Meeting Minutes

Monday, July 13, 2020

Attendance: virtual meeting via Zoom.

Commissioners:

Wasiullah Mohamed, Chair

David C. Bush

Rabbi Sharyn Henry

Jen Presutti

Rev. Liddy Barlow

J. Matthew Landis

Sonya Toler

Tracy Baton

Will Tolliver, Jr.

Zack Block

Staff:

Megan Stanley, Director

Wesley Speary, Deputy Director

Rita Porterfield

Emily Costello

Chris Soult

Rachel Shepherd

Jam Hammond

Kevin Carroll

Tyler Viljaste

Guests:

Beth Anne Patterson, Legal Extern

Hillary Roman, Pittsburgh ADA Coordinator

Thea Young

Alaa Mohamed

I. **CALL TO ORDER**
   a. Chair Mohamed Called the meeting to Order at 3:33 p.m.

II. **PUBLIC COMMENT(S)**
   a. Hillary Roman: fake DOJ notice going out stating blanket exemption for those with disabilities being required to comply with mask requirements. While there may be individual accommodations, there is no blanket exemption.
   b. Thea Young, Pittsburgh Black and White Reunion; planning 23rd Reunion; more info at PittRacialJustice@gmail.com

III. **ADOPTION OF MINUTES**
   a. June 1, 2020
   b. Comments: none
   c. Motion to Adopt Minutes as noted by Commissioner Landis; Seconded by Commissioner Bush; unanimous voice vote in favor.

IV. **COMMITTEE AND STAFF REPORT**
   a. ***Director's Report***
      i. Director's narrative report included with agenda items
      ii. Great staff discussion on anti-racism; what might be more equitable from other perspectives. Needs a long look.
      iii. Government Alliance on Racial Equity (GARE) – Majestic from the mayor's office updated Commission. GARE had training last year; looking for a toolkit for each department, but Director suggested city wide training for avoid departments being isolated, not recognizes work as a whole
      iv. Tyler Viljaste, intern, on All-for-all: laying groundwork for what coalition between All-for-All and Commission.
      v. Earthtime web site is going well, and others are excited.
      vi. Sustainable Development Goals – tomorrow is the first City roundtable about how each department furthers goals.
      vii. Housing 12% increase in closing times
      viii. Housing 32% increase over 2 years
      ix. Increased HUD funding by about $45,000 in 2020
      x. Settlements have gone up 35%; a step towards engendering trust
      xi. New Commissioners:
         1. Alejandro
         2. Beasley
         3. Lizarando
         4. One opening left
      xii. In the future, will always be a virtual option
   b. ***Executive committee Report***

i. *Commissioner Barlow: desire respond acutely and accurately; need to promote equal rights and opportunities are recognize the focus on and importance of Black lives in the Pittsburgh community.*

ii. *Three point plan:*

1. *Crowd source Google document collecting data, resources, and information on how to formulate an action plan, address situation as it is presented.*
    a. *Zack Block – BIPOC should be permitted to opt out to minimize trauma because those identifying as White need to educate themselves*
    b. *Tracy Baton – has been an anti-racist trainer; one set was mandatory and another only for White persons or BIPOC could opt out. Suggesting space for individual and joint conversation*
    c. *Sonya Toler – Question: is the mediator someone inside of or from outside of Pittsburgh Region?*
    d. *Liddy Barlow – looking to go outside for fresh view, but may be dictated by available funds.*
    e. *Megan Stanley – cost would be between $8,000 and $16,000 for one training that has been researched; only available in the event of a grant.*
    f. *Will Tolliver – opt in and opt out is important, as is the prep work*
    g. *Wasi Mohamed – it is important that we recognize varying levels of knowledge within commission; how do we hold each other accountable*
    h. *Megan Stanley – echoing Jam Hammond – acknowledge variety of opinions within groups*
    i. *Tracy Baton – also acknowledge dynamic groups/groups are not static*
    j. *Will Tollver – training needs to transcend this moment in time*
    k. *Zack Block – these needs to be regular/cyclical training. Can allow new commissioners to be assessed and updated as needed*
    l. *Megan Stanley – continuous training may take effort, but effort well spent on common language*
    m. *Liddy Barlow – are commissioners comfortable committing to regular training*
    n. *Tracy Baton – how can we make this a blessing to the whole City; group meetings*
    o. *Will Tolliver – Coffee and book club with the Commissioners*

