**Seattle Human Rights Commission**

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, April 6, 2017, 6:00–8:00 p.m.

City Hall - Boards and Commissions Room

**Commissioners Present:** Tammy Morales, Jonathan Nichols, Bill Dow, Jeremy Wood, Ashley Miller, Danielle Wallace

**Commissioners Present by Phone:** Alice Serko, Pauline Alvarado

**Commissioners Absent:** Amy Huang, Yasmin Christopher, Marcel Baugh, Fekadu Shibeshi, Lara Diaconu, Sarah Bishop

**SOCR Staff Present:** Marta Idowu

Welcome and Introductions

**Call to Order:** By Jeremy Wood at 6:03 pm

**Public Comment:** None.

**Approval of Minutes:** Bill moves to approve, Tammy seconds, all approve.

**Approval of Agenda:** Tammy moves, Jon seconds, all approve, no abstention or against.

**SOCR update:** None.

**Appeals and Hearings Update:** Lara asks for three volunteers for April 24 appeal, Pauline volunteers, Tammy is a tentative yes.

April 18 hearing—Alice and Sarah signed up.

**Action items:**

**Sound Transit and ICE**

Jeremy explains the BART model, which has a primary goal of not turning over those not paying fare to immigration enforcement. Jeremy wishes to push that to a task force. He has previously talked to CM Rob Johnson who has asked for the commission’s support.

Bill asks which task forces would be good, Jeremy suggests CIRT or CPR. Jeremy moves to send to a task force for support and formalizing, Tammy seconds. All approve, no negatives or abstentions.

**Report on youth jail**

Tammy states that she is still working on the memo so it has been pushed back. She has not been able to get in touch with people for interviews. Marta asks whether we are still interested in a tour, Tammy states it will take about a week or so to know for sure. Tammy intends to leave commission meeting early to do more research and outreach on the plan.

**Community meeting plan**

Jon states that during retreat, concept of community meetings was raised. Jon says that he likes the idea of two meetings in 2017, thinks summer may be easier. He was thinking one in the south somewhere and one in the north somewhere. Jon says he can take the lead on the one later in the summer but cannot do the first one. He suggests that we advertise heavily.

Tammy suggests that we consider a different approach to our meeting, especially since the public comment period will be very different. She suggests that we base it around an issue or a theme.

Bill says we would have more success if we organize around an issue and a group.

Jeremy suggests that July and September may be a better strategy, Bill agrees. Bill also says that we could use Maria, our intern, to help coordinate a community meeting.

Pauline suggests that she be the point of contact for Maria. Pauline says she starts June 1 and goes until August 11. Tammy says she could help with the July event.

Jeremy suggests her coordinating the July issue. Ashley says that we could have her major project be the meeting, she could do applied community engagement and then policy side. Ashley says that we need to do some logistical groundwork before she starts for the July meeting.

Jon moves that have our July and September 2017 meetings at a public space, Jon will coordinate September meeting and Maria/Pauline/others will coordinate the July meeting. Tammy says she may be able to help the July meeting. Tammy seconds. All approve, none opposed or abstain.

**Katie Wilson and unearned income tax**

Katie Wilson joins, she organizes with Transit Riders Union, Tammy invited to have her talk about Trump Proof Seattle. Katie says that Seattle, compared to 50 cities around the country, has the fourth-highest taxes for households at $25,000.00 income level. Seattle also has fourth-lowest taxes for households at $150,000.00 level. Not limited to Seattle but also Washington state—very inequitable tax structure. Katie says that because we do not have many acknowledged funding tools, and therefore we are very vulnerable to potential cuts from the federal government.

Katie says the coalition is asking that Seattle pass a progressive income tax, potentially 1.5% on income above a certain threshold. Says it would not be lower than $250,000.00 per year, and could be higher. Any income under that level would not be taxed at all, any income above would be. Threshold at $250,000.00 would create over $130 million per year. Katie says that one of the things that they considered an initiative, but decided to go legislatively.

Katie says that once the city passes it, the city will be sued. She says there are two legal areas—(1) what kind of taxing authority cities have absent explicit state legislative permission, and (2) whether a progressive income tax is even constitutional in this state. Katie says that there is a pretty strong consensus among lawyers that income is not property, and the constitutional issue is therefore easy. Katie says the more disputed question is the issue of legislative authority.

Jeremy asks whether the coalition has moved away from unearned income, Katie says yes and the reason that they switched strategies is that there are efforts at the state level to get a capital gains tax passed. Katie says that they wanted their strategy to complement the state strategy so state officials cannot use the court issue as an excuse to not pursue a capital gains tax.

Tammy asks whether the coalition has taken a position on other regressive taxes that are in play right now, she says one of the reasons that councilmembers were saying they may support income tax but not until 2018 was because they did not want to interfere with property tax levy being proposed. Tammy says that this is not the right answer, Katie says what is interesting about the strategy is that it is a medium-term thing—it will take a few years to see whether it is even legal, so putting specific funding proposals is a little tricky.

Alice asks whether the car tabs fees for Sound Transit have affected the campaign’s thinking. Katie says that these more-regressive taxes can be used as a juxtaposition.

Bill asks the status of getting councilmembers in support, Katie says they met with them all and there is a lot of interest. Katie says there is some questions about timing, but that there are enough councilmembers who will propose this soon. She wants to do this by August, but is confident that it will happen this year. Katie says they are hosting town halls around the city in each district, believes they are making great progress with councilmembers.

Katie passes flyers for future town halls. Tammy says that these are both educational and advocacy. Katie says that another thing they are doing is passing around petition sheets.

