



Reparations Committee
Thursday, April 6, 2023 @ 9:00 AM
Virtual

**COMMITTEE MEMBER
PRESENT:**

Krissie Harris, Councilmember, Chair Robin Rue Simmons, Committee Member, Carlis Sutton, Committee Member, Bonnie Lockhart, Committee Member, Bobby Burns, Councilmember, and Claire McFarland Barber, Committee Member

**COMMITTEE MEMBER
ABSENT:**

Devon Reid, Councilmember

STAFF PRESENT:

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

1. CALL TO ORDER/DECLARATION OF A QUORUM

The meeting was called to order at 9:06, and Chair Simmons made a declaration of quorum.

A Ancestral Acknowledgement

Councilmember Harris read the Ancestral Acknowledgement.

B TESTIMONIALS

Jennifer LovetteCephus: Jennifer inquired about their reparations status. They asked if they had to live in Evanston in order to be compensated. They moved from Evanston because they couldn't afford it.

Chair Simmons responded that those who have moved outside of Evanston are still eligible.

Charline Nyomo: Charline expressed their desire to engage in activities to bring the diverse community together. Charline suggested the creation of a Community Unity working group.

Chair Simmons agreed to the creation of a Community Unity working group.

Chair Simmons also clarified that the purpose of the testimonials is different from public comment. The Committee has allocated this time to hear about Black Evanstonian experiences, why they should be doing this work, and any reason residents feel they should expand on their work.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Approval of the February 2, 2023 Reparations Committee Meeting Minutes

Chair Simmons moved for the approval of the Feb. 2, 2023 Committee Meeting Minutes. Councilmember Harris seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

B. Approval of the March 2, 2023 Reparations Committee Listening Session Minutes

Chair Simmons moved for the approval of the March 2nd, 2023 Reparations Committee Listening Session Minutes. Councilmember Harris seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

3. DISCUSSION

A. Amendment to the Restorative Housing Program

Corporation Counsel, Nicholas Cummings, inquired of the Committee whether cash payments would be unrestricted and related to housing. Chair Simmons clarified that the added benefit is an expansion of the Restorative Housing Program and that the amendment is in line with the exception that was made earlier for the two siblings of the first 16 recipients.

Mr. Cummings explained that the City would not have the person power to police the ways recipients would use cash benefits. With the rest of the application, there is an affirmation that must be signed in terms of people committing to the terms of the application. Therefore, it would be based on an honor system on the part of the recipients to use cash benefits for housing specifically. Chair Simmons acknowledged, with the agreement of Committee member Sutton, that an honor system is sufficient.

Mr. Cummings also stated that the Restorative Housing Program aimed to keep residents or bring residents back to Evanston, with the cash benefit that is no longer part of the equation. He asked if the Committee was okay with this. Chair Simmons responded that the Committee is not looking to give direct oversight. The needs of the Program are still being met with the narrow tailoring, and discussion on a full-on Cash Benefits Program will be had.

Committee Member Barber provided an update on her presentation on "Estate Administration: How Assets Transfer When a Person Dies." Committee member Barber stated that a few families were looking for clarity on how to claim their deceased relative reparations benefit. The families were seeking ways on how to handle the asset in the probate process and on how to handle multiple beneficiaries/heirs of legatees.

B. Creation of a Reparations Cash Benefit Program

Counsel Cummings explained that in order to have race-based or race-conscious programming, sufficient evidence is needed to show the necessity for the remedy. Currently, they do not have the research to show that a cash benefit would be a narrowly tailored remedy for those harmed. The type of research needed has to quantify the harms to a dollar amount. He expressed that he does not think the City will ever be able to afford whatever number is concluded. However, they would have the evidence to say that Evanston's

discrimination caused this much harm to this dollar amount. This would allow a cash benefit program to have sufficient evidence if challenged in court.

Chair Simmons stated that she has reached out to partners that can provide such a report and explained that Counsel Cummings had started his own process as well.

