

Duluth Indigenous Commission
Monday, January 24, 2022
Virtual WebEx Meeting

Commissioners present: Babette Sandman, Lenelle Hrabik, Kassie Helgerson, Moira Villiard, Phoebe Davis, Amber Lightfeather

Commissioners absent: Carol Deverney, Cayla Bellanger DeGroat, Roxanne DeLille

Staff present: Suzanne Kelley, Kathy Wilson

Note: per the request of the Indigenous Commission members, Ojibwe language words are used in the meeting minutes. Bezhig (“one”) indicates who made the motion and niizho (“two”) indicates who seconded the motion. Gegit is used to indicate that the motion passed with majority support.

1. Call to Order and Introductions

- Co-chair Sandman called the meeting to order at 5:40 PM, introductions were made.

2. Approval of October 18, 2021 Meeting Minutes

- Helgerson bezhig / Davis niizho to approve the November 15, 2021 minutes. **Motion passed: Gegit - All.**

3. Public Comment

- none

4. City Reports and Updates

- Police Chief Tusken provided an overview of the timeline of events and the arbitration process involving DPD Officer Huot. Chief Tusken discussed where the City did and did not have decision making powers in this process. The arbitration decision stated that Officer Huot could not be fired. The City challenged the arbitration ruling but was not successful. Ultimately the arbitration decision required that Officer Huot be reinstated with all the rights and authorities of a licensed police officer. Chief Tusken stated that he was not happy with the arbitration decision or the appeals process and supports arbitration reform. Chief Tusken stated that he saw personal growth, reflection, and self-awareness in Officer Huot since he has been reinstated. Chief Tusken believes Officer Huot is remorseful and wants to make amends. Reiterating that Officer Huot was reinstated with all the rights and authorities of a licensed police officer, Chief Tusken said that Officer Huot had requested patrol duty and his request was granted.
- Co-Chair Sandman stated that she had not been aware of all the details of the arbitration process before Chief Tusken had discussed them here. Sandman said that she had not seen a personal statement from Officer Huot and wondered if he had made a statement. Chief Tusken mentioned a press release in which Officer Huot had made a statement: <https://duluthmn.gov/media/WebSubscriptions/100/20211214-100-6675.pdf>
- Co-Chair Helgerson asked why the community wasn't notified that Officer Huot was back on patrol duty. Chief Tusken again reiterated that Officer Huot was reinstated with

all the rights and authorities of a licensed police officer and has the right to do any of the work.

- The Commission expressed appreciation to Chief Tusken for explaining the arbitration process and offering his assessment of the situation. Several Commissioners said they were reassured by Chief Tusken's comments regarding Officer Huot's progress, but still felt the entire issue was handled in a way that eroded trust between the community and the DPD, especially the Indigenous and homeless communities that were most impacted by this incident.
- Co-Chair Sandman thanked Chief Tusken for taking the Commission's concerns seriously and showing up to have this conversation tonight.

5. New Business

- Section 8 Housing Information – Commissioner Hrabik gave an overview of what housing vouchers are and how they work. Community members who meet certain income requirements can apply for vouchers which they can then use to find a market rate rental unit. The tenant usually pays 30% of their household income towards the rent and the voucher is supposed to cover the rest of it. The vouchers have a maximum amount set by the federal government. Rents are high enough that even with vouchers, community members with lower incomes are not able to find affordable rental housing, or landlords/rental companies won't rent to people using housing vouchers. The Duluth Housing and Redevelopment Authority is working on landlord education to encourage more landlords to accept housing vouchers. Co-Chair Sandman asked that Commissioner Hrabik provide regular housing updates at Indigenous Commission meetings.
- 2022 Meeting Calendar – Commissioners will look over the draft calendar and bring their ideas to the next meeting.

6. Action Items

- Committee of the Whole- The Indigenous Commission will hold a Committee of the Whole with City Council in 2022, discussion items could include Chief Buffalo Mural, Sobriety Feast, Indigenous People's Day. Commissioners will send ideas and event photos to City staff to include in an accomplishments report.
- Bylaws- City staff will help schedule a subcommittee meeting with the City Attorney
- Duluth Ojibwe Language Project- Commissioner Villiard is working on signage, city staff will send Villiard the Duluth Ojibwe Language flyer to use as a reference.

7. Subcommittees

- **AIM/Opioids/Sweat Lodge/Sobriety Feast**
 - Native Reports will be doing a 7-part series, and the Sobriety Feast will be filled for one of the episodes.
- **Art in Gichi-ode' Akiing**
 - Commissioner Villiard continues to champion this project, working with the Buffalo family to raise more funding.
- **Bylaws-** was discussed during the meeting.
- **Education-** no updates
- **Police/Racial Bias Audit Task Force-** no updates
- **Sacred Sites-**no updates
- **Spirit Mountain-**no updates

8. Old Business

- **Decolonization and Visibility Ideas**

9. Announcements

10. Next Meeting February 28, 2022

Meeting adjourned at 7:03pm