



City of Seattle



Meeting Minutes

Thursday, October 15, 2020 | 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

Virtual Meeting via WebEx

Commissioners Present: John Rodriguez, Byram Simpson, Manuel Venegas, Kari Lerum, Deaunte Damper, Joseph Suttner, Deepa Sivarajan, Nate Higby, Annabelle Backman, Chris Brown, Victor Loo, Jessi Murray

Commissioners Absent: Michael Garrett

SOCR Staff: Janet Stafford

Meeting Minutes recorded by: Deepa Sivarajan

Guests: Yazi Aceves (future commissioner), Caedmon Cahill (SOCR), Erika Pablo (SOCR), Dominique Stephens (Mayor's Office), Shefali Ranganathan (Deputy Mayor), Andrea

Welcome and Introductions

1. Welcome Yazi Aceves, the new Get Engaged commissioner as of next week!

Public Open Comment

1. Andrea: I'm a trans, nonbinary, and intersex activist who has worked with the United Nations. I've written to the City before about set of pedestrian crossings that should have rainbow crossings in Queen Anne in solidarity of the LGBTQI+ community. This area serves as a gateway for the world and Seattle Center. The King, Pierce, and Snohomish counties include one of the world's largest LGBTQI+ communities.
2. Shefali Ranganathan: I shared a letter with commission members. I know one of the agenda items is to discuss the Human Rights Commission letter. I would like an opportunity to talk about this when that agenda item comes up.

Approve September Minutes and October Agenda

1. Motion to approve September minutes. **Motion passes (100%)**
2. Motion to amend the October agenda with below edits. **Motion passes (100%)**

- a. Correct spelling of Mayor Durkan's name.
- b. Remove approval of July minutes and special meeting minutes postponed until next meeting for approval.
- 3. Motion to amend the October agenda to add space for discussion with Deputy Mayor Shefali Ranganathan and add five minutes to this agenda item. **Motion passes (11 in favor, 1 opposed)**
 - a. Byram Simpson: I will be voting no because we do not have anyone from the Human Rights Commission here to respond.
 - b. Annabelle Backman: My understanding was that this was just to ask clarifying questions of the Deputy Mayor since she already sent in a statement about her position.
 - c. Jessi Murray: I think we should be able to get information from the Deputy Mayor in the time that we have.
 - d. Deepa Sivarajan: I will be voting yes on this because I want to take the opportunity to speak to the Mayor's Office but I want to express my disappointment that such a step is necessary. We have made numerous overtures to the Mayor's Office to speak with us and it's really frustrating that we only receive this attention on a day when we're discussing the Human Rights Commission's letter asking the Mayor to resign. I agree with all of Byram's points about fairness and I think this time should only be for clarifying questions.
 - e. Byram Simpson: I want to point out that we have already tried to have open dialogue with the Mayor's Office – we have made requests for information that have gone unanswered. So when the Deputy Mayor's letter requested clear and open dialogue, that dialogue has already been opened and it is on the Mayor's Office to contribute.
- 4. July minutes and July special meeting minutes postponed until next meeting for approval.

Committee Reports

- 1. Commission Operations: Report by Manuel Venegas
 - a. Comm Ops has not met this month and Manuel is no longer able to chair this committee. Members can provide nominations for chairing this committee at our next meeting.
- 2. Social Media & Communications: Report from Jessi Murray
 - a. Met to discuss a general schedule for posting on Facebook and other social media
 - b. Request that that the Community Engagement Committee share any information that needs to be put out regarding upcoming events
 - c. We have talked about using our budget for boosting posts, especially as we are running out of time to use this year's budget – item to bring to the full Commission
 - i. Currently we have allocated a total of \$500 from our budget and only \$200 has been dispersed so far, which leaves \$1,500 total to be allocated
 - ii. A portion of that would go towards the boosting of the event to make sure we're engaging with the appropriate audiences
- 3. Community Engagement Committee: Report from Nate Higby
 - a. One of the initiatives for this committee is trying to build resources and transparency around resources we have in the LGBTQ community – if you are affiliated with an organization that deals with LGBTQ issues, if you could do some exploring about resources that the Social Media Committee could come out
 - b. Giving another plug for the event happening next Wednesday at 6 p.m. for the panel conversation with three queer activists with disabilities
 - i. Has been organized by us in collaboration with the Seattle Disability Commission and Town Hall Seattle

Ad-Hoc Committee for Mayoral/SPD Engagement

1. We had received some contact back from the Mayor's Office providing some of the information that we had been promised and providing a date to expect additional information, which was not met, and we have not heard any follow-up
 - a. We had been talking to Sunny Nguyen who had initially offered to do a quick 15-minute update on Seattle Police Department (SPD) budget situation with us, which we declined because of the timing, but Sunny sent an email somewhat later
 - b. Our asks and requests for more information on the public engagement process have been met with promises and no actual activity
2. Status on the asks of the Mayor's Office:
 - a. Breakdown of costs for specific tasks in SPD – Sunny sent us a tool that is now online that has some amount of information, generally to the level of detail we were asking for
 - b. Documents from the Deputy Mayor that were provided by SPD in support its budget proposal – we were supposed to get those at the end of the week of Sept. 24 and have not yet received
 - c. Another person from the MO wanted to talk about engaging from the MO and we asked what the plan for engagement was, and we have not gotten any response
 - i. At this point, likely makes sense for us to propose what we want engagement to look like – if anyone has suggestions, please email them to Annabelle or Jessi

