



Planning & Development Division
Planning & Economic Development Department

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African Heritage Commission Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, March 10, 2021, 5:30 p.m.

Virtual Meeting –Web-Ex

Commissioners present: Jebeh Edmunds, Verna Thornton, John Staine, Bernice Pepper, Antonio Carter, Susie Green

Commissioners absent: Breanna Ellison

Staff present: Mollie Hinderaker, Suzanne Kelley

1. Welcome & Introductions

The meeting started at 5:38 PM. Due to the Commission not having a chairperson, Commissioner Edmunds volunteered to chair the meeting.

2. Election of Officers

Commissioner Pepper nominated Commissioner Staine for Chairperson. Commissioner Staine accepted the nomination. Staff asked if there were any other nominations, this request was made the required three times.

Thornton/Edmunds for Commissioner Staine to become Chairperson – **motion passed 6:0**

Commissioner Pepper nominated Commissioner Carter for Vice-Chair. Commissioner Carter declined the appointment. Commissioner Thornton was asked if she would like to become Vice-Chairperson. Commissioner Thornton declined the offer.

Commissioner Carter nominated Commissioner Green for Vice-Chair. Commissioner Green accepted the nomination. Staff asked if there were any other nominations, this request was made the required three times.

Carter/Staine for Commissioner Green to become Vice-Chairperson – **motion passed 6:0**

3. Approve Meeting Minutes for February 10, 2021

Staine/Carter to approve the February 10, 2021 minutes – **motion passed 6:0**

4. Demographics Report Discussion

City Staff presented a Duluth demographics data report. During this presentation, members discussed a variety of issues including:

- Learning more about the Duluth Police Department patrols and arrest rates
- Seeing an increase in African Heritage owned businesses
- Needing more information about health care from St. Luke’s and Essentia and other medical facilities for the African Heritage Community
- Connecting with trades organization and unions
- Finding out how many African Heritage personal are in the middle and upper management medical community in Duluth, including nurses, doctors, and administration
- Understanding the hiring process for the school systems
- Asking the school system about the graduation rates and project graduation rates
- Researching how many people in the African Heritage community are pursuing education degree in the local colleges and universities
- Explaining why people in the African Heritage community leave Duluth and what can be done
- Inviting people to the Commission to explain their stories
- Having a listening session with employers
 - Commission Peppers volunteered to form a subcommittee to focus on this issue
 - Discussion items included:
 - How to connect with employers
 - What are student’s ideas about employment
 - What is available outside the Twin Ports
 - Connecting with the BSU’s at the colleges
 - Incentives for businesses to improve employment

Edmunds/Staine to establish a subcommittee to focus on these items– **motion passed 6:0**

5. Public Comment

- a. Human Rights Commission (Mark Daniel Hakes, Commissioner) asked if Commission members would like to join a subcommittee of the Human Rights Commission, which focuses on racism being a public health crisis. Commissioners Staine, Edmunds, and Green stated they were interested.
- b. Epilepsy Foundation of Minnesota (Lisa Peterson, Regional Outreach Manager) stated they were having visioning sessions on March 24 and April 7 and invited the commission members to attend or share the opportunity with their networks.

6. Waabizheshikana Trail Plan/African Heritage historic preservation (City Staff)

City Staff update the Commission on the trail plan and that it was going to City Council. The plan does contain some information about history of the African Heritage community in Duluth. City Staff explained there are grants available that would allow for additional research.

7. Old Business
 - Items were summarized, but no actions were taken.
8. Next Meeting Topics (April 14th)
 - No discussion
9. Announcements
 - No discussion
10. Adjourn

Staine/Pepper to adjourn the meeting at 8:20pm – **motion passed 6:0**

Next meeting to be held virtually on April 14, 2021 at 5:30 PM