



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.

