



Reparations Committee Listening Session Hybrid

Thursday, July 06, 2023

Lorraine H. Morton Civic Center, Parasol Room 4900 9:00 AM

COMMITTEE MEMBER

PRESENT:

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

COMMITTEE MEMBER

ABSENT:

Bobby Burns, Councilmember, and Devon Reid, Councilmember

STAFF PRESENT:

Tasheik Kerr, Assistant to City Manager, Nicholas Cummings, Corporation Counsel, Luke Stowe, City Manager, Liam Bird, Manager of Organizational Performance and Equity

1. **CALL TO ORDER/DECLARATION OF A QUORUM**

The meeting was called to order and there was a declaration of quorum by Chair Simmons.

2. **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Committee Member Barber announced that the Committee has been in contact with the Buffett Institute at Northwestern. They are doing a project on Epistemic reparations and they are looking at lessons learned from the truth and reconciliation process that took place in South Africa. The Epistemic reparations process seeks to give voice to people in the community, and the Buffett Institute is looking to include the Evanston Reparations process. More information will be uploaded on the Reparations website.

3. **PUBLIC COMMENT**

- A. Listening Session - To share remarks or ask questions virtually, participants must pre register to speak by 8:30 a.m. Thursday, July 6, 2023.

Public Comment 1: To their recollection the city has \$3.4 million to allocate for the ancestors. They would like to know the updated amount. This amount they want to know how much is coming from donations and how much from the Real estate transfer tax.

Chair Simmons explained the revenue for repair comes from a few places. Initially \$10 Million came from recreational cannabis sales tax, and that was coming in more slowly than expected due to state laws and Evanston at the time only having 1 dispensary. The next revenue source is donations. Another revenue source is the real estate transfer tax, specifically the graduated real estate transfer tax. Ms. Kerr shared that the revenue received from the real estate transfer tax is about \$1,188,000. The revenue received from donations is about \$43,000. Chair Simmons explains that 100% of the money received from the reparation's fund goes to repair, not to consultants, committee work, staff or anything else. Chair Simmons adds that while the Real Estate Transfer Tax is a revenue source it still needs to be collected. They are collecting it as real estate transactions happen over time. It is projected they can fully fund the ancestors this year.

Public Comment 2: There has been some concern over how things are being allocated. Some people are getting numbers that are higher than theirs. They wanted to know what the order was. Ms. Kerr explained that the home visits are split between 3 people. Thus, folks might get done "earlier" but everyone will be addressed. 48 people have had home visits this far. Chair Simmons further elaborates that there is funding for 90, and those ancestors have their order. Staff have split that up and some have been able to schedule their visits earlier than others. Ms. Kerr added that there are two staff members, Taishiya Nix and Carmen Francellno. Carmen works at the library. She also assisted with the reparations application process. Taishiya works with the Mayor's Summer Youth Program. Then there is Director Thompson. Those 3 individuals are doing the home visits.

Public Comment 3: Why do we need to give money to someone else who has never earned money? Committee Member Barber responded that reparations are repairs for past harm. It is not a gift, a lottery win, or a prize. We are reaching out to groups who have experienced harm in our community that has not been rectified. People experienced red lining, couldn't get zoned, Black Evanstonian community was taxed and that revenue was used to build amenities and refurbish things where the Black community was excluded from. There are many programs that African-American Evanstonians were excluded from. Those are specific that ancestors experienced, but if you think about building generational wealth those families were excluded from that process. She also shares that Committee member Carlis Sutton had the experience of his home being lifted out of the ground because it was in an area they wanted to reserve for white Evanstonians. Reparations is a measure of atonement, Evanston is trying to move forward and repair harm. Chair Simmons added you can learn more about the details at cityofevanston.org/reparations. You can also visit Shorefront Legacy center in Evanston.

Public Comment 4: They ask if applications are currently being accepted. Committee Member Barber responded that the Restorative Housing Program applications are closed but there are more programs underway.

Public Comment 5: How is race benefit legal in light of the SCOTUS decision on college decisions. Corporation Counsel Cummings responded that first and foremost the restorative housing program is not an affirmative action program. Additionally, the reparations program does not have to do with college admissions.

Public Comment 6: They want to thank the committee for their hard work and they are

grateful for them.

Public Comment 7: Someone updated their address they hope that City staff has that reflected.

Public Comment 8: They shared a possible resource; Central valley reparations.

Public Comment 9: Why is it necessary to submit documentation previously submitted and accepted from a parent. Staff Tasheik responded that a child of a parent has to show direct lineage to the Ancestor recipient.

Public Comment 10: Staff Tasheik explained that if you have an Ancestor who passed, the direct descendant or spouse's family can claim those reparation funds. Counsel Cummings further elaborated that if someone passes and they don't have a will: if they are married and don't have a will but they have already received their number and selected which option they want then their benefit is passed to most likely their spouse. If they are not married and they do not have a will or beneficiary form it goes through probate. The city is still obligated to pay the benefit. This again is if they passed before receiving their benefit but completed the intake process. For specific cases please speak with Staff Tasheik Kerr.