C. Establishing Reparations Committee Working Groups (5 or 7 members?)

Chair Simmons recommended that the Committee reestablish working groups with Committee members as chairs and community members and experts beyond the community that have experience in the three areas. Chair Simmons also recommended the Committee add "Community Unity" (name subject to change) as a working group.

The Working Group chairs will set the meetings and will have 5 or 7 members from the community. Committee Member Barber offered to chair the Economic Development Working Group committee.

It was noted that the Housing Working Group could put together a database for folks who want to volunteer their time or labor to recipients of the reparations program. This Housing Working Group could also assist Connections for the Homeless on zoning equity. Councilmember Burns and Committee Member Lockhart volunteered to chair this working group.

Education Initiatives Working Group: Councilmember Harris and Committee Member Sutton volunteered to chair this Working Group. Chair Simmons also volunteered to assist as well.

Community Unity Working Group: Charline Nyomo and, in the absence of a volunteer, Committee member Barber will chair the group. Councilmember Reid will also be filled in if they want to chair this group. Chair Simmons recommended working with interfaith organizations.

Tashiek Kerr, Assistant to the City Manager, inquired about the application process for the working groups. Chair Simmons recommended that the working groups have open meetings, and Councilmember Harris suggested a Google form created for people to apply.

Counsel Cummings reminded the Committee members that no more than two members could work on the same working group at the same time; otherwise, that would trigger the open meeting act requirements such as minutes requirements, working groups being noticed, etc. Chair Simmons stated she would act as a backup person for the Education Initiatives Working Group.

D. Update on the Equitable Zoning Project

The Committee introduced Sue Loelbach. Sue is working with Connection for the Homeless and their equitable zoning project.

Objectives for the Equitable Zoning Project:

- Zoning to remove barriers to affordable housing

- Exploration of ways to reach those most impacted by the lack of affordable housing and by racial and socioeconomic inequity
- Contributions to repairing the harms by the City of Evanston through its zoning and housing policies

Supporters/Partners for this project:

- City of Evanston
- ZoneCo - consulting firm with an expertise in zoning
- Chicago Metropolitan Agency on Planning - Providing technical assistance and community outreach
- Funders: Chicago Community Trust, Cornerstone Foundation, Evanston Community Foundation. Money from the funders are mainly used for compensation.

Process:

- Zoning Diagnostic Review: Done
 - ZoneCo evaluated every line of the zoning code, which contributed to the hypothesis this equitable housing project is based on.
- Community outreach and input: Done
 - Partnered with organizations such as Center for Independent Futures, EC2C Advocates for Action, Evanston Latinos, Evanston NAACP, Evanston Own It, Laude Consulting, Radio La Difference, VAJM. Also, Connections for the Homeless channels
 - 500 responses, 110 focused groups
- Analysis of Data 1st round: April
- Stakeholder Discussions: May
- Analysis of Data 2nd Around: June
- Report Roll-Out: Beginning in July

The next steps involve data analysis and creation of key data points, with a presentation and feedback from key stakeholders. Loelbach asked if the Reparations Committee would be interested in being involved as one of these stakeholders.

Sue will send Tashiek dates and meetings.

4. COMMUNICATION

A. Update on the informational session with the families of deceased Ancestor Reparations Recipients

Chair Simmons shared that outside of Committee members Barber's committee work, she is an attorney that specializes in probates and estate. She also used to run free clinics for low-income seniors.

Committee Member Barber volunteered to have a workshop that was held the previous Tuesday for family members who were on the ancestor list and passed away before they could receive their distribution. She walked them through different ways to handle their deceased relative's estates. She began with assets administration 101, then broke off and spoke to families 1:1. Committee Member Barber clarified that the discussion is not part of

Evanston's legal department or marketing for her firm. Committee Member Barber has spoken with Tasheik to plan a general estate planning to give people more information because, for many, inherited wealth relates to real estate.

