

Duluth Indigenous Commission  
Monday, July 19, 2021  
Virtual WebEx Meeting

**Commissioners present:** Lanelle Hrabik, Moira Villiard, Rochelle Goodrich, Kassie Helgerson, Phoebe Davis, Roxanne DeLille, Amber Lightfeather

**Commissioners absent:** Babette Sandman, Carol Deverney, Cayla Bellanger DeGroat

**Staff present:** Kathy Wilson, Mollie Hinderaker

*Note: per the request of the Indigenous Commission members, two Ojibwe language words are used in the meeting minutes: bezhig (“one”) indicates who made the motion and niizho (“two”) indicates who seconded the motion.*

**1. Call to Order and Introductions**

- Co-chair Helgerson called the meeting to order at 5:46 PM, introductions were made.

**2. Approval of May 17, 2021 Meeting Minutes**

- DeLille bezhig/Davis niizho to approve the May 17, 2021 meeting minutes.
- **Motion passed 6:0.** One Commissioner was not present for the vote.

**3. Public Comment**

- Summary of written comments received prior to the meeting
  - The Duluth Lions Club reached out to the Commission because they are responsible for a series of plaques on skyline parkway that were originally installed in the 1970s. The plaques currently leave out Indigenous history and the Lions Club would like to redo them in collaboration with the Commission. The timeline is for the plaques to be installed sometime next year. The Lions Club has reached out to the Fond du Lac Tribal Historic Preservation Office already. Commissioners discussed that they would like to invite a representative of the project to the next meeting to discuss further and that part of the Commissions contribution could be to share the ethnographic study that was completed a few years ago or they could start a new subcommittee.
  - Cliff Knettel from City of Duluth Parks and Recreation is requesting volunteers for a project advisory committee to help with the parks master planning process. Commissioners discussed that they would like to see the message before deciding how to proceed and that they would ideally like to have more than one person representing the Commission on this Committee. City staff confirmed to follow up with the email.
- Virtual public comment via Webex
  - A member from the public came to the meeting with questions about a proposed development of tiny homes at the Point of Rocks. The community member mentioned that just a few months ago there was an encampment of homeless people at Point of Rocks, and expressed concern about housing affordability and the City’s response to homelessness. Commissioners requested more information from the City about the new housing

development. City Staff will find and send information about the project to the Commission.

- Monica Milton from the Association for Criminal Defense Lawyers was in attendance to find volunteers or recommendations for folks to join focus groups (4-6 people) that would discuss how to better diversify jury pools in St. Louis County. Milton explained that her organization has partnered with the St. Louis County Public Defender's Office to explore this topic through partnership with Black, Latinx, and Indigenous communities. Milton further explained that jurors in St. Louis County are disproportionately white while defendants are disproportionately BIPOC and that studies show that diverse juries are more fair than homogenous juries. The focus groups are planned for August and members will be compensated as subject matter experts. Commissioners had questions about the jury selection process and people of color being chosen to be removed from juries due to their race. Commissioners were given Milton's contact information, and were encouraged to contact her directly if interested.

#### **4. City Reports and Updates**

- Updates/Comments from City Councilors or City Staff
  - City staff explained that the last few months the City Council meeting schedule has had time conflicts with Commission meetings so Councilors are unable to attend. Their schedule will change in the Fall and they will be able to attend more often.
  - City staff updated the Commission that meetings will be in person again starting in August. Because of open meeting laws doing meetings over Webex is no longer an option for the public or Commissioners to participate through and has very few exceptions. Staff explained there is a virtual option but that is only to stream the meetings and not participate.

#### **5. New business**

- Analysis of the Homeless Response System in St. Louis County
  - Laura Birnbaum from St. Louis County gave a presentation on a systems mapping report that addresses how the St. Louis County homeless response system is functioning, with a focus on demographic data from 2020 to tell the story. Major themes include: racial disparities in people experiencing homelessness, permanent supportive housing is a high need, the number of people experiencing homelessness is increasing, increased shelter and navigation services are needed.
  - Commissioners shared feed back on the following:
    - The coordinated entry system seems to be limited and there needs to be more entry points, for example communication via phone can be difficult or limiting for some people due to mental health complications.
    - Immediate help options are needed.
    - People are getting evicted or receiving a nonrenewal of their lease due to lack of communication. Tenant Landlord Connection is a good service but some type of advocate system could be utilized that is more informal or approachable.