Review of our previous deliberations and decisions re: Mayor Durkan and discussion of recent Human Rights Commission letter for Mayor Durkan's resignation

1. We are revisiting this topic that was previously discussed in a special meeting in July because of the letter put out by the Human Rights Commission last Wednesday
 - a. The Mayor's Office was supposed to present to the 5-chairs committee the following Friday and but cancelled
2. Statements from commissioners:
 - a. Deepa Sivarajan: I want to say that I think the letter from the Deputy Mayor, which attempts to address "inaccuracies" in the Human Rights Commission statement, is in fact misunderstanding the intent of that statement and not responding in a meaningful way.
 - b. Annabelle Backman: It's interesting that we hear from the Mayor's Office in response to a potential statement on Mayor Durkan's resignation, and not to any of our statements on homelessness or police violence.
 - c. Jessi Murray: One thing I'd like to bring up from a factual perspective – under normal circumstances, I understand that the Mayor does not have the power to address some of the things enumerated in the letter, but under emergency powers, it is my understanding the Mayor has extended powers in those times – as was the case a few times with the declarations of a curfew. I also want to express that in my time on the Commission, we have written numerous letters to the Mayor's office that have never received any response. We only hear from the Mayor's Office during the Pride flag raising or when they have bad PR. I will not be used as a prop of support for the Mayor's Office.
 - d. Byram Simpson: One of our past letters was about the Seattle Police Officers Guild (SPOG) which has still failed to be addressed. I believe as well that the cuts from the SPD 2020 budget were for rebalancing the budget during COVID-19.

- e. Annabelle Backman: In fact, that \$20 million cut from the SPD budget was presented to us in the presentation we received this summer, which the Deputy Mayor attended, where we were told that it was in fact not in response to community concerns about policing. So it is disappointing to see that in fact be cut back.
3. Questions for Deputy Mayor:
- a. Chris Brown: Can you tell us about Stephen Sawyer's appointment to the task force on the \$100 million investment?
 - i. Yes, Stephen Sawyer has been a long-time advocate and leader with People of Color Against AIDS Network (POCAAN) and we are proud to have him on the task force.
 - b. Annabelle Backman: Who has been involved in the development of this task force as a program and as the means to address these needs?
 - i. Mayor's Office initially drew names from boards and commissions and community leaders, focusing on BIPOC and particularly Black members.
 - ii. The only structure that currently exists is the \$100 million that is currently in her budget. The committee has the ability to shape these needs.
 - 1. Annabelle Backman: I've seen the Mayor's Office in a pattern of responding to engagement with a process that they have put forward instead of engaging with community on what is a good mechanism.
 - a. Shefali Ranganathan: I want to acknowledge that there are a diversity of opinions in community. If the community members who are on this task force decide on a different approach, that is their prerogative. I'm well aware of the calls for a participatory budgeting process and the coalitions that are supporting it.
 - c. Byram Simpson: There's been a lot of discussion that the \$100 million as you are describing will actually come from the Jumpstart tax that was allocated for a different purpose by Council, and does not come from cuts to the SPD budget.
 - i. The Mayor's investment of \$100 million in her budget – which ultimately Council has to agree to adopt – the Mayor has proposed the \$100 million this year with the understanding that starting in 2022, we will identify other sources of funding. This year, the resources have come from a variety of sources. The Jumpstart spending sources always included some amount for COVID-19 relief, the rainy day fund, and City services. I want to go to the divestment side because I think that is an important conversation. The Mayor is committed to divestment but understands that it will take much longer. It was important for the Mayor to prioritize investments in community over divestments from SPD which will take time.
 - d. Deaunte Damper: I live in a community where police will shoot me because I'm Black, and my community has a hard time standing with me because I'm queer. I want to know where the Mayor's stance is in all space. I thought that being a part of the Commission would give us more transparency. I also have a lot of issues too with the word BIPOC – I want to be clear that a lot of what has been going on in the news and what has been impacting community has been affecting the Black community. I want to make sure we get clarity on what community is being addressed – BIPOC is the new trendy word. I'm interested in whether we can have more money from developers going towards Black LGBTQ youth – for instance we have the Lambert House, which primarily serves white. Over 70% of our homeless youth are Black and trans people. If we can just get away

from saying the word BIPOC on this line, I look at it as a way of watering down the impact of what is happening to Black African communities.

