



Special Reparations Committee
Thursday, March 16, 2023, @ 9:00 AM
Virtual

**COMMITTEE MEMBER
PRESENT:**

Krissie Harris, Councilmember, Chair Robin Rue Simmons, Committee Member, Carlis Sutton, Committee Member, Devon Reid, Councilmember, Bobby Burns, Councilmember,

**COMMITTEE MEMBER
ABSENT:**

Claire McFarland Barber, Committee Member, and Bonnie Lockhart, Committee Member

STAFF PRESENT:

Tasheik Kerr, Assistant to City Manager; Mari Jonson, Deputy Legal Assistant

1. CALL TO ORDER/DECLARATION OF A QUORUM

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m.

A. Ancestral Acknowledgement

Councilmember Reid read the Ancestral Acknowledgement.

2. CONSIDERATION

A. Amendment to the Local Reparations Restorative Housing Program

Councilmember Reid stated cash payments should be the fourth option for the Housing Reparations program because cash benefits eliminate a lot of the procedural bottlenecks happening. Chair Simmons agrees with the sentiment and also added that a designated staff person for the reparation program is in the works.

The framework for the \$25,000 benefit is a direct correlation for the specific harm of anti-Black zoning laws and policies.

Motion made by Councilmember Reid to create an amendment to the Restorative Housing Program to add a fourth option for ancestors of cash payment. This fourth option is not contingent on the eligibility of the already existing three options in the Restorative Housing Program. Councilmember Burns seconded the motion.

Councilmember Harris inquired whether there would be tax implications that would affect the amount of money recipients would receive. Attorney Johnson responded that in order to avoid any tax implications, the Committee may need to add an income reporting component for the recipients.

Attorney Johnson clarified the language of the amendment. She inquired whether cash benefits would be in lieu of the current fourth option of declining the payment because the recipient does not meet the requirement to renovate, pay a mortgage, or pass the benefit to a beneficiary.

Councilmember Reid explained his motion is not the aforementioned amendment but to add the option to get a cash payment instead of the money for a mortgage, renovation, or direct descendant. Chair Simmons clarified this amendment is for the existing program, and the applications are currently closed. Those who have already applied would have this fourth option.

Attorney Johnson advised the City will need to have evidence that the remedy is related to the harm because the original program's limited options tied the harm to the remedy. However, by offering a cash payment as a fourth option, it is effectively creating a stand-alone cash payment program. Ideally, this should be a separate program, not under the Restorative Housing Program with the necessary research.

Councilmember Reid claimed having direct cash benefits does not change the course of the program and helps expedite the program.

Chair Simmons explained that what Councilmember Reid suggested is a future program, but the Committee members do need to vote on Councilmember Reid's motion.

Councilmember Burns suggested that item 2B be discussed before voting on 2A. However, 2A was voted on before agenda item 2B.

Roll Call Vote

Ayes: Committee Member Sutton, Chair Simmons, Councilmember Burn,
Councilmember Reid, Councilmember Harris

(5-0 on a recorded vote)

Councilmember Reid's motion to add a 4th option to the Restorative Housing Program passed.

B. Development of a Cash Payment Program

Chair Simmons noted she is willing to reach out to the partners to get the necessary reports to satisfy the requests from the law department.

Councilmember Reid moved for the approval of a Direct Cash benefit program for the development of the reparations initiative. Seconded by Councilmember Harris. This will be an item on a future agenda. Roll Call Vote

Ayes: Chair Simmons, Councilmember Burn, Councilmember Ried, Councilmember Harris

The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Simmons requested a list of initial recommendations from the community in 2019. Additionally, she requested a financial report on real estate transfer tax and what can be disclosed about cannabis sales tax. Tasheik responded that a donations report and the transfer tax could be provided. The City's monthly treasury report can also be provided.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

Michael Trapp: For the people that didn't apply but fall under the "Wyman exception" now, what will happen?

Chair Simmon responded that there will be programs in the future that will open, which was discussed today (cash program)

Meleika Gardner: Thanked Devon Reid and stated cash payments should have always been an option.

Gerald Johnson: Voiced their support of the cash payment option

Rose Cannon: Cannon would like for the remaining ancestors to be paid with the program and for this process to be more quick. Cannon claimed cash payments have always been wanted and not housing.

Otis Griffin: Griffin stated if you are doing a justice claim that is based on four centuries of harm that has been backed by government-sanctioned entities, they don't think the precedent should be a peace deal paternalistic program. Justice is not about incrementally getting something that is supposed to be feasible, it means total repair of harm - which is reparations.

Nicholas Murphy: They wanted to thank everyone on the panel. They are in favor of continuing to craft the language to get the community what they really want, which is wealth. Also agreed to take the opportunity to set a precedent

Tina Paden: They have always been an advocate of direct cash payment. they recalled that the first \$400,000 would be for a housing program then it would open up to other programs. Therefore, they claimed they must open up the application for a direct cash payment otherwise, this is discrimination and misleading the public.

Charline Nyomo: They stated that having a reparations program in Evanston is already a precedent. They hear everyone's desires, but they believe that it should be done in conjunction with the Reparations committee which is unfolding this and have an understanding of the legislative process. It's one thing to want something to happen, but it's another thing to move it into legislation. Nyomo requested contact about the lottery that was mentioned in the previous listening session.

Freida Lynn Morris: Morris explained they are also in support of cash benefits; however, there are laws that have to be passed, and think about who is going to challenge the programs. You can make exceptions, but it should be aligned with the program. The housing program is not all the reparations for Evanston, they claim nobody with good sense would think that, so the attacks need to stop.

Adriene Strickland: Agreed everyone should be positive. Additionally, there are four sisters, three of them who signed up for the Restorative Housing Program and one who didn't who wanted cash payment which was Strickland. Now Strickland has to wait until another program opens up to apply for cash payments. After this 600 or so people in this first program have the opportunity to get theirs. Despite this, Strickland is loving and supports them and can not stand the negativity in the community. They also believe there should be a fifth option that family members of four are able to go to Africa. Additionally, they asked whether there would be a reparations float for Juneteenth.

Chair Simmons instructed Tashiek to make a note of these recommendations.

Tashiek reported that as of February, the City collected \$330,865 in transfer tax. There is money coming in every day, so numbers will continue to change.

Councilmember Burns clarified the Committee did receive information about the tax liability question, for the past three years, the Committee sought out a solution which was discussed today.

4. ADJOURNMENT

Councilmember Harris adjourned the meeting