



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

Room 160  
411 West First Street  
Duluth, Minnesota 55802



218-730-5580



planning@duluthmn.gov

African Heritage Commission Meeting Minutes

**Monday, November 16, 2020, 5:00 p.m.**

Virtual Meeting –Web-Ex

1. Welcome & Introductions

Mayor Larson welcomed the newly appointed commission members. She explained the history of how the commission came to be, and thanked Councilor Kennedy. She talked about the newness of the commission.

Councilor Kennedy thanked everyone for being there and for their willingness to be part of the commission. She recognized others who came before her. She discussed current events and the current practical reality for black people in Duluth, and again thanked the commission. Councilor Therese Tomanek also thanked the commission members and stated that she was excited about the commission.

Commissioner members introduced themselves, starting with Bernice Pepper; Jebbeh Edmunds; John Staine, Verna Thonton; and Breanna Ellison. Two members were absent: Antonio Carter and Susie Green.

City Staff introduced themselves: Adam Fulton, Deputy Director of Planning and Economic Development; Ben VanTassel, Manager of Planning and Development; Suzanne Kelley, Senior Planner; Alicia Kozlowski, Community Relations Officer; Carl Crawford, Human Rights Officer and Sara Baldwin, Assistant City Attorney. Each staff person explained their role in assisting the commission in its operations.

2. Public Comment

Members of the public expressed their support and enthusiasm about the commission.

3. Perspectives & Purpose

- Provide an opportunity to hear each Commissioner's perspective
- Explore what niche this Commission can fill in our community

Manager VanTassel described what commissions do, and how they evolve over time. Commission members were asked to provide aspirations and goals for the commission. Ideas that were expressed by the members included:

- Increase community outreach- develop a think tank
- Increase engagement with kids and families, learn what parents need
- Increase mentorship
- Increase visual leadership -Kids need to see people that look like them in leadership roles
- Address Restorative Justice- Look at Carleton County's program; seek improvements to St. Louis County's program
- Encourage more arts- get youth more involved
- Establish a African Heritage Space
- Have full collaboration with all groups, including people of all colors and white people
- Recruit more teachers and professionals who are black
- Support black businesses
- Advocate more implicit bias training
- Work with alliances to get black voices heard
- Focus on Faces, Places, and Spaces
- Address systematic failures-why is there a continuous cycle of failure
- Incentivize BIPOC people to go outside and enjoy the trails and recreational opportunities
- Design surveys on that focus solely on the African Heritage community
- Dedicate a building for the African Heritage community

4. Commission operations and details

Assistant City Attorney Baldwin explained the purpose of the bylaws and how they are to be used with commissions. She stated the attached bylaws were a starting point and that she would be working with the commission to finalize them.

Members were asked what meeting dates and times would work best. Members stated that Wednesday evenings after 5:30 would work best.

5. Opportunities for Collaboration and Correspondence

- Statement on Racism in the Duluth Community- Human Rights Commission
- Invitation for a representative to join Charter Commission Study Group (Correspondence from College of St. Scholastica Physician Assistant Program

Members expressed appreciation for receiving information and were supportive of these efforts, but stated their focus will be to establish the commission and not become overburden in dealing with items that could detract from their purpose.

6. Adjourn- Meeting adjourned at 6:39 pm.





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**Wednesday, December 16, 2020, 5:30 p.m.**

Virtual Meeting –Web-Ex

1. Welcome & Introductions

The meeting started at 5:40 PM, introductions were made.

Commissioners present: Jebbeh Edmunds, Susie Green, Verna Thornton, John Staine, Antonio Carter, and Breanna Ellison.

Commissioners absent: Bernice Pepper

Staff present: Ben VanTassel, Mollie Hinderaker

2. Public Comment

No comments were received prior to the meeting and no members of the public were in attendance to make a comment at the meeting.

3. Chairperson and Vice Chair Appointments

City Staff VanTassel explained that at the next meeting they will try to elect a Chair and Vice Chair for the Commission. In the meantime, VanTassel asked if someone would like to try leading the meeting. Commissioner Staine volunteered.

