



City Clerk

218-730-5500

Room 318
411 West First Street
Duluth, Minnesota 55802

August 4, 2021

Duluth City Council
c/o President Renee Van Nett
411 W. 1st St., Room 318
Duluth, MN 55802

SENT VIA EMAIL
rvannett@duluthmn.gov

Dear President Van Nett and City Councilors,

At its meeting on July 8, 2020, the City of Duluth Charter Commission formed a study group to review the City Charter with an eye towards identifying and proposing specific changes to any provisions which serve to exclude or oppress any group of people, particularly persons of color and those of a disadvantaged socioeconomic status, whether intentional or unintentional. The study group completed its work and submitted recommendations to the Charter Commission on June 22, 2021. A copy of the study group report is attached.

At its meeting on July 14, 2021, the Charter Commission moved to accept the study committee report and to refer the report to City Administration and the City Council for consideration. The Charter Commission further requested that City Administration provide a response back to the Charter Commission regarding the report contents and any recommendations. The Charter Commission next meets on October 13, 2021.

Very Truly Yours,

ss/Don Ness

Don Ness
Charter Commission President

www.duluthmn.gov

The City of Duluth is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

MEMORANDUM

To: President Don Ness
Duluth City Charter Commission

From: Explicit/Implicit Barriers Duluth City Charter Study Group

Re: Explicit/Implicit Barriers Study Group Findings

Date: June 22, 2021

On July 8, 2020, the Charter Commission voted unanimously to establish the Explicit/Implicit Barriers Study Group to review the City Charter to identify and propose specific corrections to any provisions which serve to exclude or oppress any group of people, particularly persons of color and disadvantaged socioeconomic status, whether intentional or unintentional.

Former Commission President Poole sent a letter to the Indigenous Commission, the African Heritage Commission, the Duluth City Attorney's Office, the Human Rights Commission and Housing for All inviting members to participate. Later, Commission President Ness issued an invitation to the NAACP as well.

The final composition of the study group is as follows:

- Erik Beitzel, Duluth City Attorney's Office
- Mark Daniel Hakes, Human Rights Commission
- Kathy Hermes, Together for Youth, Lutheran Social Services
- Char Matheson, Duluth Charter Commission
- Frank Palmer, Duluth Charter Commission
- Rebecca St. George, Duluth City Attorney

Classie Dudley of the NAACP initially expressed interest but was unable to participate due to other matters requiring her attention. Babette Sandman of the Indigenous Commission initially expressed interest but did not attend. Sharla Gardner expressed interest but later resigned due to other matters requiring her attention.

The first meeting was held on February 23, 2021 and the Study Group has met monthly since that time.

The Explicit/Implicit Barriers Study Group has completed its review of the Duluth City Charter and makes the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1:
Establish an independent advisory redistricting commission.

Rationale: To increase input from residents about issues which directly affect their neighborhoods and to ensure that all residents are represented in an equitable manner.

Recommendation 2:

Establish a Chief Equity Officer position within the City Charter

Rationale: Establishing this position in the City Charter demonstrates the City's commitment and intention to be an equitable and inclusive community for all people and undoing any systemic barriers to this vision through sustainable and consistent visioning and policy development.

Recommendation 3:

Establish an Equity Assistance Fund to support activities of the Chief Equity Officer

Rationale: To support and augment programs and activities to advance equity and support dismantling structural and institutional discrimination.

Recommendation 4:

Extend notice timelines

Rationale: Residents who are not familiar with city administrative processes or who experience barriers to engagement in the process may not be given adequate time to develop effective responses to notices.

Recommendation 5:

Establish a small dollar purchasing policy within the City Charter.

Rationale: To enhance opportunities for participation in competitive procurements, to assure that businesses that are local, small, and owned by people with historically marginalized identities are given first opportunity to provide goods and services before approaching larger businesses. This can save taxpayer resources and create more opportunities for the aforementioned businesses to compete for City contracts by reducing outdated bureaucracy.

Recommendation 6:

Recommend to the Duluth City Council a general review of the City Code to update it to modern language use, with specific attention to issues of equity and inclusion.

Rationale: While completing our work, this study group found areas of concern within the City Code in regards to equity and inclusion that should be addressed.

Thank you for the opportunity to advance equity in the City of Duluth.