

Human Rights Commission
Minutes of meeting held February 11, 2015

Present:

- Commissioners: Rebecca Domagala, Rogier Gregoire, Cruz Mendoza, Lee Stuart, Ashley Grimm, Patti Larson
- Staff: Bob Grytdahl
- Guests: Kathleen Spencer, Rosemary Hampton, Mary Jo Peterson, Dayle Peterson

Rebecca called the meeting to order at 5:05 pm.

Minutes from January meeting approved: M/SC Cruz/Grimm

Strategic planning: Bob Grytdahl informed the commissioners that the bylaws specify an annual report to the City Council. This led to a discussion of CDBG and informing the Council of the facts of poverty and other human rights indicators in our community. It seemed that although reports like the Housing Indicator Report and the Comprehensive Plan all have good data on a wide array of poverty and human rights information, the Council is unaware. The Commission could help them get and stay current with an annual (or even more frequent) session.

Homeless Status/Protected class ordinance: The commissioners then discussed the next steps for the ordinance and the Homeless Bill of Rights. The Police Chief was out of town so could not meet with the Human Rights Commission at this meeting; he was interested to do so at next month's meeting. The commissioners then discussed important items to include in the document: equal enforcement; the social compact; rights and responsibilities; recognition that there are inalienable rights associated with being human, including, as recognized by the UN Declaration of Human Rights, housing.

The commissioners reasserted that the high level participation of the next Duluth Mayor in the equity work spearheaded by the Mayors of Minneapolis and St. Paul was important and that the issue should be brought to the attention of mayoral candidates.

Update on Housing Access Center: since the City Council was not prepared to move on either a levy or an increase in the rental licensing fees to support the Housing Access Center, the planning group approached St. Louis County for \$25,000. Discussion pending.

Racial Equity: The commissioners had a brief discussion about what was meant by "racial equity". A few highlights:

- Race is a fictional concept dreamed up to classify some people as less than human
- Equity is really about "human equity" – all treated the same, with access to same opportunities
- School system contributes to the virus of racism
- Ethnic make-up of Duluth (2013 ACS): 90.4% white; 2.3% black; 2.5% American Indian; 1.5% Asian, 3% two or more races. (in other words 90% white; 10% people of color).

- Equity with respect to employment and jobs: reference where inequity seems to be the norm (ISD 709, municipal and county government, Sappi, Hospitals)
- Note that State reported participation of 5.9% People of Color and 6% Women in tracked construction jobs (?)
- Question again re Project Labor Agreements, and sections regarding hiring People of Color and women (as well as businesses owned by People of Color and women) and fulfillment of Section 3 hiring requirements in Duluth: no data; no one seems to know where to look (Lee will check with the NE Labor Council)
- Regarding unemployment: should be part of the Human Rights Commission annual report to the Council: true unemployment numbers, true poverty statistics, and the allocation of funds to businesses owned by people of color or women, and the results of Section 3 and related hiring agreements
- Discussion re breaking out the school district results by race/poverty status; the Commission voted to form an Education Committee specifically to look at issues with the district (per our strategic plan alignment) M/SC Mendoza/Gregoire.
- We should ask the Council or Mayor to make a regular report on the state of human rights

CDBG: The 2015 – 2019 Consolidated 5-Year Plan was recently approved by Council. In that plan, it says that the city would rely on CDBG and non-profits to implement the plan. The question was when and by whom was this decision made. The Commissioners asked Lee to draft a question about that for the Council, as well as about the CDBG process. (M/SC Gregoire/Larson).

Other Items:

Many commissioners attended the Citizens in Action day on Jan. 31st. It was a good way to connect with legislators and for citizens to get training on how to identify and solve issues related to poverty and disparities.

For next meeting:

- Try to obtain Federal, State and City contracts being executed in Duluth and see the percentage participation of People of Color, people with low income, and women
- Invite Workforce Center to meeting to teach commissioners on how they work to improve equity and full participation by all groups

Community meetings: March 10th at the DECC: Construction Tomorrow – geared at high school students to encourage entry to construction trades; partnership between DEED, Duluth Building Trades, ISD 709 and City of Duluth

The meeting adjourned at 7:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Lee Stuart, Secretary