4. Meeting Calendar

After some discussion, Commissioners confirmed that the second Wednesday of the month at 5:30 PM would be the best recurring meeting time. If that recurring date were to fall on a holiday Commissioners agreed that the meeting would then be held on the preceding or following Wednesday, to be reflected in the Commission bylaws.

5. African Heritage Purpose and Focus

Staff VanTassel reminded Commissioners that at the last meeting they requested to continue their discussion of the purpose and focus of the African Heritage Commission. VanTassel

explained that in the meeting packet there was a document containing purpose statements that were taken directly from the ordinance creating the Commission and that the document was there if needed to help guide the discussion. Commissioners made the following comments:

- Before figuring out specific projects to pursue, they would like to have a better understanding of the African Heritage community in Duluth. Commissioners requested statistics on income levels, homelessness rates, mortality rates, educational attainment, etc.
- Like statistics it would also be helpful to track why people of the African Heritage community are leaving Duluth, a sort of “exit interview”
- Identify non-government partners who are committed to improving the community i.e. employers, institutions, others
- Identify ways to create a “new path” that leads to successes for the African Heritage community rather than continuing to address problems/opportunities like was done in the past
- How can the Commission advocate for the African Heritage community when interacting with City government and other institutions? Ideas included working with the Chamber of Commerce, providing video tutorials and resources for BIPOC communities
- How will the Commission stay connected with community? Zoom meetings, surveys, social media pages/presence, establish a master list of Black owned businesses and organizations
- How can the Commission impact policy? Policy is the way to get results and funding is important- people need to be made aware of opportunities because the current system does not provide those opportunities equitably to the Black community. See Atlanta’s former Mayor, Maynard Jackson, for example of successful public policy initiative at the City level
- How is the City awarding contracts and what does workforce participation look like for the African Heritage community in Duluth? Request to see budget/contract/consultant demographic breakdown
- The Commission should get more coverage so people in the community are aware of their formation. Suggestions included a pitch to the DNT for an article that contains short Commissioner profiles, additional press release, more social media awareness

After the discussion City Staff confirmed that they would report back on the following:

- Statistics on the African Heritage population in Duluth
- Contracting, business, and workforce data as it pertains to the African Heritage community in Duluth
- Connect with City Communications team on visibility of newly formed African Heritage Commission

## 6. Bylaw Discussion

City Attorney Baldwin walked through the draft bylaws with the Commission and asked for feedback. Baldwin said she will update the bylaws with the changes discussed and send it out before the next meeting.

Feedback for City Staff to follow up on included:

- Initial term staggering and limits- will the Commission be able to get anything done if turnover is too quick and/or if they aren't allowed to serve full terms due to staggering?
- Chair and Vice Chair nominations- if these are voted on yearly how effective will they be and how long can someone be in these positions? How does this interact with term limits?
- Revisit standing committees/subcommittees at the next meeting after discussing what topics they would like to regularly talk about
- Commissioners inquired about a "civility clause" to be put in the bylaws to make sure Commissioners and attendees feel safe and are not harassed during any meetings. City Council may have similar language to use.

7. Adjourn at 7:35 PM

Commissioner Staine first/Commissioner Edmunds second, Motion passed 5:0

Next meeting to be held virtually on January 13, 2021 at 5:30 PM



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African Heritage Commission Meeting Minutes

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

Virtual Meeting –Web-Ex

Commissioners present: Jebbeh Edmunds, Susie Green, Verna Thornton, John Staine, Bernice Pepper

Commissioners absent: Antonio Carter, Breanna Ellison

Staff present: Ben VanTassel, Kathy Wilson

1. Welcome & Introductions

The meeting started at 5:59 PM.

2. Appoint Temporary Chair to Convene the Meeting

Susie Green volunteered to be the Chair person for this meeting.

3. Public Comment

- Written comments received prior to meeting:
  - Local activist Henry Banks invited the Commission to review a State of MN Omnibus Bill related to Philando Castile. The Commission discussed the Bill and was generally in support of it.
  - A local group working on police accountability sent information about meetings they will be holding. City staff will email those details to the Commission.
- Gail Shoenfelder, representing the League of Women Voters, introduced herself and explained that the Duluth LWV sends representatives to public meetings to stay informed about what's going on. She stated she was there to listen and would report back to the LWV with a summary of the meeting.

