

Duluth Indigenous Commission
Monday, August 17, 2020
Virtual WebEx Meeting

Present: Babette Sandman, Phoebe Davis, Kassie Helgerson, Larry Heady, Rochelle Goodrich, Moira Villiard, Amber Lightfeather, Carol DeVerney

Absent: Roxanne DeLille

City Staff: 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

Chair Sandman called the meeting to order at 5:32 PM, introductions were made.

2. Approval of meeting minutes

Commissioner Helgerson bezhig Commissioner Lightfeather niizho to approve the Duluth Indigenous Commission meeting minutes from July 20, 2020. **Motion passed: 7:0** Commissioner DeVerney joined the meeting after the motion to approve the minutes, so was not present for this vote.

3. Public comment

- Summary of comments received prior to the virtual meeting
 - City Staff, Kathy Wilson, explained that no public comments were received prior to the meeting.
- Virtual Public Comment via WebEx
 - No discussion.

4. New Business

- Spirit Mountain task force
 - City Councilor, Janet Kennedy, explained that she is co-chair of the Spirit Mountain task force, which was put in place by Mayor Larson to research and report on the viability of the Spirit Mountain recreation area.
 - City Councilor, Aric Forsman introduced himself as the other co-chair for the task force and that one of their aims is to include the Indigenous community in the conversations surrounding Spirit Mountain. He noted that the importance of the site predates the recreational facility.
 - Chair Sandman thanked the task force members for including the Indigenous Commission early on in the process. Commissioner Heady emphasized that Spirit Mountain is a sacred place for Indigenous people and asked what precipitated the task force.

- Jim Filby Williams, Director of the City's Property, Parks, and Libraries Department, explained that the focus of the task force is how to create a more financially sustainable model for the outdoor recreation activities and services at Spirit Mountain. In creating the task force, Mayor Larson emphasized the need to have robust conversations with the Indigenous community. Wayne Dupuis is on the task force and is familiar with the significance to the Indigenous community. At this time the task force is looking for additional comments or questions from the Indigenous Commission.
 - Commissioners explained that Spirit Mountain was and is a place where Indigenous people would fast. Because of this history, the site is considered an area of cultural importance and therefore a thoughtful discussion is needed for any future plans to develop the area.
 - Members from the public asked if any information or depositions were being shared with the task force that detailed past issues regarding development at Spirit Mountain. The effectiveness of having one Indigenous person on the task force was also questioned.
 - Director Williams stated that the task force as a whole is committed to having a respectful discussion of the future of Spirit Mountain. He mentioned that the recommendations of the task force will most likely be in regards to the existing development, not an expanded development.
 - Wayne Dupuis, member of the task force, said he grew up on Spirit Mountain, where he hunted, fished, and tapped trees before it became a recreation center. He understands the importance of the place and would like to mobilize a cultural interpretive center for Woodland Indians in the area. His aim is to represent Anishinaabe voices while residing on this task force.
 - Commissioners thanked them for attending the meeting and requested that the Spirit Mountain task force return to future Indigenous Commission meetings to give updates.
- Public Art
 - Christina Woods explained that she is attending the meeting tonight to get some input on two pieces of public art that are being discussed in Duluth. The first piece of art is the statue of Leif Erikson in Leif Erikson Park and the other piece of art is the Tiffany stained-glass window that is on display at the Depot and owned by the City.
 - Commissioners commented that the Indigenous Commission has had extensive discussion over the Leif Erikson statue at previous meetings and that the Commission is in agreement that it would be best to get rid of the statue altogether, not to simply rephrase the plaque to acknowledge Indigenous people.
 - Commissioner comments on the Tiffany windows: wariness that if the windows were to be sold to a private buyer they could be further

exploited, concern that the window depicts a poem that was originally written by an Indigenous person which was then stolen/exploited, continuing to display the colonized and stereotypical view depicted in the window is not positive for future generations, Indigenous people should be able to take ownership of their own narrative and continuing to display these windows does the opposite.

- Woods thanked the Commissioners for their thoughts and explained that she will relay these points at an upcoming meeting with St Louis County Historical Society and the Depot.
- Commission Executive Committee – co-chairs
 - After much contemplation, Commissioners voted on who would be part of the Executive Committee for the Indigenous Commission. It was decided that Commissioner Helgerson and Chair Sandman would reside as Co-Chairs on the executive committee, Commissioner DeVerney and Commissioner Goodrich would reside as Co-Vice-Chairs, and Commissioner Heady would reside as Secretary.
 - Commissioner Goodrich bezhig Commissioner Davis niizho to approve the Executive Committee roles. **Motion passed: 8:0**
- Indigenous Peoples day planning
 - Commissioners were in agreement to wait until next year to do an in-person Indigenous People’s day celebration due to the pandemic but should pursue a virtual celebration for 2020.
- Recommendations for applications
 - City Staff, Mollie Hinderaker, reminded commissioners that there was an application pending approval for another Indigenous Commission member. Commissioners briefly discussed the applicant and would like to move the approval process along.
- Colonization and visibility ideas
 - Chair Sandman brought up the discussion from last meeting- City Council resolution to replace the word chief in city titles. She explained that the process leading up to the resolution made her concerned with the overall visibility of the Indigenous community in Duluth. She suggested that the Commission invite Mayor Larson to a meeting to discuss this.
 - Commissioner DeVerney suggested the Commission write a letter to detail these thoughts and invite the Mayor. Commissioner Heady volunteered to draft the letter and bring it to the next meeting.

5. Action items

- Proposed virtual meeting protocols

- Commissioner Helgerson bezhig Commissioner Goodrich niizho to approve the language added to the bylaws in regards to virtual meeting protocols. **Motion passed: 8:0**

6. Sub committees

- Art in Gichi-ode' Akiing
 - No discussion
- Education
 - No discussion
- Police
 - No discussion
- Ni Mi Win- Collaboration with Heritage Preservation for Ni Mi Win preservation
 - No discussion
- Opioids/AIM/Sweat Lodge/Sobriety Feast
 - Commissioner Helgerson explained that back in May, the local AIM group membership increased drastically. The biggest issue they are trying to address is treatment of and resources for the homeless population. Current flow of resources for the homeless get overwhelmed in the winter time causing dangerous conditions for people not housed or in shelters. AIM is working to see what culturally appropriate supports they can provide community members.
 - Commissioners were in approval of adding resources for the homeless population but interested in hearing more details about the proposal. Commissioner DeVerney and Commissioner Heady requested that the Commission reviews the full proposal before writing a formal letter of support.
 - Commissioner Davis mentioned another item regarding homelessness in Duluth. There was a march today that started in Gichi-ode' Akiing that went past Life House, CHUM, AICHO, and ended at the Government Center. Marchers wore traffic vests and walked against the flow of traffic to highlight the visibility of homelessness.
- Policy- Local designation of sacred sites resolution, Bylaws
 - No discussion

7. Old business

- No discussion

8. Announcements/Adjournment

- Meeting adjourned at 7:35 PM

9. Next meeting

- Next meeting is September 21, 2020 at 5:30 PM via WebEx