- Access to cultural activities, community, green space at AICHO is a great feature for permanent supportive housing- a model that should be repeated.
- Getting a place to accommodate large families is hard to come by in Duluth, especially for those who are low- to moderate-income rather than extremely low income.
- More housing overall could benefit the entire system.
- There are limitations due to the building code that are impacted by the State legislature that impact housing options and affordability.

## 6. Action Items

- Bylaws subcommittee next steps/schedule meeting(s) (Sandman, Helgerson, Davis, DeLille)
  - The first meeting was held with City Attorney St. George. The emphasis at the meeting was that the Commission should get the bylaws finished before next January. Commissioners directed staff to reach out to Attorney St. George and get some options for when she is available to schedule the next subcommittee meeting.
- Duluth Ojibwe Language Project next steps (Sandman, Helgerson)
  - Co-chair Helgerson said she would connect with Co-chair Sandman to discuss this. Commissioner Lightfeather mentioned that she has been coordinating with the Duluth Library to get Ojibwe language signage up because she resides on another committee for them. Library is already working on adding the signage and could be used as an example to show how this could work elsewhere. Commissioner Lightfeather confirmed that she would like to join this subcommittee.

## 7. Subcommittees

- AIM/Opioids/Sweat Lodge/Sobriety Feast (Helgerson)
  - Co-chair Helgerson explained that the Yurt project is currently on hold due to seasonality but that AIM is still actively looking for places to put up yurts. The timeline for putting them up will be in late Fall.
  - The sobriety feast is also on hold because they are waiting for One Roof to open up again so they have a location to host the feast.
- Art in Gichi-ode' Akiing (Villiard)
  - Commissioner Villiard explained she is still waiting on full approval for the Chief Buffalo mural project from the City. This is due to a pending maintenance agreement and final approval of the mural plan from the Duluth Public Arts Commission (DPAC). DPAC might have to hold a special meeting in order to approve the designs before they run out of time to do community painting sessions in August. Commissioner Villiard mentioned that she would like to help refine this process moving forward so it is easier for other artists.
  - Commissioner Villiard also mentioned that a grant worth \$25,000 from Arts Midwest is in the works to go towards the Chief Buffalo project.
- Bylaws (Sandman, Helgerson, Davis, DeLille)
  - Discussion held earlier in meeting
- Education (Lightfeather)

- In addition to language in the libraries Commissioner Lightfeather is also working on getting Ojibwe language in Duluth schools.
- Commissioner Lightfeather also updated the Commission that the cultural space is currently in the works at Northstar. By doing a project like this once, other schools could more easily copy similar spaces in the future. A school in Grand Marais has already shown interest.
- Police/Racial Bias audit task force (DeLille)
  - City Staff updated the Commission that Commissioner DeLille agreed to represent the Commission on the racial bias audit task force.
- Sacred Sites (Davis, Bellanger-Degroat)
  - No updates
- Spirit Mountain (Sandman)
  - Commissioner Helgerson said that they were currently working on rescheduling the feast and will update the Commission with information once they have more to share.

## **8. Old Business**

- Decolonization and Visibility Ideas (Sandman)
  - Commissioner Davis said she just finished writing her first book from an Indigenous point of view and that she plans to write another one
  - Commissioner Villiard said she got awarded a grant to collaborate with an Indigenous poet, Tanaya Winder, to do an animation based on native boarding schools. Commissioner Villiard also mentioned her other animation project that was just recently projected onto the Washington Center this past month.
  - Co-chair Helgerson talked about her grand children and that she taught them how to say good morning and how to pray, use Indigenous medicines, and dance.

## **9. Announcements**

- August 16, 2021 meeting will be in person at City Hall at 5:30 PM

## **10. Next Meeting August 16, 2021**

- Meeting adjourned 7:24 PM