4. Approve Meeting Minutes for December 16, 2020

Staine/Edmunds to approve the December 16, 2020 minutes – **motion passed 5:0**

5. Bylaws Review and Approval

Commission Pepper expressed concern over the language used in section 3.2 Purpose and inquired if it could be changed. She felt the language placed the burden of gaining acceptance for the African Heritage community on the Commission, rather than holding the City accountable to accept the African Heritage community. Commissioners Green, Staine, and Thornton expressed understanding for Commissioner Pepper's concerns and support for changing the language. Commissioner Staine, while supportive of changing the language, felt that if it couldn't be changed, it would not impact the Commission's purpose in practice. Attorney Sara Baldwin from the City Attorney's Office stated that she had copied that language from the City Ordinance that was voted on by City Council to form the African Heritage Commission and that she was not sure if it could be changed in the bylaws. Attorney Baldwin will follow-up and provide clarification to the Commission.

Green/Pepper to table the discussion of bylaws until the next meeting so the Commission can get more clarification on whether the language in the Purpose section has to exactly match the language in the Ordinance or not – **motion passed 5:0.**

The Commission decided to table the issue until the next meeting so that City staff can provide more information.

#### 6. Purpose and Focus Discussion Follow-up

- Demographic Information update
  - At the last meeting the Commission requested demographic information regarding the African Heritage community in Duluth. City staff asked the Commission for more detail and specifics on what kind of data they would like. Commissioners listed data and information they would like including employment, businesses, education attainment, justice and legal system, health disparities, and general demographic stats about the African Heritage community.
- Businesses and Contracting efforts discussion
  - City staff stated that the Director of the Workforce Development Department would be presenting at the next meeting and that she would be better suited to answer questions/discuss this topic. The Commission asked to see information about her presentation before the next meeting so they could prepare questions.

#### 7. Next Meeting Topics (February 10<sup>th</sup>)

- Workforce Development Director Elena Foshay presentation
- Commissioner Thornton requested the City publicize the Commission so community members know that it has started meeting and know when the meeting are so they can join.
- Commissioner Thornton also suggested that the Commission make a statement on the insurrection at the Capitol. The Commission was supportive. Commissioner Thornton volunteered to draft a statement that the Commission could review at the next meeting.

8. Adjourn

Green/Pepper to adjourn the meeting at 7:19pm – **motion passed 4:0** (one Commissioner had to leave 5 minutes prior to adjournment so was not present to vote)

Next meeting to be held virtually on February 10, 2021 at 5:30 PM



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African Heritage Commission Meeting Minutes

**Wednesday, February 10, 2021, 5:30 p.m.**

Virtual Meeting –Web-Ex

Commissioners present: Jebeh Edmunds, Verna Thornton, John Staine, Bernice Pepper, Breanna Ellison

Commissioners absent: Antonio Carter, Susie Green

Staff present: Mollie Hinderaker, Kathy Wilson

1. Welcome & Introductions

The meeting started at 5:38 PM.

2. Appoint Temporary Chair to Convene the Meeting

John Staine volunteered to be the Chairperson for this meeting.

3. Public Comment

- Written comments received prior to meeting:
  - Emailed to Commission in meeting packet prior to meeting, no discussion.
- City Councilor Kennedy wanted to make the Commission aware of the Waabizheshikana ("The Marten Trail") project so they can provide input if they would like to. She mentioned that the trail interpretation plan includes white European history and Indigenous history, but that there is a lot of Black history in Western Duluth that could be included as well. Councilor Kennedy asked the consultants working with the City Parks Division on this project to reach out to the African Heritage Commission. Councilor Kennedy also discussed her role with the Commission – that she wants to make sure the Commission is informed so will bring them information as appropriate.

