



City of  
**Evanston™**  
**EQUITY AND EMPOWERMENT COMMISSION**

**Thursday, June 20, 2019, 6:30 to 8 p.m.**  
Lorraine H. Morton Civic Center  
2100 Ridge Avenue, Evanston, Room 2402

**Members Present:** D. Holmes, M. Wynne, A. Ibañez, T. Eberhart, J. Grover, K. Lyons, J. Corbier de Lara, M. Dillard (7:25 p.m. arrival)

**Staff Present:** P. Efiom, P. Martínez

**AGENDA**

1. **Call to Order/Declaration of a Quorum**  
Chair Grover called meeting to order at 6:36 p.m.

2. **Approval of meeting minutes of May 16, 2019**  
Approved 7-0

3. **Public comment**

Ms. Doreen Price said she was happy with the work being done by the Equity and Empowerment Commission.

Ms. Tina Payton spoke about gentrification in the 5<sup>th</sup> Ward, and asked the Commission to help with financial resources to community members who offer affordable housing.

Ms. Betty Sue Esther said she is still trying to figure out what the mission of the Commission is. She also spoke about gentrification of the 5<sup>th</sup> Ward. Ms. Esther said the Commission needs to talk to 5<sup>th</sup> Ward residents to understand their needs, and become familiar with the West End Plan.

Mr. Corlis Sutton spoke about discrimination and redlining in Evanston. He also spoke about reparations, and the needs to take action instead of following rhetoric.

Ms. Sanina Ellison-Jones, from Dearborn Realtors Board, spoke about her organization's mission.

Mr. Courtney Jones, President of Dearborn Realtors Board, spoke about the work and programs of his organization. They provide financial literacy programs, connect clients with organizations who can help them achieve their financial goals.

Ms. Eileen Heineman, from the YWCA, thanked the Commission and Ald. Fleming for their work on equity. She said the YWCA Equity Institute is ready to be a resource for the City. Ms. Heineman also said the City needs more than a "sorry" and get to work towards equity.

Mr. Bobby Burns spoke the “Commitment to End Structural Racism and Achieve Racial Equity Resolution,” and asked about the City’s relationship with GARE. He said he is concerned about the training staff receives to change their “hearts and feelings,” because staff leaves; he argued the City needs to do work to operationalize equity.

4. **For Discussion**

a. CARP Policy Engagement – Kumar Jensen, Chief Sustainability and Resilience Officer

Mr. Kumar Jensen, Chief Sustainability and Resiliency Officer, explained he wanted to explain how the Climate Action and Resiliency Plan (CARP) was thinking about the public process for the plan, and the policy development process to receive input.

CARP is Evanston’s plan to reduce its climate impact. It has 14 focus areas, 133 actions, and over 40 policies. Some of the focus areas include zero waste, municipal operations, and building efficiency.

The policy package was designed by staff, modeled as an omnibus. The plan will follow a two-year process. The first year will be a pilot process, broken down in three (3) phases: to educate and solicit input, reflect back, and then do policy development.

The next steps are for the Equity and Empowerment Commission to review the proposal and provide feedback at the next meeting, to then present the results to the Human Services Committee.

b. Evanston’s Environmental Justice Resolution – Timothy Eberhart

Comm. Eberhart presented a proposal for an environmental justice ordinance, brought forward by the Environmental Justice Evanston (EJE).

Mr. Rick Nelson introduced himself and explained he is seeking feedback for the resolution, and hoped the Commission will support the resolution when it goes to City Council.

EJE is a committee from the Citizens for a Greener Evanston. They want to ensure that all Evanston communities are treated with respect when it comes to the environment.

Ms. Jeri Garland said the ordinance includes a declaration of environmental justice and public engagement policy. The ordinance calls for fair and meaningful engagement with minority and low-income communities, who will be the most impacted by climate change. The group hopes the City Council will adopt the resolution and eventually become an ordinance.

Comm. Eberhart said there is a need for an ordinance to take environmental justice into account. He encouraged the Commission to endorse it.

Ald. Wynne said the resolution makes sense, but wanted to know more about Kumar’s level of involvement in this resolution. Comm. Eberhart he has worked with Kumar in the last two years to help frame it. Ald. Wynne said she has concerns; the group needs to work with Community Development staff, as they

are the department that deals with developments, specifically with zoning. She said that a lot of the concerns addressed in the resolution are already addressed by the City, and the group would benefit from talking to Community Development staff to identify the real gaps in the development process. Ald. Wynne noted the resolution is too general.

