back on the December 12 Council Meeting. As required by the EAC's bylaws, the Co-Chairs presented the draft initial work plan to the Metropolitan Council. At last week's meeting, they heard several suggestions from the Council Members:

- Council Member Barber suggested making sure the goals, mission, and journey this committee has been on will be transferred over to the new Council.
- Council Member Rodriguez commented that she was glad scaling up the Transit Assistance Program (TAP) is on the draft work plan.
- Council Member Cunningham suggested that the EAC look into the Council's contracting practices as it relates to women/ "minority owned" businesses as the Council moves forward with setting contracting goals. He suggested the EAC receive a presentation on the Metropolitan Council Underutilized Business program that the Management Committee heard in November. This comment relates to item #12 on the one-page version (Excel table handout) that we identified in November.
- Council Member Cunningham also suggested that we discuss gender disparities in the Metropolitan Council workforce. This relates to Item #11 on the one-page version.

Committee members agreed that they were comfortable with including the suggested items in the work plan.

Committee members had several questions about the Council's contracting, subcontracting, and workforce initiatives and goals and asked staff to prepare a presentation in the first quarter of 2019.

Committee members discussed ensuring that the work plan is impact-oriented and actionable. It was recommended to categorize the work plan items in a manner that would allow for tracking of outcomes and efficacy of the committee; it would also assist in managing the committee's time and capacity. Sitati Munene reminded the committee that the work plan will set the roadmap for the Standing Committee's monthly meetings where they set the monthly agendas. Sitati Munene stated that the plan will ultimately evolve

throughout the year but thanked the committee for their work in making sure there is a clear plan heading into 2019.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN 2019

Sitati Munene reminded the committee that during the EAC's review this year, one common theme was the need to clarify and strengthen the committee's role in engaging with communities. The Standing Committee felt it was important to spend time talking about how the committee can work towards the goal crafted at the last meeting to address community engagement in 2019. Michelle Fure, Manager of Public Involvement, discussed the Council's community engagement efforts and opened a discussion to evaluate engagement opportunities/strategy for the EAC's 2019 Work Plan.

Throughout the presentation, committee members had the following questions and recommendations:

- Once engaged, do staff complete follow-up surveys to assess whether they understood the content presented?

We do. It's not always a survey. We ask them how they want us to follow up with them (e.g. some sort of communication, survey, or staff come back to report out). We immediately bring the feedback into continuous improvement.

- Cain recommended the strategy of hosting focus groups at the conclusion of a project to get an overall look at how the project went.
- Please provide more information about the community engagement team conducts community engagement. Who is defined as community? Can staff work with EAC members who know community engagement?

Community engagement staff primarily support regional policy development. Thrive MSP 2040 sets significant regional policy, Michelle's team provides support to staff around the Council to make sure they are engaging the right people on the policy issues. Most of their time is spent with policy areas, they spend less time in operations-related topics. All things considered, there isn't a reason staff couldn't do more and find more ways to connect. As a matter of fact, there are engagement staff working on items identified in the committee's work plan.

- Who sets the required community engagement?

The Council's Public Engagement Plan (PEP) and the Council's administrative policies set the standards for community engagement.

- Are there community engagement staff that represent each community?

Due to budget constraints, that is something that has been a challenge. The Council partners with external agencies who have trust relationships with the communities.

- What budget line items are dedicated to community engagement?

Primarily staff salaries. There is some dedicated funding dedicated to do the work, but it is limited. It often depends on the project as well. For example, for the I-94 Project, the Council paid community organizations to conduct community engagement.

- When community engagement is conducted on a project by project basis, rather than an overall engagement strategy, there will be people both positively and negatively affected by the project. I am curious about your processes and how you determine who is your audience. Further, I'd like to know

how that engagement loops back into actual decisions made to the project itself, so the impact isn't just that the community felt heard.

Michelle agreed and emphasized the importance of valuing people over data. Michelle summarized the I-94 project as an example of qualitative data influencing project decisions and outcomes.

- If there aren't already, the Council should implement requirements for community engagement on its grant funded projects; in addition, there should be accountability measures if the requirements or thresholds are not met.

Committee members asked to receive regular community engagement updates at least on a quarterly basis.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Council Member Munt provided a follow up to EAC's Public Comment to 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan 2018 Update. Committee members were provided a written summary of changes made to the Regional Parks Policy Plan before the Council adopted it in November.

Sitati Munene had several announcements for the committee:

- In response to a committee member's concerns about the service reductions to Route 16, Sitati Munene provided information received from Metro Transit staff. If the committee wants to take up the issue of how service reductions are made and communicated, we can do that at a future meeting.
- Reminder, since we are at the end of the year, Yolanda needs to process any remaining reimbursement requests that you have by the end of this month.
- Also, reminder to 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 8:07 p.m.

Yolanda Burckhardt  
Recording Secretary