4. Approve Meeting Minutes for January 13, 2021

Staine/Ellison to approve the January 13, 2021 minutes – **motion passed 5:0**

5. Presentation from Workforce Development - Elena Foshay, Director

Foshay explained some of the work and mission of the Workforce Development Department and asked for their input on issues specific to the African Heritage community in Duluth.

6. Bylaws Review and Approval

Commissioners and Attorney Baldwin made final revisions to the bylaws.

Staine/Pepper to approve the bylaws – **motion passed 4:0**  
(Commissioner Ellison left the meeting prior to this vote)

7. Statement on the 1/6/21 events at the Capitol

The Commission discussed the draft statement, it's timing, and purpose. Staine/Edmunds to approve the content of the statement with Commissioner Thornton to make non-substantive changes to grammar and formatting before making it public– **motion passed 4:0**

8. Follow up reports from City Staff

- Demographic Information update
  - The Commission tabled this and requested that City staff present information, at the beginning of the agenda, at the next meeting. Staine/Edmunds **motion passed 4:0**
- Commission awareness
  - The Commission discussed communications options to raise awareness about their meetings. Commissioners expressed frustration towards the City for the slow pace of public communications and the lack of City communications widely advertising the Commission beyond some press coverage before their first meeting in November. As a new Commission, the African Heritage Commission wants the community to know about their meetings and be able to participate. City staff will follow up and coordinate with the City Communications Office.
- BIPOC-owned business list
  - No discussion
- City grants and other funding opportunities
  - No discussion

9. Next Meeting Topics (March 10<sup>th</sup>)

- No discussion

10. Announcements

- City of Duluth Charter Commission Study Group Virtual Meeting: February 23rd at 4PM

11. Adjourn

Staine/Pepper to adjourn the meeting at 8:05pm – **motion passed 4:0**

Next meeting to be held virtually on March 10, 2021 at 5:30 PM

**AFRICAN HERITAGE COMMISSION BYLAWS**  
**CITY OF DULUTH**

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## ARTICLE I – IDENTITY

- 1.1 Name. The Duluth African Heritage Commission (hereinafter referred to as “Commission”).
- 1.2 Address. The administrative offices and mailing address of the Commission shall be Room 160, City Hall, Duluth, Minnesota, 55802.

## ARTICLE II – ORIGIN AND POWER

- 2.1 Establishment. The Commission was created by Ordinance 10701 (05/26/2020), pursuant to authority provided by the 1912 Home Rule Charter of the City of Duluth, as amended. The Commission serves in an advisory capacity.

## ARTICLE III – DUTIES AND PURPOSE

- 3.1 Duties. The Commission shall have the following duties:
- (a) To advise the mayor and city council about issues concerning services, policies, procedures, and facilities that are of concern to the African Heritage community;
  - (b) To serve as a forum for citizen involvement and expressions on issues affecting the community;
  - (c) To identify and apply for funds and grants on behalf of the African Heritage community;
  - (d) To make recommendations to the city council regarding community development planning;
  - (e) To recommend to the city council legislation that empowers and promotes African Heritage community development;
  - (f) To increase public understanding and acceptance of the African Heritage community and culture;
  - (g) To develop a process to institutionalize a dialog with the city council, the mayor’s office, and city departments;
  - (h) To foster programs that will increase African Heritage community involvement in all aspects of community affairs;
  - (i) To develop research and information about African-American heritage and the African Heritage community;
  - (j) To establish community development objectives and policies;
  - (k) To develop a strategic plan for the African Heritage community.
- 3.2 Purpose. The purpose of this Commission is to ensure that the views of the African Heritage community are incorporated in the decision making, future planning, and stewardship of the City of Duluth. The Commission will endeavor to act as a guide in the development of public policy,

planning, and services so that the African Heritage community is adequately represented in these processes. The Commission will aim to plan, develop, and implement community projects that recognize and increase the awareness of the contributions of African-Heritage history; to encourage and assist the teaching of African-Heritage history; and to recognize sites in the community that are significant to African-Heritage History.

