

## Minutes of the

### MEETING OF THE EQUITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, September 25, 2018

**Committee Members Present:** Nelima Sitati Munene, Edward Reynoso, Mohamed Sheikh, Shirley Cain, Jennifer Munt, Aarica Coleman, Ruthie Johnson, Tie Oei, Tommy Sar, David Ketroser, Metric Giles

**Committee Members Excused:** Harry Melander, Sonya Lewis, Samantha Pree-Stinson, Miah Ulysse, Leslie Badue

**Committee Members Absent:** Leon Rodrigues, Tony Sanneh

### CALL TO ORDER

Committee Co-Chair Reynoso called the regular meeting of the Council's Equity Advisory Committee to order at 6:06 pm.

### APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

The agenda was moved by Coleman and seconded by Cain.

The meeting minutes from August 28, 2018 were moved by Coleman and seconded by Sheikh.

### IMPEDIMENTS TO FAIR HOUSING CHOICE REPORT

Jessica Deegan, Director of Federal Affairs, Minnesota Housing, presented on the Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice Report. The document is the 2018 State of Minnesota Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice (AI). The State of Minnesota is required to assess barriers to housing choice with development of its five-year Consolidated Plan for federal block grants funding for housing and community development. The state agencies that are direct recipients of these funds are the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency (Minnesota Housing), the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) and the Department of Human Services (DHS).

Throughout the presentation, Committee members had the following comments and questions:

- A renting issue of high importance is the issue of criminal convictions. The document did not discuss expungements.
- It is recommended that Minnesota Housing advocate for state legislation to restrict background checks after 10 years. Other states restrict this, but in Minnesota, rental background checks can go all the way back.
- Across the board, landlords are not taking vouchers even in so called areas of poverty; I think it is problematic to say it's only an issue in lower poverty areas. For example, Brooklyn Park, Brooklyn Center and New Hope.
- Is Minnesota Housing agency involved in enforcing existing federal protections for perceived or real discrimination based on color, income, religion, etc.?

As an agency, Minnesota Housing does not do enforcement; we partner with the Department of Human Rights.

- How much is your entity focused on partnering with those interested in investing in low income properties? How much do you work with developers when you are addressing zoning issues, in trying to structure the new development so that they cover the need for the existing low-income market?

At the State, we have a Qualified Allocation Plan that determines how we are going to allocate the tax credits throughout the state. A typical tax credit could be affordable for just 15 years; we incentivize 40-year affordability, at this point. Typically, we wouldn't invest in developments that only have a few affordable units; unless it was mixed income more dramatically, or mostly affordable units. The Community Reinvestment Act has been a tool to encourage private investors to invest in lower income communities. Another tool that is still very new and no one knows how it will be used yet, is Opportunity Zones, that came out of the new federal tax law last year. This is supposed to tap into unrealized capital gains as wealthy investors invest in lower income communities.

- It is recommended that there be increased educational opportunities around getting evictions expunged; especially because there is a short window to get them expunged.
- As a former senior social worker, I know people need supportive services, mental office, accessibility services, how much do you have in your funding to focus on accessibility and mental health services?

Minnesota Housing does not have any authority over the counties who provide such services; however, we are working with our partners to develop best practices. The Governor's Taskforce on Housing included a call to counties to think about the support services.

- I would like to see the data disaggregated further; Asian communities are not a monolith, there is great diversity in Asian communities.

## **REGIONAL PARKS POLICY PLAN UPDATE COMMENT**

Committee Co-Chairs Sitati Munene and Reynoso presented the committee's draft Regional Parks Policy Plan Update Public Comment letter.

The committee walked through the draft letter recommended the following additions to the letter:

- In the Overview Section, include prioritizing making parks more accessible for people with disabilities.
- In Question One, include that the committee recommends having clear equity goals in the RPPP.

Throughout the discussion, committee members also had the following comments:

- There should be accountability for whether or not parks attract people of color and indigenous communities (POCI); accountability means conducting regular studies to track the progress.
- At the Committee of the Whole, the Council got a report of park usage between 2014 and now, and I have to say I am disappointed.
- Beyond making parks more welcoming, I would like to see more of a focus on making parks equitable (e.g. facilities, lawn care, accessibility).

With the revisions, Co-Chair Reynoso asked if the committee for a motion to approve the Public Comment for the Regional Parks Policy Plan Update. Coleman moved and seconded by Johnson.

## **EQUITY POLICY UPDATE**

Cyrenthia Jordan, Director of the Office of Equal Opportunity, presented on the updated draft of the Equity Policy. The EAC last commented on the policy on March 6, 2018. Cyrenthia walked through the policy to discuss the various changes made to the document since March. This policy will direct and guide staff on the work they do internally, but this will also affect external work.

Members of the committee had the following questions and comments:

- Has a strategic action plan been developed yet?

No, it will be developed in the Office of Equal Opportunity in partnership with the EAC.

- Is the equity lens similar or the same as the Parks Equity Toolkit?

We will have an opportunity to review an appropriate tool. There are certainly examples from internal to the Council and external. What we will be using may be similar to an equity impact assessment. As we develop and review the tool, we will be bringing it to the EAC for your input and guidance.

- How will we measure accountability? How do we know we are on track to achieve the commitments in the policy?

This will be accomplished through the Equity Framework that will be created. In addition, we will continue to review what the Council is currently doing around equity and how equity is weaved into our work at the Council internally and externally. The Equity Framework will be a piece of that, and we will be working with the EAC to create an equity impact assessment tool.

- Is the Council going to do a self-evaluation? People who are in power should not review themselves. A neutral party should evaluate.
- The EAC will help the Office of Equal Opportunity develop a framework that they will use as the Council rolls out their work.

The language in this policy includes an annual review of this policy; as for the strategic action plan, we can develop accountability measures.

- It is recommended that the policy use language clarify the Met Council's jurisdiction; refrain from using Twin Cities Metropolitan Region. For example, regional area or 7-county area.

The language was molded off of Thrive MSP 2040 and statutory language. The term '7 county area' is not necessarily all-encompassing of the Council's jurisdiction; there are some cities not included in that. Staff will double-check the statutory language and make adjustments.

Sitati Munene asked Cyrenthia about next steps for the policy. Cyrenthia said that there will be cosmetic checks and proofing, then the policy will go before the Management Committee in October.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Committee Co-Chairs Sitati Munene and Reynoso had several updates for the committee:

- The investigation regarding the arrest video is still underway. More information will come to the committee when it is available.
- The EAC Retreat will focus on fostering relationships, building trust, and developing norms for our processes. The agenda is not set yet, so if anyone wants to provide input, they are welcome to.
- EAC Review Wrap Up/2019 Work Planning
  - The committee is not going to start planning for 2019 during the retreat, but it will be an opportunity to reflect on committee priorities. Work planning for 2019 will likely happen during the November 13<sup>th</sup> EAC Meeting.
- Giles stated that he is hearing complaints from people in the community about Metro Mobility. Giles would like them to come in front of the EAC to talk about their concerns as this is an avenue for them to come provide input.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Business completed, the meeting adjourned at 7:38 pm.

Yolanda Burckhardt  
Recording Secretary