



Reparations Committee

Thursday, August 03, 2023

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

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

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

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Council Member, Devon Reid; Council Member, Bobby Burns,

STAFF PRESENT:

Tasheik Kerr, Assistant to City Manager; Nicholas Cummings, Corporation Counsel; Damilola Olabanji, Reparations Intern

1. CALL TO ORDER/DECLARATION OF A QUORUM

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

A. Ancestral Acknowledgement

Committee Member Sutton read Ancestral Acknowledgment

B. TESTIMONIALS

Testimonial One: Resident from the 5th ward appreciates what the Reparations Committee has been doing and correcting the wrong that has been done to the Black community. He is still trying to figure out how the process is moving forward. He wants to know when people are accepted, how do they get notified of their acceptance and how they can receive their funds. He then again thanks the Committee.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Approval of the March 16, 2023 Reparations Committee Meeting Minutes

B. Approval of the April 6, 2023 Reparations Committee Meeting Minutes

C. Approval of the June 1, 2023 Reparations Committee Meeting Minutes

Chair Simmons moves to approve the meeting minutes (agenda item A-C). Seconded by Committee member McFarland Barber. No opposition. Motion passed unanimously.

3. DISCUSSION

A. Reparations Working Group Updates

Committee member Lockhart provided an update on the Housing working group: Housing working group had their second meeting in July that really acted as the first meeting due to the large amount of interest. The next meeting is August 17th at 6 pm.

Committee member McFarland Barber Community Unity Updates: The first meeting was held; unfortunately, there were last-minute cancellations. Also, some members who joined moved outside of Evanston and need to be replaced. There is a possible opportunity for the Community Unity group to join the project the Buffett Institute has initiated with Epistemic Reparations. This project has had one meeting thus far with people who have been identified as key figures in the Evanston community. The process is based on the Truth and Reconciliation process that happened in South Africa.

Committee member McFarland Barber Economic Development Updates: Had a promising first meeting. The first meeting was introductions, and a lot of ideas were shared, such as Mr. Bennet Johnson's Freedom Plan

Intern Olabanji Education Initiatives Update: At the last meeting, Henry Wilkens came from STEM Evanston and spoke about their organization and part of the work they are doing to open a school in the 5th ward. Mr. Wilkens also spoke about a recent survey done called Amplifying Black Voices which described what type of education people in the community want to see for Black Evanstonians. Council Member Harris added that there have been two meetings in total thus far. The group looks forward to working with different stakeholders in the community such as Northwestern, Oakton College, District 65, and more, in order to understand how to best help the Black Evanstonian in education.

B. Chair Nominations

Ordinance 102-O-20; 2-17-5. - ADOPTION OF RULES; SELECTION OF A CHAIRPERSON. The Commission must annually elect a Chairperson from among its members.

C. Voting for a Reparations Committee Chair

Council member McFarland Barber nominated Robin Rue Simmons to continue as the committee chair. Committee member Lockhart seconded the nomination. Chair Simmons accepts the nomination. No opposition. The motion passed unanimously.

D. Reparations Funding Disbursement

Staff recommends that the Reparations Committee accept and file the reparations program funding disbursement update.

As of August 1st: Staff has met with 76 recipients' ancestors and just recently met with more.

E. City of Evanston Environmental Justice Efforts

Presentation given by Marlene Odia on City of Evanston Environmental Justice Efforts - Sustainability and Resilience Division - Cara Pratt, Ben Martin, and Kristen Drehobl

The Climate Action and Resilience Plan (CARP)

- This is a resolution to support environmental justice by confronting Evanston's history of discrimination, inequities and institutional racism
- Evanston Process for Local Assessment of Needs (EPLAN) Community health assessment overview
- Environmental Equity Investigation: City of Evanston is allocating \$100k to assess current policies engage with community and provide solutions
- Environmental Justice Narrative Storytelling: Inform policies and practice by humanize and uplifting of Evanstonians
- Green Homes Pilot: Program that provides no or low cost home upgrades to homeowners and landlords in historical underinvested and redlined neighborhoods.

There is no cut off deadline. The pilot's intention is to find 50 housing units with ARPA funding. Anyone who applies will not be rejected but may be placed on a wait list.

F. Recognition of Corporation Counsel, Nicholas E. Cummings work on Reparations Program

Staff gave their thanks to Nicholas Cummings work as Corporations Counsel. Chair Simmons stated it was due credit to Mr. Cummings work that allowed the reparations programs to move forward adhering to the legal framework. Committee Member McFarland Barber, Council member Harris, and Council member Sutton also admire the leadership role Mr. Cummings has taken in the Reparations program. Judge Lionel Jean-Baptise, Reverend Dr. Neighbors, Mr. Greene, and Mrs. Delores Holmes and many more also uplifted Attorney Cummings and his work.

Mr. Cummings will be the new head of the Cook County Bar Association

4. CONSIDERATION

5. COMMUNICATION

A. Reminder: Reparations Acknowledgment Dinner - Aug 25, 2023

B. Reparations Financial Report

Staff recommends that the Reparations Committee accept and file August's Financial Report.

C. Upcoming Reparations Working Group Meetings

- Housing - August 17, 6pm
- Education - September 5, 7pm

6. PUBLIC COMMENT

Public Comment One: Mr. Johnson has a concept for Reparations. This concept is called the Freedom Plan. The first main concept is that it should be out of the city government and be in the hands of the Black community. The second main concept is that the program has a voting trust. Only the board makes the decisions.

There are three main entities for the Freedom plan:

1. Real Estate investment trust - this group is anything to do with housing, every year it disperses its profits.

2. Venture Capital Group: group that provided loans and funds to businesses

3 Freedom funnel: Education, health, and welfare

In addition, he suggests a truth and reconciliation process where Black people share their stories of the harm they have experienced.

Public Comment Two:

Ms. Payden uplifted the committee on starting cash payments, they have been an advocate for cash payments since the beginning. They then recited a poem they created about the times they have been silenced when advocating for Black lives.

Public Comment Three:

Mrs. McCoy expressed thanks towards the Reparations committee and also Attorney Nicholas Cummings.

Public Comment Four:

Ms. Ndonga is proud of all the work elected members and volunteers have done thus far for Reparations. She hopes that there will be investment in indigenous African and Afro-descendant festivals and fairs to highlight other aspects of Black people outside of oppression. She requested that another fund be added for cultural festivals to be held throughout the year.

Public Comment Five:

Ms Sheila Darks from Florida State University. She did her master thesis on Evanston reparations and plans to do her dissertation on Reparations and Identity in Evanston. She is looking for 25-30 respondents. She is really appreciative of everything that Evanston has done so far.

Public Comment Six:

They understood the sacrifices the Reparations committee has to go through. They grew up in a Black community that had all types of entities that a community needs to thrive on. They are grateful to be recognized as an Evanstonian.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Council member Harris adjourned the meeting