#### ARTICLE IV – MEMBERSHIP

- 4.1 Number. The Commission shall consist of seven members and shall reflect African Heritage diversity in the area.
- 4.2 Eligibility. A majority of the members shall be residents of Duluth.
- 4.3 Appointment. Members shall be appointed by the Mayor with approval of the City Council.
- 4.4 Term. Of the first seven appointments, three shall be for three years, two shall be for two years and two shall be for one year. Thereafter, all appointments shall be for a term of three years.
- 4.5 Absenteeism. If any member fails to attend three regular meetings of the Commission, notice may be forwarded to the Mayor and Council with the request for removal of such member from the Commission at the discretion of the Commission Chair.

#### ARTICLE V – OFFICERS AND DUTIES

- 5.1 Titles. The officers of this Commission shall be Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary.
- 5.2 Chair. The Chair shall preside at all meetings, appoint committees, rule on procedural questions subject to reversal by two-thirds of members in attendance, exercise the same voting rights as the other commissioners, and carry out such other duties as are assigned by the Commission.
- 5.2 Vice Chair. The Vice Chair shall act in the absence or inability of the Chair to act in such instances shall have the powers and functions of the Chair.
- 5.3 Secretary. The Secretary shall be responsible for notifying all members of meetings; drafting and circulating agendas; performing research work and preparing reports as are necessary to fully advise the Commission of all facts on matters before the Commission; keeping on file all official records and reports of the Commission; keeping a written record of Commission meetings,

transactions, and actions; serving required notice of all public hearings and public meetings; maintaining and circulating minutes; reporting on and attending to correspondence of the Commission; and carrying out such other duties as are assigned by the Commission. City of Duluth Staff shall serve as Secretary.

#### ARTICLE VI – ELECTION OF OFFICERS

- 6.1 Terms. Officers shall be elected at the annual meeting of the Commission. Terms of office shall be for one year and no member shall hold the office of Chair or Vice Chair for more than two years consecutively. Officers shall serve until replaced by a duly elected officer in accord with these procedures.
- 6.2 Nominating Committee. Nomination of officers shall be made from the floor.
- 6.3 Majority Required. Candidates for office receiving a majority vote of the entire membership (seven) shall be declared duly elected.
- 6.4 Vacancies. Vacancies occurring in officers of the Commission shall be filled forthwith by regular election procedure.

#### ARTICLE VII – MEETINGS

- 7.1 Annual Meetings. An annual organizational meeting shall be held in November, at the time and place set forth for that month's Regular Meeting, of each year. Election of officers shall be conducted and proposed amendments to bylaws may be acted upon.
- 7.2 Regular Meetings. Regular meetings of the Commission shall be held on the second Wednesday of each month at 5:30pm. In the event that the regular meeting date falls on a legal holiday, the meeting shall be held on the following day. Regular Meetings will be held at City Hall unless circumstances so require an alternate meeting place.
- 7.3 Special meetings. Special meetings may be called at the discretion of the Chair, or at the written request of at least five members who shall convey such request to the Secretary.
- 7.4 Notice of Meetings. Notice in writing of annual meetings setting forth the time and place thereof shall be delivered to all Commission members at least ten days in advance of such meetings; notice in writing of each regular meeting shall be sent to all Commission members at least three days in advance of such meeting; and notice in writing of any special meeting shall be sent to all

Commission members at least one day prior to such meeting and shall state the time, place, and purpose of such meeting.

- 7.5 Open Meeting Law. All meetings of the Commission shall be posted and conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Minnesota Open Meeting Law.

#### ARTICLE VIII – PRE-MEETING PROCEDURES

- 8.1 Agenda. The agenda for each meeting of the Commission shall be developed in writing by the Secretary of the Commission. The Chair shall determine the meeting at which an agenda item will be considered.

