



Equity and Empowerment Commission

Thursday, March 21, 2024 @ 6:00 PM

Hybrid - Lorraine H. Morton Civic Center, Room 2404

**COMMITTEE MEMBER
PRESENT:**

Darlene Cannon, Chair & Commissioner; Molly Malone, Commissioner; Josephine Bostic, Commissioner; Parielle Davis Commissioner, Shana Sexton, Commissioner

**COMMITTEE MEMBER
ABSENT:**

Absent: Devon Reid, Councilmember; Kady McFadden, Commissioner; Christine Escobar, Commissioner

STAFF PRESENT:

Tasheik Kerr, Assistant to the City Manager

1. CALL TO ORDER/DECLARATION OF A QUORUM

The meeting was called to order by Chair Commissioner Cannon at 6:12 p.m. There was no quorum. A quorum was established at 8:04 p.m.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Approval of the February 15, 2024 Equity and Empowerment Commission Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Malone shared that Commissioner Sexton was present, and Commissioner McFadden was absent from the February meeting. It should also be noted that the agenda item "Working Groups" should indicate that "this topic would be placed on the April meeting agenda." It was moved by Commissioner Malone and seconded by Commissioner Cannon to approve the February 15, 2024, Equity and Empowerment Commission minutes. The motion passed (5-0).

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

William Carter, a tenant at the Wesley apartments, shared that the tenants have approached the City regarding their needs regarding their move from the apartments that have been deemed unsafe. He shared that the City has not yet provided the tenants with a definite answer. They met with the City last night and did not receive a definitive answer. The tenants are looking to get this topic on the City Council agenda.

Trisha Connolly, a resident of the 2nd ward, shared that the City, Evanston Housing Coalition, and Housing Opportunity Development Coalition need to provide answers to the residents of the Wesley apartments. She requested that the residents be provided with a full

history of what led to the order to vacate the building. Ms. Connolly requested that copies of the needs assessment, inspection reports, emails, and photos be provided to the tenants. They also shared that this leads to the tearing down and displacement of the black community.

Gail Schattner, a member of Community Alliance for Better Government and a Fair Housing professional, shared a book titled "Know Your Price" by Andre M. Perry. They shared that the community does not know whether the buildings had to be torn down and that the City has an obligation to protect the tenants as many are in protected classes. They recommended donating the property to the tenants.

Online Public Comment

Albert - Shared that they do not believe in diversity, equity, and inclusion programs. They don't see why Blacks and Jews need to tell white people what to do and fire white people. The Supreme Court has deemed these programs discriminatory. White people are given the end of the stick.

Frand Yidson inquired about equity and empowerment. They shared that these are clever buzzwords made up by think tanks and nefarious characters. They referenced the Wesley apartments.

Ursula Haverbeck - provided the definition of racism. They shared that this is city-sanctioned racism against white people.

4. DISCUSSION

A. Envision 2045 Update

Meagan Jones, Neighborhood and Land Use Planner, provided an overview of the comprehensive plan, zoning code, and projected road map and inquired about feedback from the Commissioners.

Commissioner Malone shared she would like the land to be given back to the Indigenous people.

Commissioner Davis shared that she is interested in knowing the corporate interests and real estate investors related to the project.

Commissioner Cannon shared that she would like the plan to meet the community's needs, such as affordable housing. She is also interested in knowing who is behind the project.

Commissioner Bostic inquired about how the Wesley tenants would benefit from their living situation.

B. City Council Referrals List (available online [here](#))

Commissioners reviewed the referral list. It was motioned by Commissioner Malone and seconded by Commissioner Cannon to draft a letter to the Referrals Committee recommending an equity review of the Housing Over Parking Ordinance. Motion passed (5-0).

C. BCCs Onboarding Documents Update and Evanston History Timeline

Commissioner Malone summarized the onboarding process and her meeting with Clerk Mendoza. She shared that a MBA student will update the handbook. Tasheik will review the handbook and forward it to Literacy Works to make sure it's comprehensible. The handbook will also be translated into other languages and be placed online. Clerk Mendoza will also draft a new welcome letter.

Commissioner Malone inquired whether the Commission would assist in updating the Evanston history timeline. It was motioned by Commissioner Malone and seconded by Commissioner Cannon to update the Evanston history timeline of the BBC Handbook. Motion passed (5-0).

D. Public Engagement Policy Update

Cara Pratt, Sustainability and Resilience Manager, provided an update on the Public Engagement Policy. Cara shared that a template was developed and her team is currently testing the template. Ms. Kerr shared that the guidelines would be shared with the City's Department Directors. The guidelines would be piloted. Commissioner Cannon asked the Commission to review the guidelines again. Tasheik shared that the document is an internal staff document.

E. EEC Retreat

- **Date & possible Facilitator?**

This item will be placed on the next agenda.

F. Alternating EEC Meeting Locations and Frequency of Meetings

This item will be placed on the next agenda.

G. Wesley Avenue Housing Emergency

Commissioner Cannon mentioned that she attended last night's meeting with the City and the Wesley Avenue tenants and was appalled at the outcome. The tenants are basically being put out, and they have no plan. There is no guarantee that the tenants can return to their units. Commissioner Cannon provided a summary of the meeting and issues with the Wesley building.

The Commissioners, Gail Schattner and William Carter, discussed the matter. Mr. Carter shared that they would like a definite answer from the City.

Commissioner Cannon motioned to recommend that the Equity and Empowerment Commission write a letter to the City Council and Sarah Flax voicing its concerns. Commissioner Bostic seconded the motion. The motion passed 5-0.

Shana inquired about the timeline of the situation. Commissioner Cannon provided a summary.

Commissioner Davis stated she supports writing a letter. This is an example of a situation that is damaging the community and people's lives. The EEC should pay attention to and provide support for residents.

Commissioner Davis arrived in person. A quorum was declared.

Commissioner Malone motioned to place the topics: EEC retreat, Alternating EEC Meeting Locations and Frequency of Meetings, Sustaining, Stabilizing, and Growing Black Businesses in Evanston and Resources and Migrant Community in Evanston on the next meeting agenda.

H. Sustaining, Stabilizing, and Growing Black Businesses in Evanston

This item will be placed on the next agenda.

I. Resources and Migrant Community in Evanston

This item will be placed on the next agenda.

5. CONSIDERATION

Commissioner Davis requested the Equity and Empowerment Commission discuss the public comment process at the April meeting.

6. COMMUNICATION

7. REPORTS

8. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Cannon adjourned the meeting.