



Planning & Development Division
Planning & Economic Development Department

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African Heritage Commission Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, May 12, 2021, 5:30 p.m.

Virtual Meeting –Web-Ex

Commissioners present: Jebbeh Edmunds, Verna Thornton, John Staine, Bernice Pepper, Breanna Ellison

Commissioners absent: Antonio Carter, Susie Green

Staff present: Mollie Hinderaker, Phillis Webb, Suzanne Kelley

1. Welcome & Introductions

The meeting started at 5:36 PM.

2. Approve Meeting Minutes for April 14, 2021

The minutes for the April 14, 2021 meeting were not approved, after discussion; City Staff was directed to provide revised language for the Commission to review prior to the June meeting. The following change was emailed to the African Heritage Commission for review.

~~7. Old Business~~

- ~~• The Commissioners acknowledged the work that Commissioner Thornton put into writing the statement and discussed how they can be better prepared to released communications from the Commission in the future.~~

7. Old Business

- The Commissioners acknowledged the work that Commissioner Thornton put into writing the statement regarding the January 6, 2021 events at the US Capitol that was submitted to City Administration. This statement was also to be used to introduce the members of the African Heritage Commission to the Duluth community. The AHC Commissioners were perplexed as to why these issues (public introduction of Commissioners and the publication of the statement regarding the insurrection at the Capitol) were not upon or addressed. The Commission also expressed dissatisfaction that the members of the African Heritage Commission have not been formally introduced to the Duluth Community. The Commission requested city staff provide direction so that items that are approved by the Commission are published and that a formal introduction of the Commission to the Duluth Community occurs.

3. Old Business

Commission members expressed concerns that they have not been formally introduced to the Duluth community and requested staff to address this issue at their next meeting.

4. Public Comment

- Will Wilson from the Lake Superior Health Community Center introduced himself.

5. Goals and Workplan discussion

The Commission discussed what they would like to focus on for the rest of the year and what they would like accomplish. Two key items were discussed: 1) having a building representing the community and culture and 2) having listening sessions in the community.

Building: Members discussed how there is a need to have a space that represents the African Heritage community in Duluth. They would like City Staff to assist with the grant process in creating this space. There were questions on what happened to the dedicated space for the African American Awareness Institute in the Central Hillside Community Center. Commissioners want to insure that once the new facility is established that it remains for this proposed use. Commissioners also discussed financing and operation costs. Commissioners asked City Staff to develop a framework in which they could use to develop a work plan.

Listening Sessions: Members discussed that they should hold a series of listening sessions to learn more about the Community's needs.

6. DPD Racial Bias Audit (Deputy Chief Marquardt)

Deputy Chief Marquardt explained the Duluth Police Department is creating a committee to draft a proposal to hire an independent contractor to perform a racial bias audit on the police department. They are asking NAACP, AICHO, and other BIPOC groups for members to join this committee. This committee will develop the request for proposals, review the proposals from the contractors, select the contractor and then review the contractor's findings in the racial audit. These committee meetings would be held once to twice a month. The racial audit would review the practices, policies, training, recruitment, and procedures to identify areas that need improvement. Commissioners suggested that the people who are from outside the Duluth community should be involved in this process due to their perspectives. Deputy Chief Marquardt provided her contact information for potential members and asked for additional recommendations.

7. Subcommittees

- a. Community Center/Grants (Pepper)- this topic was discussed earlier in the meeting.
- b. Employer Engagement/Demographics and Data Research (Carter, Green, Thornton)- this topic will be discussed next month.
- c. Historic Preservation (Edmunds, Staine)-this topic will be discussed next month
- d. DCSI Law Enforcement Accountability Proposals (Green, Stain, Thornton)- the email addressing this issue was sent.

8. Announcements

- Chair Staine encouraged members to visit Leanduluth.org, which is law enforcement accountability network and contains data from the County and City about policing.

9. Adjourn

Staine/Edmunds adjourn the meeting at 6:47pm – **motion passed 5:0**

Next meeting to be held virtually on June 9, 2021 at 5:30 PM