Comm. Eberhart said the group has already worked with City staff and Ald. Revelle to make sure they were addressing the gaps.

Ms. Garland said what they are looking for feedback, and wanted to be very conceptual at this point, because they understand there are processes the City conducts. She also said they are in the process of meeting with individual aldermen to make sure they understand the ordinance.

Ald. Wynne reiterated her recommendation to talk to Community Development staff and continue conversations with Kumar Jensen to make sure the resolution reflects the work and needs already in place.

Comm. Corbier de Lara asked the group to consider access to the disabled when they address quality of life.

Ms. Janet Alexander Davis, 5<sup>th</sup> Ward resident, thanked Ald. Wynne for her feedback. She said the group tried to talk to staff, but did not always receive a response. She also said there are information inequities.

Comm. Holmes recommended that Mr. Jensen takes the lead on getting all appropriate departments together to work on the resolution.

Comm. Dillard agreed there are information inequities.

Comm. Ibañez said she hoped that the community engagement policy she and Comm. Holmes drafted gets pushed so that staff can work with it.

Comm. Grover said the City needs an community engagement plan.

**Comm. Grover moved to recommended that City staff work with EJE to develop a resolution. Ald. Wynne seconded. Motion carried unanimously.**

- c. "Solutions Only" Policy for reparations for the west end of the 5<sup>th</sup> Ward  
Alderman Robin Rue Simmons

Ald. Rue Simmons introduced Baxter Swilley. Mr. Swilley spoke about the institution of slavery. He spoke of his work his work with the City of Chicago; he explained he worked to allocate funds to investigate if companies the City of Chicago does business with did work that supported slavery.

Mr. Swilley said we need to be intentional about reparations at a national level. He said we should work to bring a special master to oversee the process to give back the money from inflated property taxes, as an example of work that can be done at a local level.

Ald. Rue Simmons said she wants to focus on actionable policy that brings reparations to the community. She said Evanston has 100 resolutions and proclamations that speak to equality and diversity, yet the wealth gap persists.

Graduated income tax, real estate sales from the City's assets can be allocated to a fund to the solutions.

Ald. Rue Simmons said has reached out to institutions such as Metropolitan Planning Council, and the Dearborn Realtors to assist with the work. She expressed she wants the Commission to designate a subgroup to work on creative solutions that would put funding and programs forth for reparations.

Comm. Holmes, Comm. Dillard, Comm. Ibañez, and Chair Grover volunteered to be in the subcommittee.

A member of the public commented that he would like to see something address the spiritual and mental aspect of the issue.

Comm. Dillard said reparations is more than just giving "money" to people, but directing financial resources to address the mental issues slavery caused.

d. **Commitment to End Structural Racism and Achieve Racial Equity Resolution**  
Alderman Cecily Fleming

Ald. Fleming said the goal of the resolution is for City Council to commit to the goal of equity. She said she is interested in making sure the City addresses issues that do harm to the community.

Ald. Fleming said that she recommended joining GARE because they are the oldest organization doing equity work with government agencies. She said the membership is \$1,000, and that she is interested in the technical resources it can provide the City.

Ald. Fleming asked what has been done to operationalize equity so far. Dr. Efiom said equity advocates (staff) are working on internal processes. The equity framework from the Commission is on hold to make sure it aligns with the recommendations from the social services review.

**The subcommittee working on reparations solutions will work on Ald. Fleming's request to operationalize equity in August.**

Comm. Cornier de Lara noted that the resolution did not include people with disabilities, which she requested twice to have the language included.

5. **Reports**

a. **Staff**

i. **Language Access Policy Update**

Paulina Martínez reported that a survey for employees to report their current processes to handle cases of community members with limited English abilities, and had over 100 responses. She also reported she has met with some community members to capture qualitative data.

The Commission asked Ms. Martínez to provide an update at the next meeting.

b. **Commissioners**

Comm. Ibañez said she is putting together a petition asking the City to refrain from using any equipment or vehicles that belong on DHS, as it causes fear and anxiety for community members, especially vulnerable populations.

City Manager, Wally Bobkiewicz clarified the trailer belongs to Cook County and that the department who owns the vehicle used as Custer Fair really works on emergency preparedness, not immigration issues.

6. **Items for communication**

7. **Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned at 9:32 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Paulina Martínez

DRAFT