

Minutes of the

MEETING OF THE EQUITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, September 17, 2019

Committee Members Present: Francisco Gonzalez, Nelima Sitati Munene, Leah Goldstein Moses, Shirley Cain, Anita Urvina Davis, Mohamed Sheikh, Metric Giles, Sarah Rudolf

Committee Members Excused: Tie Oei, Chai Lee, Juliana Miller, Lanise Block, Aarica Coleman, Tommy Sar, Kris Fredson, Abdirahman Muse, Miah Ulysse, Sonya Lewis

Committee Members Absent: Leslie Redmond, David Ketrosor

CALL TO ORDER

A quorum not being present, Co-Chair Gonzalez started the meeting at 6:15 pm, proceeding to the public invitation and subsequent business items.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Julie Rappaport, SLP SEEDS, spoke to the committee about the organization's mission to eliminate hunger through sustainable agriculture and asked for the EAC's support for a new urban education farm project that would provide an all-year, vertical growing season in Saint Louis Park. The property for this project is under a moratorium by the City of SLP. CM Gonzalez offered to send Julie's information to the committee and connect her to the other Council committees.

REGIONAL PARKS MASTER PLAN EQUITY ANALYSIS

Darcie Vandergrift, Research Analyst; Tracey Kinney, Planner, Regional Parks and Open Space Unit, discussed the Regional Parks Master Plan Equity Analysis Requirement (EAR) development. The *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan (2040 RPPP)* states that the Council will collaboratively develop tools and approaches for equity analysis in master plans. Master plans are the place that establishes a high-level concept and long-term vision for the regional park/trail. Staff seeks advice from the EAC in the early stage of developing the Equity Analysis Requirement (EAR) for master plans, particularly asking for guidance in structuring the most productive input process.

Staff provided a brief background on the Parks Unit, Park and Trail Master Plan characteristics, and summarized past engagement with the EAC. Staff then invited the EAC to participate in an activity to seek the committee's input.

Throughout the presentation, committee members had the following questions:

- What does equity mean to you in parks? It is important for staff to understand and have a definition because how else can you integrate it into the work?

We use the Thrive MSP 2040 definition of equity. In addition, in our unit, we have operationalized this definition as the following: equity means that all people have access to the parks regardless of race, gender, ability. Access includes park usage, employment, and facility to use the park's amenities. We certainly have some capacity building to do on our team, but the definition stated before is what our team uses in our work.

- Do you track the usage of parks?

Yes. We conduct a visitor study that includes in-person administered surveys to park users.

Darcie and Tracey asked committee members to participate in an activity that sought to capture the EAC's input. Since master plans are at the beginning part of the process there is room to imagine and plan for what the regional park or trail system should be like. In thinking about the regional park system, what would an equitable regional park and trail system look like?

Giles said that staff cannot ask him to provide feedback on something that has ever existed; it doesn't work.

Committee members opted to not participate in the activity.

EQUITY STRATEGIC PLANNING UPDATE

Mitzi Kennedy, Equity Manager, Office of Equal Opportunity, provided an update and discussed the equity strategy planning process.

Throughout the presentation and discussion, committee members had the following comments and questions:

- Cain asked on the equity inventory, is there a mechanism to assess and measure outcomes? Identify what we were able to accomplish?

That is exactly what we are trying to do. We need to be doing equity work in coordination and build a way to measure progress and outcomes, identify appropriate resources, and/or adjust projects if it is not going to get us where we want to go.

- Sitati Munene asked what is the timeline? Are there benchmarks?

We are putting together the information and proposal to present to the Director of the Office of Equal Opportunity, the Regional Administrator and executive leadership. We will be moving quickly now that we can articulate the priorities and what needs to be done, what support the Office of Equal Opportunity/Equity Unit can provide, what staff and/or resources are needed, how to engage the EAC in the process, etc.

- Sheikh stated he understands when developing something from the ground up it's hard to know what it's going to entail or how long it will take. Is the Theory of Change (TOC) an approach that will be an organizational approach or compartmentalized?

There will be an overall approach for the Council, but then it will go to divisions to be tailored based on the work of the division. It will be modeled after continuous improvement processes.

- Cain said the most important process is strategic planning, especially identifying a concrete action plan to address disparities.
- Urvina Davis said she liked the idea of staff starting to think differently as they do their work. There are some thinking processes and training that needs to go on for staff because some may be resistant. People need to understand before they can put it into their work. That is going to take time.
- Sitati Munene asked what is informing the Council's work right now? There are a lot of urgent things happening in the region right now. People have their roles and responsibilities; this is a governmental business.

The Council has been doing equity work before I got here 9 months ago. People have been doing this work in many ways – developing the Racial Equity Work Plan, forming Equity Change Teams, utilizing a Thrive Lens, developing and adopting the Equity Policy, and much more. The work has frequently not been in coordination, and that is what I have been doing since arriving at the Council: documenting the Council's efforts and creating a proposal for how to move forward. We need a clear, standardized procedure for advancing equity work— just like the Procurement Department has for contracts. We are operationalizing the Equity Policy.

Sitati Munene invited Joo Hee Pomplum, Acting Executive Director of the Alliance Twin Cities, to comment. Joo Hee stated that while it is appreciated that staff acknowledges the work has been done for the Equity Strategic Plan, Joo Hee would like a report. There needs to be some accountability. Joo Hee has been at these meetings and heard staff say that they are doing work, but they have still not seen anything.

Mitzi responded that the inventory would be a tool to address [...] Joo Hee stopped Mitzi and said, "I was not talking to you, Mitzi, I was talking to the Chair."

Sitati Munene said that the Council cannot be performing self-evaluations on equity work, they need a report card from communities to establish accountability.

Giles said that the work should also incorporate restorative justice components and acknowledge trauma.

DIALOGUE

Committee briefly discussed the upcoming EAC retreat. Few committee members have yet responded with their availability for the October retreat. Committee members deliberated about using the regular EAC meeting time for the retreat but decided to confirm the October 19 date. The next regular EAC October meeting can be used as a pre-retreat planning session.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Gonzalez had several announcements for the committee:

- Our next Standing Committee meeting is on Tuesday, September 24 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 to complete, and your feedback is really useful. Yolanda will send the survey link.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:01 p.m.

Yolanda Burckhardt
Recording Secretary