#### ARTICLE IX – MEETING PROCEDURES

- 9.1 Rules of Order. Unless otherwise specifically designated, *Roberts Rules of Order*, as most recently revised, shall govern meeting procedure.
- 9.2 Quorum. A majority of the currently serving membership of the Commission shall constitute a quorum for meeting purposes. A majority vote of the members present shall be required to transact business or make binding decisions on behalf of the Commission.
- 9.4 Suspension of Rules. The Commission may temporarily suspend its rules by a three-fourths vote of members in attendance.
- 9.5 Public Participation. The public shall be given an opportunity to speak on all agenda items pursuant to provisions written below.
- 9.8 Tabling. A tabling motion if passed has the effect of laying the matter over until the next regular meeting unless otherwise specified.
- 9.9 Notice of Appearance. Any person desiring to speak to the Commission shall express that desire in writing prior to hearing of the matter in question, setting forth their name and address and the matter in which they are interested.
- 9.10 Time Limits. Any person desiring to speak to the Commission shall be limited to a total presentation period of five minutes each.

ARTICLE X – COMMITTEES

- 10.2 Special Committees. The Chair may appoint such special committees and chairperson thereof from time to time as may be deemed necessary.

ARTICLE XI – AMENDMENT OF BYLAWS

- 11.1 Amendment Procedure. These bylaws may be amended by the affirmative vote of the majority of the entire Commission then sitting, provided that the proposed amendment has been read at the preceding meeting of the Commission.

ARTICLE XII – EFFECTIVE DATE

- 12.1 Effective Date. These bylaws shall take effect on February 10, 2021.



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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 14<sup>th</sup>)
  - 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



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**Wednesday, April 14, 2021, 5:30 p.m.**

Virtual Meeting –Web-Ex

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

Commissioners absent: Breanna Ellison

Staff present: Mollie Hinderaker, Kathy Wilson

1. Welcome & Introductions

The meeting started at 5:34 PM.

2. Approve Meeting Minutes for March 10, 2021

Thornton/Green to approve the March 10, 2021 minutes – **motion passed 5:0\***

\*Commissioner Carter was not present for this vote

3. Special Item

Chair Staine and Vice Chair Green brought up the Human Rights Commission Community Listening Session scheduled for 6pm. The Commission agreed to try to finish their meeting by 6pm so Commissioners and meeting attendees could also attend the Community Listening Session.

4. Public Comment

- A few community members who are interested in forming a Hispanic/Latinx commission introduced themselves and stated they were in attendance to observe the meeting
- City Councilor Kennedy said she would attend AH Commission meetings occasionally and that the Commissioners should feel free to reach out to her

5. Action Items

a. Duluth Community Safety Initiative (DCSI) Law Enforcement Accountability Proposals Staine/Pepper that the African Heritage Commission supports the Proposals for Community-led Police Accountability in Duluth – **motion passed 6:0**

6. Subcommittees

Roles for subcommittees were briefly discussed and Commissioner assignments were clarified. A new subcommittee was established to continue working on support for the DCSI proposals.

- a. Community Center/Grants (Pepper)
- b. Employer Engagement/Demographics and Data Research (Carter, Green, Thornton)
- c. Historic Preservation (Edmunds, Staine)
- d. DCSI Law Enforcement Accountability Proposals (Green, Stain, Thornton)

7. Old Business

The Commissioners acknowledged the work that Commissioner Thornton put into writing the statement regarding the January 6, 2021 events at the US Capitol that was submitted to City Administration. This statement was also to be used to introduce the members of the African Heritage Commission to the Duluth community. The AHC Commissioners were perplexed as to why these issues (public introduction of Commissioners and the publication of the statement regarding the insurrection at the Capitol) were not upon or addressed. The Commission also expressed dissatisfaction that the members of the African Heritage Commission have not been formally introduced to the Duluth Community. The Commission requested city staff provide direction so that items that are approved by the Commission are published and that a formal introduction of the Commission to the Duluth Community occurs.

8. Next Meeting Topics (May 12<sup>th</sup>)

- Agenda Items:
  - Goals and Work Plan discussion
  - Subcommittee updates and lead roles
  - Resolution in Support of DCSI Proposals
- Questions for City staff:
  - What is the procedure/time line for press releases or statements from the Commission?
  - How can City Commissions communicate with the City and each other to ensure they don't have overlapping events/meetings?

