# Minutes of the

# MEETING OF THE EQUITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, July 21, 2020

### Committee Members Present: Nelima Sitati Munene, Leah Goldstein Moses, Tie Oei, Anita Urvina Davis, Nicholas Jenkins, Michael Luseni, Andres Boland, Chai Lee, Edward McDonald, Juliana Miller

### Committee Members Excused: Tommy Sar, Francisco Gonzalez, Richard Paul, Sarah Rudolf

### Committee Members Absent: Miah Ulysses, Sonya Lewis, Lanise Block, Desralynn Cole, Phillip Sterner

# CALL TO ORDER

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Equity Advisory Committee Meeting was held virtually, via Webex. Committee Co-chair Sitati Munene called the meeting of the Council’s Equity Advisory Committee to order at 6:07 p.m.

### APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

Co-Chair Sitati Munene motioned for approval of the agenda. The agenda was moved by McDonald and seconded by Boland. Agenda was unanimously approved.

### Co-chair Sitati Munene motioned for approval of the meeting minutes from June 16, 2020. Minutes were moved by Goldstein Moses and seconded by Jenkins. Minutes were unanimously approved.

**REGIONAL ECONOMIC FRAMEWORK**

Mike Larson, Senior Planner; Tawanna Black, CEO, Center for Economic Inclusion; Amanda Taylor, Vice President of Research, GREATER MSP

* Mike Larson presented the REF, which is a collaborative body of work between the Metropolitan Council, the Center for Economic Inclusion and Greater MSP.
* Shared vision for the region addressing racial disparities and framework serves as a way for BIPOC businesses to adapt and recover from the COVID-19 Pandemic.
* Comprehensive economic development strategy defined by the US Economic Development Administration, or EDA. Therefore, the REF is a pre-requisite for eligible entities in the region who wish to apply for EDA funding, including supplemental funding by the CARES Act, so part of the reason why the process has been so rapid.
* Main intention is that the needs and interests of BIPOC communities are included in the document.
* Tawanna Black introduced herself and spoke about the Center for Economic Inclusion’s background and role in creating the REF and helping create economic wealth, equity and elevating voices for BIPOC communities.
* Amanda Taylor from Greater MSP discussed their organizations background and role with the REF, including a focus on regional strategy work and priorities.
* Mike then went over the REF and how the Met Council, the Center for Economic Inclusion and Greater MSP collaborated in the process and posed some questions for the relating to the framework and nine strategic priorities.
	+ Approval timeline is rapid – final approval to the Council is slated on August 12, 2020.
	+ Document needs to be updated at least every five years.
* Co-chair Sitati Munene opened the meeting up to comments from the committee. Sitati Munene recommended that the committee propose formal response during the public comment period.
* Boland asked about racial disparities measurements relating to employment data.
	+ Larson responded that by reducing disparities relating to employment the region will solve disenfranchisement issues relating to employment gaps in the workforce.
	+ Black added that the employment data was pulled before the pandemic when the gap was closing a bit. Post COVID has only exacerbated wage inequities in BIPOC communities and speaking to employers about employees of color.
* McDonald asked about closing gaps and why the focus wasn’t on eradicating disparities.
	+ Larson responded that the clarity of language is important and that from that standpoint they agree that the goal is eliminating disparities.

