



**Planning & Development Division**  
*Planning & Economic Development Department*

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African Heritage Commission Meeting Minutes

**Wednesday, October 13, 2021, 5:30 p.m.**

Virtual Meeting –Web-Ex

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

Commissioners absent: Susie Green

Staff present: Emily Nygren, Phillis Webb

1. Welcome & Introductions

The meeting started at 5:42 PM.

2. Approve Meeting Minutes for July 14th, 2021

Staine first/Edmund second to approve the minutes for the July 14th, 2021 meeting. **Motion passed 6:0**

3. Public Comment

No Public Comment

4. New Business

a. Chair Staine offered information on the Equity Summit facilitated by Northspan, as part of their Welcome to the community work. It is on October 27<sup>th</sup> and they are seeking individuals to speak for a few minutes on behalf of the commission and what the goals are.

b. Discussion on the need for a new Co-Chair, due to an absence. Motion by the Chair for Commissioner Thornton to become the new Co-Chair. Staine first/Edmunds second. **Motion passed 5:0**

c. Due to the difficulty of attendance, the Commission discussed the merits of changing the time and frequency of the meetings. The proposed change was to keep the same day (Wednesday), but move the time to 6pm. The idea of a summer break was discussed and agreed upon. Also moved from monthly to every 6 weeks in 2022. Also discussed on the former

ask for City staff to discuss and return to them with information on paid time for attendance. Motion by Commissioner Thornton for meetings every 6 weeks with a changed start-time to 6pm. Thornton first/Staine Second. **Motion passed 6:0.**

5. Old Business

a. Cultural Center

Discussion of the progress on a Cultural Center. Discussed the African Heritage Hub, which was created a few years ago and which Chair Staine has been working on, as well as other Commissioners. One challenge is that there isn't a non-profit specifically led by African Heritage individuals for this purpose, which is needed to purchase or lease a building. The NAACP has been working on this, and the need for a 501(3) c. The Commission requests staff look at the DAHC bylaws and seek out individuals to bring to the group to see if the DAHC can assist with the hub creation (building). Commissioner Pepper also requests the attendance of Duluth NAACP Chair Classie Dudley to discuss this proposal.

b. Community Outreach

Commissioner Thornton suggested that Commissioners come back to the next meeting with the one thing they would like this Commission to focus on. Discussion on past frustration with not knowing if they can provide stipends for surveys as other City events and surveys are able to do this. Request City Staff follow up. The Commission would like to have staff return to them with information from their bylaws on what they can, and cannot do and discussion of not wanting to just be an approval board. This also includes how they can interact within "Open Meeting Laws" and do work outside of the group. The Commission also discussed overall need for stronger involvement from City leadership, including City Councilors, at these meetings. Finally, a request for communication staff Kate Van Deale to attend per previous invitation from Chair Staine.

c. BIPOC Presentation

The commission was shown a recap of the PowerPoint presented in the previous month. Invitation was extended to have a second presentation from the group leading the process on the BIPOC Business Directory at the next meeting.

6. Subcommittees

a. Community Center/Grants (Pepper)

Discussion held earlier.

b. Employer Engagement/Demographics and Data Research (Carter, Green, Thornton)

Discussion held earlier.

- c. Historic Preservation (Stain, Edmunds)

No discussion.

- d. DCSI Law Enforcement Accountability Proposals (Staine, Green, Thornton)

No Discussion.

#### 7. Next Meeting Topics (August 11)

No Discussion

#### 8. Commissioner Updates

- a. Chair Staine shared a Request for Proposal by resident Chuck Sylvester regarding the Duluth Police Department's racial bias audit. Chair asked for comments and feedback from the committee to return to Mr. Sylvester by October 31st. Discussion on need to focus on deliverables and accountability. Further discussion on the need for the African Heritage Commission presence with the release of the data from the audit. Also request that they receive this information directly.
- b. Commissioner Ellison shared an update on the Hank Willis Exhibit and the coordination with partners.
- c. Commissioner Edmunds shared information on the George Bonga preservation monument with the City and plans for a larger display. She is looking for contact information for any decedents to include in the planning.
- d. Commissioner Thornton shared their work with the UMD Medical Association and working to bring more diversity to medical positions. They are in the phase of gathering information statewide on DEIJ in medical schools and hospitals etc.

#### 9. Announcements

Next meeting (December 1st) via Webex at 6pm

#### 10. Adjourn

Meeting Adjourn 7:12 PM.