

DULUTH INDIGENOUS COMMISSION

MEETING MINUTES

Monday, May 18, 2015

Present: Babette Sandman, Tina Olson, Hannah Smith, Victor St. George, Amber Lee Stewart, Kassie Helgerson

Absent: Carol DeVerney, Jaron Smallwood, Donna Newgren, Coreen Roy

Staff: Karen Olesen, Mike Palermo

1. Call to Order, Introductions

Sandman called the meeting to order at 5:37 PM. Introductions were made.

2. Approval of September meeting minutes

Olson motioned to approve the October 20, 2014 meeting minutes, Smith seconded the minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Public Comments

Lutheran Social Services (LSS) – Donna Bergstrem, Manilan Houle, Bob Sherman, and Robin Maxwell introduced themselves to the commission. They gave a presentation about the Center for Changing Lives. They explained that the center is targeted for homeless and at-risk of homelessness youth. The center has raised \$2.5 million including \$400,000 from the City of Duluth, \$250,000 from the Twins Foundation and will be applying for Tax Credits from the State. Lutheran Social Services works with Life House and operates the Safe Place Program. Houle shared his story about being helped by LSS and their programs. Sherman asked the Commission if they would be willing to write a letter of support as they continue their fund raising efforts.

Sandman thanked Houle for sharing his story and commended him for reaching out to the police who helped connect him with LSS. She explained that many youth are afraid of the police and suffer because of it.

Olson added that we often think of these as adult issues and that there is a need for programs for youth.

Kathleen Spencer from the audience asked the presenters how best to connect homeless youth with LSS.

Sherman explained that they can have multiple options. The individual can call 2-1-1, or they can visit the Renaissance Program at 1st Ave West and 1st Street, or Life House, or any Safe Place such as a DTA Bus. At the Safe Place they will be put into contact with LSS.

St. George motioned to write a letter of support. Helgerson seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Renee VanNett and Doug Bowen-Bailey from the Citizen's Review Board came to present to the Commission. They gave a brief explanation of the CRB's roles and responsibilities for the new Commission members. VanNett discussed plans for an event centered on Mr. Jackson but as she ran into him was afraid of re-traumatizing him. She thought it would be better if the community took those unanswered questions and address the issues in a bigger way. That way the questions are being asked all along in case another incident occurs. The CRB is also working on organizing a know your rights event in June. They are vetting different organizations such as ACLU and NAACP who do presentations and seeing if they can tailor them to Duluth. They would like the Indigenous Commission to comment on the agenda before it becomes public. They also have convened a task force that will focus on implementing the 6 pillars of president Obama's recommendations from his Task Force on 21st Century Policing. The next meeting of the CRB will be 5 PM Wednesday May 27 in room 303.

Sandman thought it might be a good idea to get Mr. Jackson's story on video. If we can have a video in future cases we don't need to worry about re-traumatizing. She thought VanNett was correct though in wanting to respect Mr. Jackson and thinking of what is best for his recovery.

Olson agreed with Sandman. She pointed out it is a tight rope you walk between influencing positive change and exploitation.

Sandman reminded the commission that we always need to focus on the person. She thanked the CRB for keeping that focus and helping to reduce the fear that still exists in the community.

4. New Business

Palermo gave a presentation covering the Indigenous Commission's Bylaws. He walked through the objectives of the commission, the meeting structure, and Robert's Rules of Order.

5. Old Business

Work Plan - Olesen presented the Commission's draft work plan for the year. She walked the commission through the calendar and asked for suggestions. She invited Professor Jim Amell from the University of Minnesota to update the Commission about the strengths assessment he is completing for the Commission. Professor Amell introduced himself and discussed the progress on the strengths assessment and the possibility of presenting with the Commission at the St. Louis County Health and Human Services Conference. The project which includes interviews of community members was expanded to non-indigenous people upon the request of the Commission. He thought that was a good idea because they can gather information about perceptions from non-indigenous people. He suggested that he present the results of the study during the Feast and Forum.

Sandman thanked professor Amell work and appreciated the effort to gather a wide range of voices. She explained that just because someone lives in a community it doesn't make them all knowing about the community.

Olson was supportive of the project. She explained that the project was documenting a footprint of the population.

Professor Amell also announced that he was awarded a grant to do Photo Voice. This is a project where community members are given cameras to document aspects of the community. He was hoping the Commission would be a pilot project before he introduced this to the greater community. The project would start in July.

Olson asked to revisit the previous discussion of Lutheran Social Services' Changing Lives project, and suggested that St. George draft the letter of support. St. George said he would write the letter on behalf of the Commission.

Olson motioned that St. George draft the letter of support for Lutheran Social Services, Smith Seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

Ethnographic Study – Discussion occurred about the draft Ethnographic Study of the Indigenous Heritage of Duluth by Bruce White. Helgerson was surprised about how many burial mounds there were and how they were covered by development. Sandman pointed out that there were two American Indian centers in the 70's before AICHO. Her father ran one and Renee VanNett's family cooked meals at the other. She thought those should be included in the report. Staff will relay information to the ethnographer.

6. Announcements, Upcoming Events, and Comments from the Commission

Sandman was excited to see new members on the commission. Helgerson explain that it was the Feast and Forum that inspired her to apply. It was requested that staff email the bylaws to the commission.

Chet Welch from the American Indian Advisory Council on Chemical Dependency gave a brief update about changes in the state. Treatment Centers are now being required to have a court ordered clients and this will affect the culturally specific program at the 4 Winds Treatment Center. They will be forced to take clients from the Courts and clients who would benefit from culturally specific programming may not be assigned. It is also getting more difficult to commit someone to a program. Gayle Holton from the Duluth Police Department explained the process for commitment and that it is taking away legal rights so it becomes a court process. Welch explained that computers are being utilized more so there is less travel for case workers. Sandman added that there are Indigenous Rights and that DHS should be made aware of those rights when dealing with funding and policy.

5. Adjournment: St. George motioned to adjourn, Helgerson seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

6. Next Meeting:

Next meeting is June 15, 2015 at 5:30 PM.