p. *Wasi Mohamed – we have to define our goal and methods to achieve. Glad to see Commissioners take on this commitment; Wasi open and happy to have these conversations; excused from meeting*
q. *Liddy Barlow assumed meeting Chair at 4:02 p.m.*
r. *Liddy Barlow Need to educate people where they are; what does Director need to move forward?*
s. *Megan Stanley: 4 main points*
    i. *How can individuals do better?*
    ii. *How can Commission itself do better?*
    iii. *What can and cannot be changed?*
    iv. *How do we implement the change.*
t. *Megan Stanley: Starting a reading list*
u. *Tracy Baton: will review; send out to whole group tomorrow. Wants to be careful not to crush people*
v. *Megan Stanley: tried to include short articles*
w. *Tracy Baton: if there is a working document for continued Commissioner education, could be useful. Would like Heinz History Center for help on historical Black figures*
x. *Sonya Toler – Sam Black, now retired from Heinz History Center*
y. *Zach Block – chat reference for Terri Baltmore*
z. *Wes Speary – Andy Masich with Heinz History Center*
aa. *Will Toliver Center for Black American Life*
bb. *Tracy Baton: Swissvale Lady Swisshelm Antebellum Anti-slavery; there is rich white/abolitionist history*
cc. *Megan Stanley: Next step – collect material resources; next step thereafter?*
dd. *Tracy Baton – assign reading by sections*
ee. *Megan Stanley – one meeting can be set for education*
ff. *Liddy Barlow – that process may work well for historical learning; facilitator helpful for audit on practices*
gg. *Will Tolliver – agree may need to bring in facilitator after identification of goals; if there is no goal it would not be as beneficial*
hh. *Megan Stanley – agree with Will Tolliver; need to set outcome goals first and check expectations for agreement*
ii. *Sharyn Henry – a good facilitator will ask what is being sought*
jj. *Megan Stanley – action is to share resource list and open call for facilitator recommendations*
kk. *Liddy Barlow – looking for and hopeful for real, concrete changes*

2. *Commissioners share and debrief readings and look for outside facilitator to identify action points; goal to become anti-racist*
3. *Act; fulfill action steps and bring them into community for affirmation or revision; could be how to identify discrimination; implementation of the Rooney rule; could lead to other points of change (budget, statutory, etc.)*

c. ***Finance Committee***
   i. *None outside of budget*

d. ***Community Relations Committee***
   i. *Youth Outreach Project*
   ii. *Tracy Baton: not sure when last updated; lots of lean in from Commissioners and Staff. Contest on different youth submissions; types and age groups. Looking for judges. Exciting judging update – Tracy Baton's daughter volunteered to be a judge; PSU Writing major.*
   iii. *Human Rights is marketing tag as opposed to Human Relations*
   iv. *Wes Speary: three different categories, writing, digital, physical art; groups from under 5 to high school senior. Getting into submission criteria; within next meeting or two, it should be more formalized and can start marketing toward outside*

e. ***Housing Committee***
   i. *Update on Housing Video RFP; posted for a full month; two rounds of additional questions; should be getting candidates tomorrow, OMB meeting scheduled.*
   ii. *Zack Block deferring to Wes*
   iii. *Megan Stanley: update on mediation program, Just Mediation Pittsburgh; launching next week. Over $300,000 in funding since March. Several large landlords taking part as well as housing authority. When moratorium ends, hopefully less evictions filed because of program*
   iv. *Wes Speary: provided overview of work and funding; CARES Act money available for application through PFHA. Allocated to Allegheny County a certain amount. Basically, county is able to supplement some state aid. URA funding also available; eviction moratorum extended until August.*
   v. *Megan Stanley: County Money supplements the state ($750 for each, $1500 total) up to $200/mo for utility assistance.*
   vi. *Has been some media traction; also can focus on how evictions disproportionately impact non-white/poor*

f. ***Personnel Committee***
   i. *Overdue on evaluation of Director; staff done, but not Director.*
   ii. *Plan on evaluation by August 31, 2020*

g. ***Public Hearing Section***
   i. *Megan Stanley: part of FHA allows for election to Court of Common Pleas*

ii. *One case elected;*

iii. *Another, settled*

iv. *Another, not settled but may elect public hearing as opposed to Common Pleas*

v. *Another in the pipeline*

V. NEW BUSINESS/OLD BUSINESS

a. 2021 Draft Budget
b. Rachel Shepherd: simple; met with Finance Committee about trust funds; City asked to reduce budget by 10%; in this case, projected $980 reductions; recording and filing fees; cut registration fees for staff (ACBA IAOHRA, etc.), cut printing services from outside vendors; biggest reduction is parking reimbursement.
c. Cannot make any asks for budget next year
d. Megan Stanley: increase in federal funding; so good shape overall.
e. Motion to accept budget proposal by Commissioner Barlow; seconded by Commissioner Baton; unanimous voice vote in favor; no abstentions; motion carries
f. Next meeting: select new committees, additional Commissioners
g. Tracy Baton: willing to host a conversation for POC Commissioners about whether or not to include or exempt POC Commissioners from further racism/anti-racism training

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Motion made by Commissioner Baton; seconded by Commissioner Landis; unanimous vote in favor at 4:47 p.m.