



Minutes
Committee on Equity, Diversity & Inclusion
Monday, August 3, 2020 @ 6:00 P.M.

Via zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88097021187>; ID: 880 9702 1187; Dial In: (301) 715-8592
Email comments prior to the meeting to sherrie.boak@lansingmi.gov

CALL TO ORDER

Council Member Spitzley called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

PRESENT via audio/video

Council Member Spitzley, Chair
Council Member Dunbar, Vice-Chair
Council Member Spadafore, Member

OTHERS PRESENT via audio/video

Sherrie Boak, Council Staff
Jim Smiertka, City Attorney
Lisa Hagen, Assistant City Attorney
Spoke during public comment:
Erika Spitzfaden
Michael Lynn
Erica Lynn
Rachel Willis
Alexis Duffy
Julia Kramer
Sarah Williams
Ashlea Phenice, Planned Parenthood Advocates of Michigan
Tobias Webb
Emily Reyst
Ethan Scmitt
Nate Jemison
Jonathon (no last name given)
Emily Syrjja
Sadie Weck
Geoph (no last name given)
Chris Bethea
Rachel Diskin
Laura Anderson
Empower Lansing

DISCUSSION

Establish Organization and Goals for Committee

Council Member Spitzley noted for the record that this Committee was recently established by a unanimous vote from Council and a call to action on declaring racism a public health crisis. Tonight's meeting would be an organizational meeting and to hear public feedback and

comment. She then asked for input from the other Committee members on when it would be best to meet. Council Member Spitzley then announced that the public would have the first 15 minutes to sign up for public comment. Before she opened up to the Committee, she did also state that even though Council Member Betz is not part of this Committee, his proposed resolution to Council is a piece of the larger puzzle, but the Committee will not piece meal actions but look at the City as a whole. Council Member Betz and Dunbar sponsored resolution will be part of the future recommendations.

Council Member Dunbar at this time had no suggestions for the Committee, but did welcome the public and stated she looked forward to hearing from them. Council Member Spadafore reminded the Committee and the public that this is a permanent Committee and part of the standing Committees in the Council Rules from this point forward. There is the hope that the future members continue to look to consider towards future and a longer conversation. Council Member Spitzley recapped what the Ad Hoc on Diversity & Inclusion did in 2016-2018 with work on a diverse work force, the human rights ordinances, immigrants and seniors. Council Member Spitzley then asked the Committee on their thoughts of keeping it at 3 members or adding more. Council Member Dunbar responded it would depend on where the Committee wants to go. There are experts that could come in to testify to the numbers and goals, but at this time she did not have who to invite. She did state in her opinion it might be a more key factor to have other Council members. Council Member Spitzley stated as Chairperson her goal is to report back regularly to Council, potentially at Committee of the Whole and reach out at that time to those members for further input. Her question at this time is if the current Committee members want to increase the number of members. She too agreed to have department directors in to testify for an educated decision. Council Member Spadafore spoke about his goals and expectations for the Committee, which included a conversation on diversity and inclusion, and some topics will require different expertise, but those people could be invited per agenda, not expected to be part of the Committee on a bi-weekly schedule. Council Member Dunbar concurred with limiting it to 3 Committee members.

Public Comment/Listening Session

Ms. Spitzfaden spoke in support of the establishment of the Committee and would be encouraged with a broader approach, looking into helping the youth and the program My Brothers Keeper.

Mr. Michael Lynn asked for the Committee to look into all the things that he has been talked about at Council meetings and his belief in the where funding should go from the LPD, the Fire Department. He also noted hiring issues with the LPD and LFD seniority practices. Lastly, there he noted the role of the City Attorney since that position works for the Mayor and Council.

Ms. Lynn spoke in support of the proposed resolution by Council Member Betz and Dunbar. Then she noted what she is looking to come from this Committee is transparency, and if they bring on new members, what that process would be. She then asked this Committee to look into how they would hold Mayor Schor accountable to the recommendations from this Committee. In her opinion, the Mayor's office has been dismissive on any recommendations that have been brought to him, and his office needs to be looked into on the lack of oversight.

Ms. Willis asked the Committee to continue in the transparency that has begun and continue with the community input. Lastly, she want the Committee to address and make decisions with all three topics of equity, diversity and inclusion.

Ms. Duffy spoke in support of the resolution by Council Member Betz and Dunbar, and the creation of this Committee. She encouraged the Committee to reach out to the organizations that are currently working on something similar. With inviting these organizations to make sure it is accessible to participate.

At this time of the meeting there were two more members of Council signed into the meeting, so Council Member Spitzley asked those members to remove themselves from the meeting to maintain the integrity of the meeting. The definition of the quorum concern was addressed by City Attorney Smiertka.

Council Member Dunbar left the meeting.

Ms. Kramer spoke in support of the resolution on Council Member Betz and Dunbar, and supported the earlier statements on diversity and transparency. Encouraged moving from diversity into inclusion into equity, and the framework around racial equity.

Council Member Spitzley noted the departure of Council Member Dunbar from the meeting and there were efforts to get her back into the meeting.

Ms. Williams supported earlier comments from the public, and in support of the resolution from Council Member Betz and Dunbar to defund the police. She stated a concern on what appeared to be confusing on what all the committees that have been established are doing looking to moving forward in an equitable way.

Council Member Dunbar returned to the meeting and stated that the power of the legislative branch is control of the purse strings.

Ms. Phenice spoke in support of the resolution by Council Member Betz and Dunbar to defund the police. She encourage the Committee to listen to the community, but take actual movement on proposals by other marginalized community groups have been asking for.