Public Comment 11: This person lives out of state and would like to apply for reparations. Committee Member Lockhart explains that the Restorative Housing Program applications are closed but there are more programs underway. Counsel Cummings also responded stating the compelling interest they are trying to achieve in Evanston. The goal is to get Black folks to move back to Evanston and repair the harm in Evanston. It would be up to the committee to change what the design is. Chair Simmons explains that if you are an ancestor or descendant who lived in Evanston and then moved away, if you can prove it, then you may have had the opportunity to participate in the Housing program.

Public Comment 12: This person registered for the program but can not locate their ID number. Chair Simmons responds that if you have lost your letter the City does have a record of it and contact Staff Tasheik Kerr for that information.

City Manager Stowe introduced Liam Bird the Manager of Organizational Performance and Equity who can be contacted at Lbird@cityofevanston.org

Public Comment 13: He introduced his idea for the Freedom Plan. The money for Reparations would be handled by an independent entity. The first entity would be the Real Estate Investment Trust. The second entity would be the Venture Capital set up for the city and third would be a non-for profit fund.

Public Comment 14: This individual is speaking on behalf of the Community Alliance for Better Government. They thank the committee for the work they have done despite the challenges. He supports Bennet Johnson's proposal of the Freedom Plan.

Public Comment 15: This individual is calling on behalf of an ancestor who is having work done on their house. They suggest having a mechanism in place for people to get some

consultation. They know Community Partners for Affordable Housing is suggested but they assume it's for individuals who don't get construction all the time, so they should get some guidance. Some people want to get things done but they do not know how to assess if the people are doing the best work or not. There should be more resources to go to if someone decides to do renovations on their own. Staff Tasheik responded that there were two options for ancestors to choose from: Homeowner Managed Construction or work with Community Partners for Affordable housing. Ms. Kerr spoke with this individual and identified the ancestor who chose CPAH. However, she is going to send someone out to take a look at the renovations that are being done. Commenter responded that although there are two options, if you don't understand what you're doing you would choose the one where there is some kind of safety net. Ms. Kerr explained the City is in the process of hiring a construction manager on city staff to assist with that process. Committee member Burns also stated that besides Tasheik feel free to reach out to any committee member or the City Manager if there are any issues.

Public Comment 17: They asked if there is an update about the taxes regarding cash payment? Staff Tasheik stated an update will be given at the next meeting. The Commenter also asks for a distribution update and if they are paying someone to do the distribution. She also asks how much they are paying CPAH and where the money is coming from. Staff Tasheik responds that for cash benefits City Staff is distributing those benefits. For construction management, the committee extended CPAH's contract. City Manager Stowe enables City staff to pay CPAH about \$1,000 to administer construction management benefits, not the reparations fund. However, only 1 person a month can be addressed until a Construction manager could be hired. Commenter also states from the beginning they believe that the money should be held in a Black bank in an interest bearing account, she asks if that is being considered. Chair Simmons asked for City Manager Stowe to look into it and have the Committee vote on it. She also requested that the Mayor and their family speak about their experience receiving reparations.

Public Comment 18: They stated after listening to everyone, they wanted to ask if there has been any consideration to capture some of the stories and put it into a publication and put it on the market to bring in more funds and to share with people who are uninformed. Chair Simmons hopes that with the Buffett Institute there is some documentation process.

Public Comment 19: To them reparations should be about helping the community to be successful in businesses, in contracts, for the money to grow. The money should go back and grow the reparations fund should be something that generates wealth for the community.

Public Comment 20: This commenter read an old news story from CCC news about a relative who tried to hold on to their property but was forced to sell due to pressures from the City. She explains that this is why she was able to be at the meeting today.

4. COMMUNICATION

A. Restorative Housing Program Disbursements

Ms. Kerr reports that City staff has met with 48 Ancestors recipients. 8 individuals have chosen cash benefit, 13 have selected home improvement , 10 have selected mortgage

assistance, 4 chose mortgage assistance and home improvement, and 1 chose home improvement and cash benefit. There have been 10 recipients who have requested more time to make their selection.

[Reparations Program Disbursement Update - Attachment - Pdf](#)

B. Reparations Acknowledgement Dinner

Possible Dates: August 8,9,10,11 and August 21st and 25th

This dinner will be held in the Parasol room at the City of Evanston. Chair Simmons recommends this dinner be held every quarter. Committee Member Lockhart thinks August 25th is the best date to have the dinner. At the next meeting Chair Simmons requests Ms. Kerr brings additional dates that work with the City manager's availability for future dinners.

Councilmember Harris read the ancestral acknowledgment

C. Update on Reparations Committee Working Groups

No discussion

5. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Simmons adjourned the meeting.

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