B. Reparations Financial Reports

- Donations this month: \$43,0777.26 USD
- Real Estate Transfer Tax: (thus far) \$524,882 USD
- Treasury Report - Reparation: Reasonable statistics can not be given at this time.

It was moved by Chair Simmons and seconded by Councilmember Harris to accept and place on file the April 6 Financial Report. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Simmons hoped that the job of the Reparations Program Construction administrator would be posed soon. Counsel Cummings estimates it takes somewhere between 60 and 90 days for a candidate to be processed and onboarded.

Chair Simmons stated that with the new cash option, the City will make that transaction so another administrator is not needed for those transactions. Council Cummings explained that the City would need to collect minor financial information to determine which fund to pay from. He further explained that in order to have recipients receive this benefit tax-free the program would need to be based on need. But currently, the Restorative Housing Program is not based on need it's based on harm. To ensure the benefits are received tax-free, financial information will be needed to qualify the beneficiary.

Councilmember Burns raised the question: what other fund do we have to provide benefits other than the Reparations Fund? Counsel Cummings replied, the General Assistance Fund. Councilmember Burns also asked when money is available is the City going to allow people who opt for direct cash benefits to receive their benefit as their money comes, even if they have a higher number than someone who wants to do rehab? Ms.Kerr responded that staff is going to make it clear to individuals who want a home improvement that it is going to take months for CPAH to get to them, their money will still be there, but staff would disburse funds to those who select cash benefits. Councilmember Burns followed up with it would be best to get through to as many people as they can, starting with the ancestors. Staff Tashiek responded that staff had been assigned to work on meeting with recipients, which will hopefully speed up time.

Councilmember Burns inquired whether the City and Council should be looking for more grants/funding for the program. Chair Simmons responds yes, continue thinking of how we sustain this program, what are different revenue streams, and how to fund administrative roles. She suggests they come up with a dream budget for the program so there is less reliance on partnerships.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

Donna Walker: Is there going to be more opportunity for more funds to come in, as tax dollars, with another dispensary here?

Chair Simmons requests a report next meeting on the new dispensary and if there is a projected open date, and how that may accelerate receiving revenue.

Rodney Greene: For the elderly on fixed income and they are recipients of grandparents and parents who met the criteria for reparations, how do they receive the benefits, and how soon can it come through?

Chair Simmons clarified that the application process for this initiative has closed, but if they have applied, then they need to look for a notice that they have been accepted; otherwise, they need to look for future opportunities.

Charline Nyomo: Charline stated that when her children were younger, she was instrumental in stopping violence across gang lines, what helped her with that is her knowledge of African Culture. She stated she received an email from someone who has retired from the World Bank, and his brother is the Governor of Timbuktu. She stated all this to explain that is the piece of the puzzle she can bring to help with this work. Of her gifts, she hopes to use them to expand the wonderful work the Committee is doing.

Tina Payden: Glad to see moving towards cash payment. She hopes the seniors can get their money expeditiously as well as create a new program. Tina hopes the people on the zoning, as well as Connections For the Homeless, look for fair zoning in all the wards of Evanston and not just one or two wards. Also, she stated there should be a clear expectation of any new requirements for cash payment. Tina asked if the total number of donations and the money from the city is on the website. Additionally, Tina would like to see support from people who are getting harassed and unfair treatment in the City of Evanston and beyond.

Karli Butler: Their grandfather qualified as an ancestor then they passed away. Their dad qualified as a descendant then their father passed away. During the time of the application process, they had three generations of folks in the home who qualified, but because Karli wanted to respect the rule, they did not apply. They regret not applying because so much has changed. They inquired when there would be another opportunity for descendants to apply.

Chair Simmons responds it has not yet been determined when there will be a new application process. Still, she hopes their family was among those who attend attorney McFarland Barber's workshop, and if not, Butler can contact her directly.

6. **ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Simmons moves to adjourn, and Councilmember Harris seconds.