- i. Shefali Ranganathan: I agree – we need to figure out how does government get out of the way to make sure that Black communities are protected.
- e. Deepa Sivarajan: Three questions: Firstly, why is the Mayor’s Office choosing to engage with our Commission at this time when we have several outstanding requests for information and mayoral engagement that have not had a response? Secondly, why does the Mayor’s proposed 2021 budget reallocate money intended for Jumpstart to her \$100 million investment in Black communities instead of finding that elsewhere, since groups like King County Equity Now have pointed out that this is pitting communities against each other? And thirdly, why has the Mayor’s Office not approved pending appointees who have been waiting for up to a year?
 - i. Shefali Ranganathan: I want to acknowledge the clear frustration I’m hearing on engagement – I understand what it feels like to be stonewalled, and I apologize for that. I have said previously that I would welcome any opportunity to come to this commission, I’m sorry for that. I can commit to making sure we clear the backlog of commission appointees. It was unintentional. On the question of Jumpstart, unlike voter-approved tax revenues, this goes into the general fund and is allocated based on Council intent. Even the Jumpstart tax didn’t foresee this prolonged economic hardship from COVID-19. There is no intention to create competition.
 1. Deepa Sivarajan: I’m still not hearing a response on why the budget is allocated that way when Black-led organizations have asked for it to come from defunding SPD rather than taking from parts of the general fund that Council had intended to be spent on affordable housing.
 - a. Shefali Ranganathan: The Mayor believes that she has achieved those priorities within the balanced budget for 2021. For 2022, we’re not yet having that conversation. For a progressive revenue source, the Mayor has always supported an income tax for the City.
- f. Annabelle Backman: You said more community members might be able to participate in the task force. What is the process for community members to join the task force?
 - i. Shefali Ranganathan: The task force will then set that up, not the Mayor’s Office. We did invite members of King County Equity Now and Decriminalize Seattle to participate and they did refuse.
- g. Annabelle Backman: What steps is the Mayor’s Office taking towards divestment?
 - i. SR: A number of City departments will be consulted and will come forward with a proposal early next year. That will include some sense of whether there are health-based or community-based organizations that exist and would need to be scaled up to take on this work.
- h. Annabelle Backman: We have a number of follow-up questions. When can you commit to getting us responses if we send to you by end of day on Friday?
 - i. Shefali Ranganathan: I can try to get response by end of day on Monday.
- i. Jessi Murray: I wanted to follow-up timelines to get back to us on various items. Were you aware of the documents that Sunny Nguyen was trying to get for us?
 - i. Shefali Ranganathan: If this was about the budget justification from SPD – I think those hadn’t been able to be made public at the time but we can get those to you now.

- j. Jessi Murray: Your letter refers to the chain of command for SPD and the Mayor's role. During the curfews that were instituted in June and July, would that chain of command have changed to allow the mayor more control over the police department's actions?
 - i. Shefali Ranganathan: As it relates to SPD, the Mayor adheres strongly to the charter responsibility of the Chief of Police. The Mayor took the recommendation of the SPD Chief on curfew and she has tried to be consistent on those decisions. The SPD Chief and their ability to manage their decisions in the field.
 - 1. Jessi Murray: That sounds like her personal stance. Technically, would she be able to break that chain of command in an emergency?
 - a. Shefali Ranganathan: I don't know – I am telling you what I know about the Mayor's intentions and commitments.
 - i. Jessi Murray: Myself and one of our fellow commissioners got teargassed in our own homes, and I think that the Mayor should value us over preserving the chain of command.
4. Motion to sign on to the Human Rights Commission letter calling on Mayor Durkan to resign.
Motion passes (6 in favor, 5 opposed, 1 abstention)

Stipend for community organization presentation

- 1. Planning an event to strengthen community connections and aligned community organizations
 - a. Budget Proposal for Fall 2020: Due to the LGBTQ commission having a surplus of funds for 2020, and in the spirit of strengthening our community connections and uplifting the mission of our aligned community organizations, we propose to offer a stipend of \$300 to one of these community organizations in exchange for a 1 hour teach in/seminar. The details of this in terms of date, time, and audience would be negotiable. We propose to start with AAOC, and to schedule this in between mid-November and early December.
- 2. Motion to approve \$300 for stipends and \$100 for advertising and boosting through social media. **Motion passes (100%)**

Seattle Office of Civil Rights (SOCR) Report

- 1. Welcome again to Yazhi Aceves, the Get Engaged member for 2020-2021!
- 2. A handful of people are up for reappointments, as listed in Janet's email – they will be receiving more info on that process.
- 3. 5-chair meeting is scheduled for next Wednesday, October 21.

Announcements, Reminders, & Roll Call

- 1. Janet will be taking parental leave next month and SOCR will be finding a temp to fill in. Congratulations, Janet!
- 2. New year is when we vote on co-chairs – at least one chairship is up at the end of the year both end this year so other commissioners should think about whether that's a role that interests you.

(END 8:45)