Bill asks how the commission could support, Katie says that we could sign onto the letter on the Trump Proof Seattle website. Bill asks whether the letter is changing or static, Katie says it is a pretty general message. Katie says we could also individually come out to the town halls. Katie also suggests connecting potential volunteers if we know any.

Jeremy says that we will need to check in with what we are able to do regarding the letter. Tammy moves that we support the campaign, Jon seconds, Ashley and Jeremy move to approve, Alice and Pauline abstain.

**Letter on sanctuary city litigation and release on DHS policy**

Jeremy explains that the sanctuary city litigation letter is meant to support City officials when they do good things. Jeremy says that DHS has come out saying that it is present in courthouses.

Bill moves to approve both pending formatting changes, Ashley seconds. All approve, none opposed or abstain.

**Task Force Updates:**

No ECOSOC updates.

Alice states that CPR is looking into California court rule that says you cannot look into immigration status in discovery, cannot use it against them and it is not admissible in court at all. Alice says that even though Washington has case law on this, there is not a court rule on this. Alice says Jeremy and her have talked about writing a letter supporting that position and suggesting that it would be good to do. Alice says there is not any pending legislation that we know of, we could address it to the Superior Court Judges Association and thinking about what, if any, issues would be around.

Jeremy says that he was at an event with Justice Gonzalez recently, and Justice Fairhurst wants to better support undocumented persons in our courts. Jeremy asks Alice if it is feasible to get something before the judicial conference in the next few weeks. Alice says it is. Jon asks for clarification, Jeremy says it would bar immigration status in personal injury and employment cases. Says it would probably be a rule change or an advisory comment change. Jon says he would support a statement that is well-written and precise, Danielle suggests using Sara O’Connor-Kriss as a resource and critical eye.

Alice moves that we approve moving forward with making a statement on this, subject to a review by commission’s attorneys and Sara O’Connor-Kriss, Ashley seconds, all in favor, none opposed, no abstentions.

**Executive Team Update:**

**Retreat feedback**

Danielle says that an issue that came up at the retreat was recruitment and retention of commissioners of color. Danielle says that the power dynamics and communication may be keeping persons of color from being engaged and prospering on the commission, believes we should make time for this conversation.

Jon agrees that we have not discussed this enough, says it became apparent since joining the commission. Says that since we are having community meetings, part of the directive of that could be recruitment. Says the persons “holding the power” comment struck him, but he does not know if he has an answer to that.

Danielle says there were two strategies that she wanted to add that were discussed or recommended by the facilitators. One was rotating meeting facilitation, the other was exit interviews with the commissioners. Danielle thanks Ashley for being instrumental in onboarding and getting folks a place on the commission, enabling commission work to be flexible to community work and peoples’ lives.

Jeremy says he is thinking of a number of commissioners that would be great to take a meeting.

Danielle says as far as next steps, she thinks this is something that needs some more support than the commission development committee as it stands, exit interviews might be something we try to put together. Marta says that some of the commissions have a set of questions for off-boarding, Marta will send the form.

Ashley asks Marta to share a template, says there are a lot of ways around being uncomfortable—give them the option to meet with anybody, or just fill out a form. Ashley says that this could be factored into future commission development/co-chair meeting on bringing people on.

Jeremy says that before the June meeting he will ask a number of commissioners.

Bill says that commission expansion, should it ever happen, could solve issues of (1) capacity and (2) having a strong commission development taskforce to figure out these issues.

Marta asks when issues are going to happen, Ashley says some have already gone through interviews. We have two mayoral seats open right now from Margaret and Edlira, Ashley says maybe we should seek somebody through.

Bill asks if we could give a deadline, Jon disagrees.

**Workplan review**

Marta asks if May 23 is feasible to present to Council, Bill says yes.

Bill asks whether we should include partners as a column in the public document because will not have always talked to these “partners,” says we can couch in our general points. Jeremy agrees. Danielle suggests we raise this in our presentations but not put it in our public document.

Jeremy asks about ad hoc committees, Danielle says we definitely need a committee.

Bill suggests that we add a section on progressive taxation given what is going to be occurring at the Council this year. Says it will probably have to be a separate section. Jon says that is a great idea. Bill says he will add it.

Ashley asks whether we want a commission development committee, Jeremy says adding that as a standing committee would be great.

Danielle asks whether the partnership committee is a standing committee and should be added to the back, Jeremy agrees. Danielle suggests whether we have suggested members of the committees, Bill asks whether we should do that at May meeting, Jeremy says that we will do that and finalize at the May meeting.

Jon asks whether we present to Full Council or just the committee, Marta clarifies it is just CM Herbold’s committee.

Ashley says there could be value in reaching out to any folks who left early or are not present tonight so they are looped in, Jeremy and Bill agree.

Jeremy says that if we don’t get people to sign up, co-chairs could volunteer people, but that we should all try to get something. Danielle agrees but cautions against putting peoples names down if they do not volunteer, and if they do not taking it off our workplan altogether.

**Interview committee**

Jeremy asks for update on commission expansion, whether we have heard anything. Danielle says that last we heard was an email from CM Herbold legislative aide Andra Kranzler. Marta says that David is trying to meet up with commission leaders. Danielle and Bill will follow up with David.

Jeremy spoke with CM Johnson, said he would support 3 commission seats and then talk about how he thought people on council may be interested to a revised commission model. CM Johnson was thinking about a district model.

**Marta question**

Marta asks whether anybody wants to go to Community Police Commission meeting on May 3, they have a bunch of amendments. They would like somebody to come participate on behalf of the commission. Ashley says that she will be there.

Marta says she thinks they will move on appointments a lot quicker.

**Ashley motions to adjourn at 7:38pm, Bill seconds.**