

AFRICAN HERITAGE COMMISSION - MINUTES
Wednesday, January 25, 2023 | 411 W 1s St, Room 155, City Hall | 6:00 PM

Commissioners Present: Bernice Pepper, Archie Davis, Vanni Hayden, Melissa Grimes, Janine Schroer,

Start Time: 6:10pm

1. Welcome & Introductions

Guests: Njoki, Ayana, League of Women Votes (Feb 25th event), Fannie Lou Hamer to support restoring felon voting rights. Rebecca St. George City Employee Equity Action Committee. Staff guests: James G., Ryan.

All Commissioners in attendance: Davis, Hayden, Grimes, Schroer.
Staff: Emily Nygren, Phillis Webb, Adam Fulton

2. Public Comment

Panel discussion and book club and discussion... and gauge this group's interest in being on that panel or other ideas for employees. Discussion on that there is only the monument of suffering to Duluth. Discussion on whether to have instead something more uplifting, because Black issues are so infrequently the focus – joy and power whenever possible.

Melissa: Ideas on options to offer connection but with positive solutions. Love to have a positive light on the schools. Schroer seconding that the need for a different book about joy and with black folks as agents (Audra Lorde). Njoki: think of the contributions of black Duluthians to the community and worked in the City.
Opportunities for a panel?

Rebecca:
Putting out a request for proposals for audit and some action items. Looking to hire an agency who can help tell us what to do to make an impact.

Archie: Is it mandatory for City employees? No, but there is the equity training which is mandatory.

Panel: Emily can help with logistics.

Discussion on coordination with the City's Equity Action Committee going beyond Black History Month.

Pepper: Discussion on putting that on hold while the group figures out it's "next steps." And wait shortly.

Adam:

Have a staff who attends and then attends DAHC with updates from that group and vis versa.

Discussion that as it is so close to February and wondering if there is the labor or ability.

ADAM: Discussion on that the equity action team should give updates to this group. They could come and share to the group ideas and get feedback.

Discussion on that the requests during February are too many. Better to do after February to not tokenize and highlight briefly but ongoing.

Schroer: Let's move to another meeting down the line (not February) and instead do that on a recurring basis. To March. Putting it back to the City to reach back out.

3. **New Business**

a. Elections

On HOLD for next meeting.

b. Meeting dates

Meeting ideas: Do service first and then also have meetings outside of City Hall.

Schroer: Second Thursdays at 6pm. Melissa Seconds. Unanimous.

b. Martin Luther King Drive Research Presentation (James Gittemeier)

Discussion of PowerPoint presentation (attached). Discussion on history, timing, types of actions, impact on communities, and resistance. Request that if Commissioners have names of individuals who have worked on this issue in the past to contact James. Archie: I was a part of this, chose 4th street as it is a pass-through, and high traffic. Otherwise Superior Street because it runs from one side of the

Racine, WI has one that used to be Milwaukee Street or something. Discussion on the opportunities for impacts.

Guest Ayana: Reason why there is MLK (2 streets) in NY, but didn't stop gentrification of the Blvd. Seen as potentially a sign of continued pandering. Instead \$ could be used for a grant instead for black owners. Other things to bear his name that could serve his legacy. Discussion on how expensive it is to change signs and that's thousands of dollars in money for people.

Davis: Honoring other black local heroes e.g. Alex Miles as inventor of elevator technology. Or Mat Carter (doctor).

The reason for me being here is action.

RYAN: There is no reason to not have a list... for "new" streets for new developments.

INVITE THE NAMING COMMITTEE TO COME TO THIS MEETING?

Guest Njoki: Working with children and volunteering at Washington Center. If we have resources, can we think about neighborhood working with Children and afterschool program and to make it better.

NEW BUSINESS:

- e. Approval of November Minutes

Motion to approve minutes (Davis). Second (Pepper). Unanimous.

4. Old Business

- a. Cultural Center/ African Heritage Hub – HOLD for NEXT MEETING
- b. Community Outreach

5. Subcommittees

- a) Community Center/Grants
- b) Employer Engagement/Demographics and Data Research
- c) Historic Preservation

All subcommittees are not to be reported on until we elect Chair and Vice Chair. After which, staff will work with those two to craft the agenda.

6. Next Meeting Topics

Duluth African Heritage Hub (both proposals) preventing.

BIOC Business Directory

Locations for future meetings:

Harrison, Washington Center, One Roof, Wilkins

Emily: An idea would be to see if the WEES group wanted to share what they are doing?

7. Individual Commissioner Updates

League of Women Voters Citizen's in Action Saturday the 28th (9am-3pm).

Friday night starting in February (last Friday of the month they have movie nights).

DECC business event (Check back with Davis)

Friday movie nights at the DECC.

Schroer: Working on a grant to address achievement gaps in STEM at UMD. One of the goals is for that group to be actively engaged with the black community. Will be looking at input for the future.

Davis: Sits on the Housing board. There is a new equity/solar project going on. Can help with down payment assistance. Energy efficient. They will be doing tours with this group. Davis is happy to take tours when project is completed. Superior donated land to projects. Ryan will look into this and get back to the commission/Davis.

8. Announcements

Adjourn

Adjourned at 7:30p

Next Meeting February 9th, 2023