9. Announcements

- No discussion

10. Adjourn

Staine/Pepper to adjourn the meeting at 6:07pm – **motion passed 6:0**

Next meeting to be held virtually on May 12, 2021 at 5:30 PM



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African Heritage Commission Meeting Minutes

**Wednesday, May 12, 2021, 5:30 p.m.**

Virtual Meeting –Web-Ex

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

Commissioners absent: Antonio Carter, Susie Green

Staff present: Mollie Hinderaker, Phillis Webb, Suzanne Kelley

1. Welcome & Introductions

The meeting started at 5:36 PM.

2. Approve Meeting Minutes for April 14, 2021

The minutes for the April 14, 2021 meeting were not approved, after discussion; City Staff was directed to provide revised language for the Commission to review prior to the June meeting. The following change was emailed to the African Heritage Commission for review.

~~7. Old Business~~

- ~~• The Commissioners acknowledged the work that Commissioner Thornton put into writing the statement and discussed how they can be better prepared to released communications from the Commission in the future.~~

7. Old Business

- The Commissioners acknowledged the work that Commissioner Thornton put into writing the statement regarding the January 6, 2021 events at the US Capitol that was submitted to City Administration. This statement was also to be used to introduce the members of the African Heritage Commission to the Duluth community. The AHC Commissioners were perplexed as to why these issues (public introduction of Commissioners and the publication of the statement regarding the insurrection at the Capitol) were not upon or addressed. The Commission also expressed dissatisfaction that the members of the African Heritage Commission have not been formally introduced to the Duluth Community. The Commission requested city staff provide direction so that items that are approved by the Commission are published and that a formal introduction of the Commission to the Duluth Community occurs.

3. Old Business

Commission members expressed concerns that they have not been formally introduced to the Duluth community and requested staff to address this issue at their next meeting.

4. Public Comment

- Will Wilson from the Lake Superior Health Community Center introduced himself.

5. Goals and Workplan discussion

The Commission discussed what they would like to focus on for the rest of the year and what they would like accomplish. Two key items were discussed: 1) having a building representing the community and culture and 2) having listening sessions in the community.

Building: Members discussed how there is a need to have a space that represents the African Heritage community in Duluth. They would like City Staff to assist with the grant process in creating this space. There were questions on what happened to the dedicated space for the African American Awareness Institute in the Central Hillside Community Center. Commissioners want to insure that once the new facility is established that it remains for this proposed use. Commissioners also discussed financing and operation costs. Commissioners asked City Staff to develop a framework in which they could use to develop a work plan.

Listening Sessions: Members discussed that they should hold a series of listening sessions to learn more about the Community's needs.

6. DPD Racial Bias Audit (Deputy Chief Marquardt)

Deputy Chief Marquardt explained the Duluth Police Department is creating a committee to draft a proposal to hire an independent contractor to perform a racial bias audit on the police department. They are asking NAACP, AICHO, and other BIPOC groups for members to join this committee. This committee will develop the request for proposals, review the proposals from the contractors, select the contractor and then review the contractor's findings in the racial audit. These committee meetings would be held once to twice a month. The racial audit would review the practices, policies, training, recruitment, and procedures to identify areas that need improvement. Commissioners suggested that the people who are from outside the Duluth community should be involved in this process due to their perspectives. Deputy Chief Marquardt provided her contact information for potential members and asked for additional recommendations.

7. Subcommittees

- a. Community Center/Grants (Pepper)- this topic was discussed earlier in the meeting.
- b. Employer Engagement/Demographics and Data Research (Carter, Green, Thornton)- this topic will be discussed next month.
- c. Historic Preservation (Edmunds, Staine)-this topic will be discussed next month
- d. DCSI Law Enforcement Accountability Proposals (Green, Stain, Thornton)- the email addressing this issue was sent.

8. Announcements

- Chair Staine encouraged members to visit [Leanduluth.org](http://Leanduluth.org), which is law enforcement accountability network and contains data from the County and City about policing.

9. Adjourn

Staine/Edmunds adjourn the meeting at 6:47pm – **motion passed 5:0**

Next meeting to be held virtually on June 9, 2021 at 5:30 PM