**RETHINKING AREAS OF CONCENTRATED POVERTY**

Matt Schroeder, Principal Researcher; Krysten Ryba-Tures, Senior Researcher

* Krysten Ryba-Tures presented the Rethinking Areas of Concentrated Poverty data and focused on how the project changed due to interactions between the Council and community members.
* Work originated with Council’s 2014 fair housing and equity assessment called: The Choice Place and Opportunity.
* At very early stages of developing strategies on ACP and policy documents.
* Began by listening to primary users of data and stakeholders and what tools would be helpful regarding place-based strategies to benefit people.
* Also followed conversations by others and new and innovations research.
* Real opportunities for change in Regional communities and how we change outcomes thoughtfully.
* Follow-up from last visit to the EAC, and the team took feedback from committee and integrated it into their work. Work needs to reflect all voices.
* Reflections. ACP wasn’t the most useful finding to bring forward. It isn’t equity. Over-emphasizing ACP takes away from the causes of it, like structural racism or broader income disparities and the real consequences of poverty. What are we learning? Is it useful? Is it advancing Regional Equity?
* Matt Schroeder described the way research is changing its strategy in three main phases:
	+ Now: Publish data to support a shift in regional narrative
	+ Soon: Research that reflects all voices
	+ Future: Longer-term influence in the next regional planning cycle
* Also showed data of high-income areas and income segregation.
* Focus on history of redlining and discrimination, racially restrictive covenants and ACP
* No longer specifically calling out ACP in neighborhoods where greater than 50% are POC. Disaggregating data and showing a more nuanced view of data and reporting.
* Ryba-Tures spoke about other collaborations currently taking place around equity, poverty and data.
* Co-chair Sitati Munene opened the meeting up to the committee.
* McDonald spoke to the worthy human capital in BIPOC communities that can help with research and talked about different approaches of economic analysis and creating wealth.
* Staff will follow up with the research team on their questions.

**OVERVIEW OF COUNCIL EQUITY STRATEGY FRAMEWORK**

Ashanti Payne, Assistant Director, Office of Equal Opportunity

* Ashanti Payne went over the Council’s Equity Strategy Framework.
* Aligned with the Council’s policies, plans, Thrive 2040 and priorities. OEO has a lead role, along with HR, Communications, along with the rest of the Council has a responsibility for implementing equity at the Council and the Region.
* Framework is being presented around the Council, at the Council of the Whole and at Divisions.
* McDonald commented on accountability and the lack of it in the framework and what are the benchworks and consequences if equity falls away. Luseni also added to the lack of accountability.
	+ Payne responded that transparency needs to happen, and they want to be held accountable. Look forward to coming back to the EAC for more discussions.

**SURVEY AND SUBCOMMITTEE WORK**

Leah Goldstein Moses, Committee Member

* Leah Goldstein Moses reviewed the results of the survey. Nine people responded and generally reported that they would be interested in two additional hours a month towards EAC subcommittee work.
* Most interest in Council Operations, however there was much crossover between subcommittees, e.g. Operations and Housing.

 **THE COMMITTEE’S 2020 WORK**

Co-chair Nelima Sitati Munene spoke to:

* Committee revisited their workplan in light of the COVID-19 and Equity crisis’s and how the Council is responding.
* REF presents an opportunity for the Council to use their statutory authority in helping address inequities in the region.
* The REF also enables the region to access funding as a response to the COVID-19 crisis that directly impacts marginalized communities, so it’s a good conversation for the EAC to have.
* Encourage committee members to tap into their networks regarding the REF and bring forth the conversation.
* McDonald asked Co-Chair where she recommends the committee start?
	+ Sitati-Munene responded that some of the REF language could be strengthened, a desire from the committee to give a formal response to the Council regarding the REF.
* Goldstein-Moses commented on the research team’s evolution versus the REF’s short time frame. Inclusion versus equity language is problematic, would like to work on a response given the short timeframe.
* McDonald added that he feels like the EAC would be “rubber stamping” or it’s unfair how the REF was brought to the committee. Anything should be pre-cleared to the EAC before it goes forward and putting the EAC on the front end.
	+ Sitati Munene responded that the EAC can participate in the implementation phase of the REF.
	+ Mike Larson added that he knows it feels rushed to the committee, will take it back to our partners and appreciate the thoughtful comments.
* Sitati Munene recommended that committee members agree to draft a formal response during the Standing Committee meeting being held on July 28, 2020.
	+ Motion to draft formal REF response at Standing Committee moved by McDonald, seconded by Urvina Davis. Motion was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Co-Chair Sitati Munene read announcements before adjourning meeting:

* The Standing Committee will now be meeting virtually via Webex. Our next meeting is Tuesday, July 28, 2020 at 5:30 pm. Note, that participation in the Standing Committee is critical.
* 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

Co-chair Sitati Munene motioned for adjournment. Block moved; McDonald seconded. No roll call needed for adjournment. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 8:02 p.m.

Erena Anderson
Recording Secretary