



# African Heritage Commission Meeting Summary

**February 12, 2026, 411 W 1<sup>st</sup> Street, Room 430, City Hall, 6:00-7:30 PM**

## Call to Order

- Meeting called to order at 6:11 pm.
- Those in attendance: Jacob Bell (chair), Ayana Izala (VC), Njoki Kamau, Christine Colbeson, Deyona Kirk
- City Staff: Marsha Lue, Human Rights & Equity Officer and Suzanne Kelley, Community Planner
- Guests: Henry Banks, Dan Maki, Terrance Lovejoy

## Approval of January meeting minutes

- Comments: Deyona made motion to approved, Christine seconded. Ayana and Njoki abstained. Motion passed 3 to 0.

## Public Comment

- Henry Banks-is an active community member who is involved with many organizations, including the Parks and Recreation Borad and ISD 709 school board. He is working on a program called Community Understanding, a peer to peer organization that is solution based in the Central and East Hillside neighborhoods. He is asking for space in Washington Center. Specifically, he would like to ask to contact Councilors Roz Randolph and two other councilors for dedicated space and equipment.

## Governance and Capacity Building

- Capacity-building with Nexus (20 minutes)
- Guest speaker: Chai Lee, Boards and Commissions Program Director, Nexus Community Partners
  - Nexus has been around for 20 years and about 12 years ago they started developing a training program to assist BIPOC and historical marginalized organizations to become more involved with commissions. They created a Boards and Leadership Institute that has graduated 168 people, including people from Duluth. More information is at this link: [Boards & Commissions Leadership Institute - Nexus Community Partners](#)
  - Looking to create a shared training with the Indigenous Commission and other commissions and peoples that would benefit.

## Unity Fund application and shared training strategy

- Status update on the Unity Fund application submission
  - The application due date is this month, and Jacob will work on the application to hire an organization such as Nexus to provide training to the African Heritage Commission, and possibly other protected class commissions.

## Commission operations and governance priorities for 2026

- City Clarification Needed: AI Transcription and note-taking for official meetings, including virtual guests in an in-person meeting
  - Marsha will connect with the Director VanTassel and Attorney's office
- Updates needed and a process for drafting changes to send to City Council
  - Agendas will be led by the Commission member
- Confirm access to the shared agenda document/drive and deadlines for agenda items
  - Process was discussed and the Commission members are able to provide input.

## Black History Month programming

- Debrief from Councilor Colberson on the MLK Day introduction of the African Heritage Commission
  - It was reported that this was a very positive event with lots of participants.
- Discussion of African Heritage Commission participation or visibility during Black History Month
  - Family Freedom Center will have an event on February 27
  - Damiano will have an event on February 25
  - Henry Banks will be hosting events at 11 am on Tuesday/Thursday. On February 26<sup>th</sup> at 11am there will be conversation and coffee with the school district executive leadership.

## Inviting City Councilors and other City Officials

- Establish a consistent process for extending invitations and preparing officials in advance.
  - City Staff was informed that all communication to City Councilors and the Mayor from City Commissions and Boards should go through City Staff.

## New Business

- Commissioner announcements
- Requests for future agenda items

## Meeting Information for the Year

- There was a discussion about moving the following meeting dates. It was decided not to change the meeting dates and to make sure City Staff has alternatives for facilitator and meeting notes.
  - April 9 to be moved to April 7?
  - May 14 to be moved to May 12?
  - June 11 to be moved to June 9?
- Months are off historically are June-July-August-December – will need to discuss at the next meeting.

## Human Rights and Equity Officer Report

- February 25 at the Damiano – Black History Month event

## Adjournment

- Meeting adjourned at 8:02 pm.