



Noah Schuchman
Chief Administrative Officer

City of Duluth
Room 402 • 411 West First Street
Duluth, Minnesota 55802

 218-730-5370

 nschuchman@duluthmn.gov

October 8, 2021

Don Ness
President
Charter Commission

RE: Charter Commission Explicit/Implicit Barriers Study Group Report

Dear President Ness,

This letter serves as a response to your August 4, 2021 letter on behalf of the Charter Commission and the included June 22, 2021 Memorandum from the Charter Commission Study Group. Thank you to the Charter Commission and the Study Group for the time and care put into these recommendations – we appreciate your service to the city. Below are responses specific to each recommendation.

Recommendation 1: Establish an independent advisory redistricting commission.

Redistricting is an important component of our electoral system and we appreciate the Study Groups recommendation on this issue. Pursuant to Chapter 2, Section 2, of the City Charter, the City Council is tasked with determining apportionment of districts within the City. In consultation with the City Clerk, the Council will begin work on this process before the end of the year as redistricting for City precincts and districts is scheduled to occur between February 15, 2022 and March 29, 2022. The City Clerk will be advising the City Council of the Study Groups recommendation to include an advisory redistricting commission of citizens as part of the consultation process for redistricting.

Recommendation 2: Establish a Chief Equity Officer position within the City Charter.

Recommendation 3: Establish an Equity Assistance Fund to support activities of the Chief Equity Officer.

Recommendation 5: Establish a small dollar purchasing policy within the City Charter.

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.

This set of recommendations is particularly timely – early in 2021, I led the establishment of an internal City of Duluth Equity Action Team. The Equity Action Team includes City of Duluth staff from all nine departments and at all levels of the organization and is co-chaired by City Attorney Rebecca St. George and me. The Equity Action Team is intended to identify opportunities to move the dial on the City's internal work around equity and inclusion.

Specific to Recommendations 2 and 3, we agree that it is critically important that equity and inclusion remain a top priority for the City. Currently, we are working to embed that work in all aspects of City work, this is the purpose and goal of the



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Equity Action Team. We understand (and don't disagree) with the rationale of the Study Group to elevate that work through the creation of a position and fund, but at this time, we feel it is important to take a holistic approach to City operations through analysis being conducted by the Equity Action Team, in addition to supporting and expanding the work of the Human Rights Office. However, the inclusion of an additional position and fund will be considered as part of that analysis.

Specific to Recommendation 5, currently the City is restricted in how purchasing and procurement are conducted by State law. However, the City will consider this recommendation with further legal review.

Recommendation 4: Extend notice timelines.

Public notice is a critical piece of transparency in government, and the City works to ensure that transparency is embedded in all the work that we do. This recommendation is another item that the Equity Action Team will review for consideration of changes to the City Code. Additionally, as notice requirements are often rooted in state and local law, I have requested that the City Clerk and Attorney's Office review and consider notice requirements when reviewing and drafting Code requirements or otherwise assisting in the development of City process(es).

I am open to additional discussion with the Charter Commission on these topics at the appropriate time.

Thank you,

Noah Schuchman
Chief Administrative Officer