

**Equity and Empowerment Commission Meeting
Minutes of June 28, 2018
Evanston Township High School, 1600 Dodge Ave
6:30 p.m.**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jane Grover, Delores Holmes, Timothy Eberhart, Kathy Lyons, Mario Vela, Alejandra Ibanez, Ald. Melissa Wynne

MEMBERS ABSENT: Julie Corbier de Lara, Monte Dillard,

STAFF PRESENT: Dr. Patricia Efiom, Deputy City Manager Kimberly Richardson, Janella Hardin

OTHERS PRESENT: Daily Northwestern, League of Women Voters, Elaine Heineman

I. CALL TO ORDER: JANE GROVER, CHAIR

A quorum being present, Chair Jane Grover called the meeting to order at 6:37pm.

II. PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment

III. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE MAY 24, 2018 MEETING

Ald. Melissa Wynne moved to recommend approval of the Minutes of the May 24, 2018 Equity and Empowerment Commission Meeting, seconded by Mario Vela. A voice vote was taken. **Motion passed unanimously.**

IV. STUDENTS ORGANIZED AGAINST RACISM (S.O.A.R.)

S.O.A.R was established at ETHS in 2012 after a district transformation stemming from Beyond Diversity training to create a safe space to talk about race using the courageous conversation framework. The group is comprised of 21 leadership board members and 5 committees.

Some of the programs highlighted are: Minority Student Achievement Network (MSAN) focuses on eliminating the achievement gap for students of color; a restorative justice program within ETHS that helps resolve class incidents called the Alliance, and a program that focuses on non-violent civil disobedience. Equity zones have also been created to identify staff members that hold safe spaces to discuss identity issues.

S.O.A.R. also conducts equity workshops for any extracurricular club or team activity to discuss race. They hold two conversation-driven conferences that provide a safe space to educate and provide resources and tools to discuss race using the four agreements of the courageous conversations framework. They also

break out into affinity groups based on racial identity to debrief their thoughts.

Some of the challenges to the S.O.A.R. mission members mentioned: Buy-in from adults, school/life balance, students self-select to participate, low income/affordable housing, strong programs in the 5th ward, making racism a priority, incorporating youth voices (Mayors Youth Council) and holding more intergenerational dialogue.

When students were asked if identifying and focusing on race in equity work is important, Dr. Corey stated that anti-blackness is deep and the liberty of other races is tied to anti-blackness. One student said that as a white woman, when the issue of equity comes up it becomes easy for her to ignore race and focus on gender or sexuality. She has to be intentional about focusing on race. "As a white Evanstonian there is a sense of "wokeness" because of the diversity of the town."

Another student said that because Evanston is so diverse, it is easy to ignore the racial issues that exist, which continues to deepen the divide. Students stated that when talking about race, we most often talk about it as some big overarching problem that is untouchable. Instead they recommend making it personal and real through the use of narratives.

Chair Grover would like the Commission to check in once a quarter with S.O.A.R.

V. COMMISSION NEXT ACTION STEPS

Dr. Efiom discussed Commission goals. She suggested recommending the implementation of a community engagement plan to the City Council as a best practice. Also, the Commission should develop an adapted equity tool to use across the City. Do we want to isolate race?

VI. CITY OF EVANSTON PRIORITY-BASED BUDGET UPDATE

Dr. Efiom discussed the budget survey results. There were 290 responses from the 5th ward and 8% black and 1.8% Hispanic participation. The Office of Equity & Empowerment will do intensive outreach in the Black and Brown communities in August and September. The purpose of this outreach is to get greater participation in the 2019 budget process.

VII. DISCUSSION OF NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER MEETING DATES

Held until the next meeting

VIII. ANNOUNCEMENTS

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Grover motioned to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 8:36pm.