



Equity and Empowerment Commission
Thursday, September 21st, 2023 @ 6:30 PM
Lorraine H. Morton Civic Center, Hybrid Room 2404

COMMITTEE MEMBER PRESENT: Devon Reid, Councilmember, Jane Grover, Commissioner, Darlene Cannon, Commissioner, Molly Malone, Commissioner, Karla Thomas, Commissioner

COMMITTEE MEMBER ABSENT: Hilda Morales, Commissioner, Kady McFadden, Commissioner

STAFF PRESENT: Tasheik Kerr, Assistant to the City Manager, Liam Bird, Manager of Organizational Performance and Equity

1. CALL TO ORDER/DECLARATION OF A QUORUM

The meeting was called to order at 6:34 p.m.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Correction to the minutes: absent committee members are Jane Grover and Katie McFaden. Paragraph 11: updated to December; move to approve the amended minutes as amended.

Chair Commissioner Cannon moved to approve the amended minutes from July 20th, and Commissioner Malone seconded. The amended minutes were unanimously approved.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

Trisha Connolly, a second-ward resident, spoke regarding the Evanston Budget. She states she hopes the Equity and Empowerment Commission is thoughtful about how it recommends the City of Evanston marshals the budget. She spoke about an overreliance on issuing bonds for projects. She was interested in the

conversation that would follow today and hoped for collective input and collaboration within the city on how to best advance an equitable budget.

4. DISCUSSION

A. Public Engagement Policy

Adam Slade from the UIC Great Cities Institute walked the EEC through the draft Public Engagement Policy and template. After the presentation, there were questions and feedback on the draft guidelines and template from the commission summarized below. Darlene Cannon stated it's important to ensure those who are most impacted and typically do not have a seat at the table from a power and influence perspective must be prioritized through the implementation of this policy or guideline. Jane Grover recommended there is education for community members on how to participate in policy design and redesign efforts effectively. Several community members provided written feedback to the city to finalize edits to the draft guidelines/policy.

B. EEC Participatory Budgeting

Matt Ouren, Participatory Budget Manager at the City of Evanston, gave a presentation on participatory budgeting. He talked about how the potential projects were proposed and the co-design process with the community. He spoke about the engagement led and the inclusion efforts including interpretation for residents who speak diverse languages. As of 9/21, there were 3946 ballots cast. Matt spoke to the efforts to include BIPOC residents, young people, and other most impacted populations and it resulted in 50 percent of participants being previously unengaged in municipal public meetings. Commissioner Thomas asked how winning proposals would be financed by the city in the long haul, so they receive appropriate funding. Councilmember Reid spoke about how Participatory Budgeting may continue if city council approves it depending on how this round of implementation is received. He also spoke about the importance of a success analysis to institutionalize some of the PB practices throughout other areas of the organization. Councilmember Grover wondered how much the City spends in total on community engagement and suggested the fund could be clearly delineated and tied to the community engagement policy in the future.

C. Equity in the Evanston Budget

Clayton Black, Budget Manager for the City of Evanston, spoke through the FY24 budget and the related engagement. He talked through the proposed budget for FY24. He highlighted fiscal challenges, including the union budget increases for Police, Fire, AFSCME, and how they were necessary. He spoke about the city's commitment to engaging in an equity audit of the budget in partnership with the new Division of Organizational Performance and Equity.

Councilmember Reid shared he believed it was important to create opportunities for engagement with the EEC and Evanston community members well in advance of the budget being finalized. Commissioner Thomas questioned how we could clearly identify equity-based funding in the budget for the future. Liam Bird, Manager of Organizational Performance and Equity, spoke about a beta Equity Index and how it is being used to support an equity audit of the Evanston budget as well as recommending the marshaling of equity-based funds in the future and believes the EEC can support this work.

D. Referral Tracker

The EEC reviewed the referral tracker and made recommendations around the following three referrals:

Liquor Tax Overhaul: Engage in an additional equity review and engagement. Explore non-regressive revenue options. Revenue options negatively impacting low income and marginalized community member are not acceptable.

Battery Power Leaf Blower Exchange Program: the EEC believes the proposed program does advance equity.

Library Parking Lot Time Limit: the EEC did not spend time reviewing the referral because they believe it does not implicate equity.

5. CONSIDERATION

Several agenda items were tabled to October 19th due to running out of time. These agenda items included: Gender Inclusion Ordinance and Training and a discussion about the definition of equity.

6. COMMUNICATION

7. REPORTS

8. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:43 p.m.