

Equity Committee Meeting

January 25, 2021

5:30 p.m. - 7:00 PM, ZOOM

Agenda

Attending: Scott Simmons, Melissa Pappas, Melissa Williams, Heather Humbert , Emily Rodriguez, John Maurer, Mohit Kumar

Visiting from other districts from the Anti-Racism Workgroup: Sarah Reuter, Jenne Nelson, Suzanne Rhees, Kim Lieberman, Tru Ten(?), Janet Pope, Dan Edgerton

Working Session to Plan for Meeting with Councilmember Jalali at the Anti-Racist Working Group Meeting on 1/27

- 45 minutes
- Em began the conversation by reviewing the letter that went to the city, advocating for homeless encampments to be considered under the eviction moratorium. The larger ones have already been cleared at this point, but there is discussion about getting a moratorium that explicitly calls for no more camp clearing. It sounds like a unanimous vote would be necessary from the city council in order to pass an emergency resolution.
- District 10's action was to make a public statement condemning the clearance of the camps and exploring how to avoid this happening in the future.
- There are questions about, if the encampments remain, how sanitation, access to water, and enacting public safety measures would be happening.
- There was additional discussion about zoning and affordable housing availability. What is the county doing to resolve these issues? Is there a way to make it more appealing for landlords to support affordable housing in their properties? It sounds like there may be at least one "tiny house" village moving forward in Saint Paul; how could we encourage more and advocate to have them in our neighborhoods? (There are some issues with tiny houses due to heating expenses; Vivo is doing one *inside* in a big warehouse in St. Paul, but Janet indicated that this isn't seen as the best solution.)
- What more can be done to support people and do outreach to them? How are services/support provided (mobile showers, etc.) being sustained?
- What's being done to keep people housed, so that they don't end up in homeless encampments in the first place? What about shelters (granted, there are a number of things that can be problematic about shelter experiences)?

- “Low barrier” shelters are shelters without restrictions on substance use or behaviors, often with harm reduction approaches; “step-up” shelters are available for people who fit certain criteria indicated by the shelters.
- Feedback from a meeting with Nelson included suggestions for councils to fundraise to provide bridge funding for unhoused people and a mutual aid fund to help people avoid losing housing.
- Homeline works w/ tenants to reduce eviction, but their work makes them a valuable potential coalition member.
- Much discussion about how to communicate with neighbors and ensure clarity of communication.

List of questions for Mitra Jalali (long-term focus questions in **bold**)

- **After a moratorium on evictions are in place, is there a plan to have a dedicated campground/s? Have resources been made available, sanitation, safety resources, etc.?**
- **What are your thoughts on tiny home villages?**
- **How can we support and work towards changing zoning to allow more duplexes and 4 plexes?**
- What is being done to create more housing and to create a market for affordable housing?
- How can district councils best communicate consistent messaging to our neighborhoods to foster supportive environments for affordable housing and temporary housing?
- How are we helping those with insecure housing to help them avoid ending up in encampments or other temporary housing?
- What about tracking people who have been moved from transient housing solutions--how do support workers find people?
- **How can we encourage initiatives like rezoning and “density bonuses” that would filter money toward neighborhoods that provided spaces for those with insecure housing?**
- We know about the St. Anthony “wet house” in Saint Anthony Park, run by Catholic Charities; what other options like these are available to unsheltered people?
- Is there a way for PED (Planning and Economic Development) to streamline the process for building affordable housing and rehab housing initiatives?
- From your perspective, what is the most effective way for district councils to foster substantive, practical change when it comes to the challenge of shelter and affordable housing for people in Saint Paul?

“Winter’s Embrace” Community Meal at Seal

- 15 minutes
- Confirm sign-up sheet is posted: Sign up sheet was posted today (January 25th)
- Next steps:

- Pull sign-up sheet on 2/6 and send to co-op
 - Confirm meals are ready for deliver on 2/13
 - Need confirmation of how much is left in the budget for this meal.
- NOTE: Scott has \$250 grant for this meal

Plan for Second Viewing of “Jim Crow of the North”

- 10 minutes
- Proposed date: 2/27 @4PM
- How is this being advertised? (Newsletter and Facebook, website)
- Registration occurs by email; when the link goes out, questions for thought will, too.

Update on HENS

- 10 minutes
- What was happening in regard to the HENS (rent control) initiative?
- Last month, the Equity Committee voted to place an endorsement of the HENS initiative, in the form of allowing our name and providing communication support, onto the consent agenda for the council.
- Instead, it was voted on as its own individual item. Three members abstained, but the initiative passed to endorse HENS and support their communication efforts.
- Kathryn is floating the idea that the council provide more substantive support in the form of a drive-through sign-up for the petition. Is the Equity Committee being asked to endorse action beyond endorsing the initiative and providing communication support? (Answer: no. “Support” was not defined beyond that.)
- So to be clear: no action is being requested at this time beyond allowing our name to be on HENS material and agreeing to echo and amplify their messaging.

Additional Topics?

- 10 minutes
- Discussion at community council meeting on fundraising for unhoused people at Luther Seminary was centered around who manages the money. It was a question of “charity” versus “mutual aid.” Who is the fiscal holder? How is the money distributed? Is it a question of attaching judgment or removing agency when the money isn’t directly provided to those in need? How many people get the money divided up? What if there are different amounts of needs for different people? What if setting up the fund to ensure tax-deductible contributions would increase the amount of funding and direct distribution would preclude this? Until these kinds of questions are addressed, the initiative will be on hold.