

## Minutes of the

### MEETING OF THE EQUITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, July 16, 2019

**Committee Members Present:** Nelima Sitati Munene, Francisco Gonzalez, Tie Oei, Chai Lee, Juliana Miller, Lanise Block, Shirley Cain, Leah Goldstein Moses, Anita Urvina Davis, Metric Giles, Miah Ulysse, David Ketroser

**Committee Members Excused:** Sonya Lewis, Aarica Coleman, Kris Fredson, Sarah Rudolf, Mohamed Sheikh, Leslie Redmond

**Committee Members Absent:** Abdirahman Muse, Tommy Sar, Samantha Pree-Stinson

### CALL TO ORDER

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

### APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

A quorum not being present at the beginning of the meeting, Co-Chair Gonzalez proceeded to the public invitation and subsequent information items. A quorum being present at 7:07 p.m., Co-Chair Gonzalez returned to the approval of agenda and minutes.

The agenda was moved by Oei and seconded by Cain.

The meeting minutes from June 18, 2019, were moved by Ulysse and seconded by Lee.

### DEFINING ACCESSIBILITY AND ADA TRANSITION PLAN UPDATES

Guthrie Byard, ADA and Title VI Administrator, Office of Equal Opportunity; Claudia Fuentes, Outreach Coordinator, Communications Department; Julee Peterson, Consultant, Julee Quarve-Peterson, Inc., discussed the ADA self-evaluation efforts and asked for recommendations for the accessibility definition.

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

- How are we looking to ensure accessibility in the regional parks? For example, in the past, the EAC has suggested paved trails for wheelchair accessibility.

There have been ongoing conversations regarding how the ADA will be enforced in the regional parks and HRA facilities. Staff is trying to get answers about how the Fair Housing Act interacts with the ADA. The self-evaluation process has been a phased approach, starting with the facilities that the Council manages.

- How do we field and categorize transit complaints regarding accessibility?

The complaint would likely first go to the Customer Relations Department where it would be then be fielded to the appropriate person to evaluate the situation. They would evaluate the issue, identify if the complaint is representative of a pattern, and then decide how to proceed.

- Will people with disabilities comment on the self-evaluation? And the decision points? Will people have prior notice?

There is a multi-tiered approach to engagement, both internal employees and interns and external. We have two listening sessions this month and two next month. For the two listening sessions, we are partnering with an organization

that serves people who are blind or have vision impairments. For the next two, we will partner with an organization who serves people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Staff asked committee members for their feedback regarding what the Council can do better for accessibility. Committee members had the following comments and suggestions:

- ADA training for staff and for this board and any other committees who have any decision-making authority here.
- Safety issues such as the Greenline on University Avenue should be addressed. For example, if you are a little person, the cars cannot see you crossing the tracks and it is unsafe. In addition, people using a wheelchair can't get on the bus because of snowbanks in the winter.
- Bathroom accessibility includes the hook in the stalls and the soap dispensers.
- Make sure the complaints process is accessible. I also had an experience when the snowbanks got really tall, one of my coworkers had to climb over the snowbank to get across the street to catch the bus. What is the process for those comments?
- It is recommended that there is a flowchart for how complaints are received and addressed, so people know where their complaint is going to. There should be a process so people know when their complaint has been resolved.
- What is the big picture for us to be an equitably accessible institution and also making sure we are promoting accessibility in our investments?
- Is this evaluation for just the services we provide externally and that our staff uses? The bathroom in the lower level of the Met Council's bathroom does not have a handle on the inside of the bathroom door.
- When you say 'employees' who do you mean? Bus operators who serve external customers, or office staff?  
  
It will be a cross-section of the employees and it will be administered accordingly.
- Gender-neutral bathrooms also. Have that lens into the mix. Washbasins for Muslim staff. Consider gender and cultural-related perspectives in accessibility work.

Committee members had several additional recommendations:

- Staff should look at the Minneapolis Institute of Art's definition of accessibility as we create a Council definition.
- Staff should come back to the EAC to have a more open dialogue. This presentation should not be qualified as a listening session when it was majorly a presentation.
- Training is vital. Committee members would like more training about the ADA and staff should undergo training as well.
- Committee members would like additional information regarding which community organizations and people were engaged. In addition, what is the data, who is the disability community?

## RESEARCH DEPARTMENT AND EAC COLLABORATION

Joel Huting, Manager of Research, Community Development; Krysten Ryba-Tures, Senior Researcher; Matt Schroeder, Principal Researcher provided an overview of the Research Department's role and work at the Council and discussed opportunities for collaboration and support.

Staff asked the committee for comments, questions and suggestions about working with the CD Research Team. Committee members had the following questions and comments:

- You guys are great! Why are we outsourcing to Wilder? How do we interface with community groups?

We met with the Alliance, CURA, and various local and state government agencies. We need to have a dedicated community engagement function. We are trying to figure out how we can get resources to support that work. We want to leverage what we do best and what others do best. We are strong in quantitative analysis and have some qualitative, but we are never going to be the best. So we are working with our partners.

- It would be helpful to get baseline data from departments. For example, regarding Metro Transit: Who are we serving, where are the buses going? Are people satisfied? Committee members don't know what we are comparing if we don't have a baseline. How is the data being shared with community organizations? People want to over-research our communities and then the data sits on the U of M's research websites. CURA co-owns the research with community partners. We need to give credit to community organizations. Topics of interest include how research is always concentrated on deficit narratives. The consequence of this approach is that it disperses communities.
- Look into prejudice mapping and examine what can we do and what kind of policies can we change.
- Emphasize and prioritize community-based, participatory research. Evaluate if the research has influenced changes in policies and procedures.

We will be doing a pilot participatory research project with the new parks researcher.

Staff presented on their recent work rethinking Areas of Concentrated Poverty (ACPs). Staff asked several questions to the EAC:

1. Are we headed in the right direction in exploring alternative measures to [Areas of Concentrated Poverty]?
2. We've proposed several other next steps. What do you think about these? What's missing?
3. How should we share our progress with you?

In response to the questions, committee members shared the following comments and suggestions:

- Can we look at other factors such as food access, education, health care in those areas [in the map of high and low wealth distribution]?
- It's recommended that the research and presentation distinguish between equity and equality.
- Regarding community-based, participatory research – it is great to involve community; however, they should be compensated in some manner. If it is not connected to leadership or policy changes, then it can be exploitative because they involved their communities, but they didn't get to authentically influence the process.
- How do people in the research department approach bias? How does it influence how you conduct research?
- There should be an analysis of "why, how and when" areas of concentrated wealth were formed.

## **RACIAL EQUITY FRAMEWORK UPDATE**

Mitzi Kennedy, Equity Manager, Office of Equal Opportunity provided a brief update on the development of the Racial Equity Framework. Moving forward, the Council will need to establish a shared understanding of the next steps or an action plan. The committee will continue to receive updates as the work progresses.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Chair Sitati Munene had several announcements for the committee:

- As a reminder, the Standing Committee will now be meeting here at the Met Council Robert Street location. Our next meeting is on Tuesday, July 23 at 5:30 pm. Note, that participation in the Standing Committee is critical. We are looking for more committee members to join the Standing Committee – this committee reviews presentation requests and sets agendas. If you are interested in participating in the Standing Committee, let me or staff know, and we will forward you the calendar invitation.
- 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 8:23 p.m.

Yolanda Burckhardt  
Recording Secretary