

Reparations Committee  
Thursday, March 3, 2022  
Lorraine H. Morton Civic Center, G300 9:00 AM

## **Minutes**

**Present:** Councilmember Peter Braithwaite, Councilmember Bobby Burns, Robin Rue Simmons, Carlis Sutton, Claire McFarland Barber, Councilmember Devon Reid

**Absent:** Bonnie Lockhart

Others Present: Tasheik Kerr, Assistant to City Manager; Audrey Thompson, Interim Parks and Recreation Director; Nicholas Cummings, Corporation Counsel

### **CALL TO ORDER/DECLARATION OF A QUORUM**

The meeting was called to order at 9:10 a.m. by Chair, Councilmember Braithwaite.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

No public comment was made.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

It was moved by Committee member Robin Rue Simmons and seconded by Committee member Claire McFarland Barber to approve the minutes for the January 13th, 2022 meeting. The motion carried (5 -0)

### **DISCUSSION**

#### **A. Update on Orientation (one-on-one) of First Sixteen Reparations Beneficiaries**

Audrey Thompson, Interim Parks and Recreation Director, provided an update on the one-on-one meetings with nine reparation beneficiaries. Mrs. Thompson noted the vast majority of beneficiaries chose to use their funds toward home improvements. The beneficiaries were given a folder that included various housing-related programs and information on the reparations procedure. Mrs. Thompson also mentioned that additional city-related program resources were shared with the beneficiaries such as the Evanston Benefit Card, Handyman Program, and the Rebuilding Together Program. Mrs. Thompson shared that she and Rebuilding Together, a nonprofit that aid in-home repair work, secure a grant of \$20,000 from the Evanston Foundation. Grant funds would supplement the reparations funding of the reparation beneficiaries who

qualify for the rebuilding together Program. Mrs. Thompson also mentioned that two of the beneficiaries are renters, and inquired of the Committee if there were any additional resources available for those renters.

Committee member Simmons inquired about the time it takes for the disbursement of funds for those beneficiaries who elect to pay down their mortgage principal. Committee member Sutton inquired about the options available for those beneficiaries who don't own a home. Councilmember Reid noted the situations of the renters are reasons why the next phases in the reparation process need to be flexible. Committee member Simmons recommended the Committee have a broader conversation on reparations. Committee member Barber recommended informing the remaining applicants of the resources available to them rather than having them wait to find out if they are eligible for further benefits. Councilmember Braithwaite agreed with Committee member Barber and recommend sending a bulleted list with the available resources.

It was moved by Councilmember Reid and seconded by Committee member Simmons to accept and place on file staff's update on the orientation (one-on-one) of first sixteen reparations beneficiaries.

#### **B. Staff Update Regarding Tax Implications of Reparations Benefits**

Corporation Counsel, Nicholas Cummings informed the Committee that the law department hired a tax attorney to provide guidance on the tax implications of the reparations program. The law department is seeking three options from the tax attorney. The first opinion sought is in regard to the current program's tax ramifications. The second is the tax consequences of granting direct monetary benefit. The third is whether there are any tax consequences for other programs/entitlement programs like social security. Committee member Barber enquired about the firm's name. Mr. Cummings responded that the name of the firm is "Tax Law Offices Inc, and Jeff Antoine Collins is the principal. Committee member

It was moved by Councilmember Reid, seconded by Councilmember Barber, to place the staff update regarding tax implications of reparations benefits on file. The motion carried (6-0)

#### **CONSIDERATION**

Councilmember Braithwaite suggested the Committee brainstormed ways of providing resources to the renter. Councilmember Braithwaite noted there are three funding

options available. First, is the \$10 million dollars Reparations Fund (\$400,000 was allocated for the Restorative Housing Program). The second is the Reparations Stakeholders Authority of Evanston (RSAE) funding, and the \$69,400 in individual donations to the Reparations fund. Discussion ensued on the interpretation of the ordinance designating the use of the Reparations Fund. Committee member Simmons shared that it's not within the scope of the Committee to discuss outside dollars overseen by the RSAE. Committee member Barber enquired whether recipients who want to use their reparations for medication would be deemed city harm. Committee member Sutton shared that reparations are a priority and should not be only for housing.

## **COMMUNICATION**

### **A. Rebuilding Together Grant**

Mrs. Thompson informed the Committee of the \$20,000 grant award to Rebuilding Together to aid in the home repairs. This is a no-cost program for those who qualify.

### **B. Reparations Financial Donation Report**

Ms Kerr informed the Committee that the City has received \$69,103 in donations to the Reparations Fund. It was moved by Councilmember Reid and seconded by Barber to accept and place on file the reparations Financial Donation Report.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Councilmember Reid moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Burns. The meeting was adjourned at 10:33 am. Motion carried (6-0).