Mr. Webb supported the start of this Committee, he supported the resolution by Council Member Betz and Dunbar. He encouraged the Committee to look at the people who are already helping the communities and make sure they are better funded. Mr. Webb asked to see the financial resources moved away from racist institutions and into the communities.

Council Member Spitzley noted that some comments have been made on the format of the meetings. Council Member Spadafore explained that with ZOOM, as the virtual platform. There are two platforms and the City started with Zoom Meetings, however with the Zoom Webinar it is better to use Webinar with largest participation. This allows participation with the security on inappropriate language and graphics. Council Member Spitzley that with this format the speakers can see the Council Members and the public comment timer. Her preference would be face to face meetings, but that might not occur until 2021. The goal at this time is transparency, no violation of the open meetings act, and asked for continued patience.

Council Member Spitzley reiterated that sign up for public comment was from 6:00 – 6:20, limiting to 3 minutes to allow time and respect everyone's time.

Ms. Reyst spoke in support of the resolution from Council Member Betz and Dunbar. She encouraged the Committee to rethink what safety is and how that can be achieved. Ms. Reyst asked the Committee to look into the LPD union contract, and holding the Mayor's office accountable with their all their tasks.

Council Member Spitzley spoke on prioritizing the resolution by Council Member Betz and Dunbar, and that the Committee on Ways and Means has been working on compiling the LPD budget details, which are restricted funds, which ones are pension, which are operating and everything Council needs to know on how to proceed. So even while comments are happening at this Committee, tasked are being done in other Council Committees.

Mr. Schmitt acknowledged the Committee for the work they are doing, and supported the resolution presented to Council by Council Member Betz and Dunbar. Lastly, Mr. Schmitt supported the other comments by the other public comments.

Mr. Jenison spoke in support of the resolution by Council Member Betz and Dunbar, and comments made earlier by Michael and Erica Lynn.

Jonathon (no last name given) spoke in support of all other public comments, and asked for all residents to have equality and the ability to get a decent education, not worry about their security. Not just diversity in hiring, but to have the best in the roles of safety in the LFD and LPD. He did not speak to defunding the police, but if there is a need for social work, to put it to the voters for a millage. Lastly, he asked the Committee to listen to all the people and what all those words such as dismantling, systemic institution and what does that look like.

Council Member Spitzley noted that in this Council no one is interested in numbers, they want the best working for the City. They can still achieve the goals of diversity and have the best. If jobs are being posted in the same area, you will always get the same, so if the City could reach out to the diverse organizations there would be diverse applications. It is not about numbers, but changing a mindset, and casts a wider net to bring in a more diverse population.

Ms. Syrja spoke in support of the resolution put forward by Council Member Betz and Dunbar, and supported earlier comments that the Council hold the Mayor's office accountable. Concluding that the Committee embrace an ethic of inclusive and trust building can be a long and effort process. Regarding meeting format, asking for all meetings of Council to be accessible to the public.

Ms. Weck spoke in support of the resolution from Council Member Betz and Dunbar, asked for diversity in hiring, and provided an example of a situation with a friend at a protest, and historical situation in 2019 at Eastern High School. This she stated is why officers do not belong in high schools.

Council Member Spadafore in the most recent budget the school resource officer was removed, and will be removed from the school budget as well.

Geoph (no last name given) supported statements made by Michael and Erica Lynn, asked the Council to march with the protestors, and asked the Committee to strongly consider all the requests to defund the police. He concluded by asking the Council to decriminalize all drug use and homelessness and take the funds from LPD and invest in healing and education. A request was made to rename a street to Bayard Rustin who was a local activist, make the City a sanctuary City.

Ms. Boak noted that Laura Anderson, Empower Lansing and Chris Beatha all lowered their hands and offered them the opportunity to speak again.

Mr. Beatha spoke in support of the resolution by Council Member Betz and Dunbar, asked for more funds into educating the youth especially the black and brown that have been left behind. He asked the Committee to hold accountable what he believes is the racism in the Mayor's administration.

Council Member Spitzley asked the Committee to discuss topics that were brought up during the public comment. One question asked was what power does Council have, and Council speaks through resolutions and ordinance changes, but a major way is through the budget

process. As the Committee looks at all this, and making recommendations back to the Administration will involve budget changes and resolutions. She continued, but clarifying that to hold the Mayor accountable, that question was asked in July to the City Attorney, it was noted by the OCA the Council does not have the authority to investigate the Mayor's office. Council does have the authority to do through resolution, budget and ordinance is to make the changes to reflect the commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. Mayor can veto, but Council has override power and that is the legislative power. Regarding defunding, she stated she understood, and with the resolution from Betz and Dunbar. In order to talk about defunding, the Council has to understand what dealing with first. WM looking at that and it will be brought back to the Committee and it will be discussed. That way everyone know what is there and what the budget looks like. It is part of the larger picture and there is not a specific timeline and this is a standing committee. This committee will have a rolling recommendations through the lifetime of this committee. Issues can be resolved with information, tenacity and resolve. This committee will report to the council as a whole and getting their input and feedback as well.

Council Member Spadafore regarding earlier questions and virtual meetings in the future, and the City is working on the technology for that. The Council and Committee meetings are streamed on Channel 12 and online. That works with cameras but not zoom at the same time. The OCA has conceded that public comment, as long as Council is in the Chambers it will satisfy the open meetings act. Regarding the budget item, the report from the Chief Strategy office was sent to all of Council by 5 pm today, and her information was good. There have already been comments by some Council Members. The budget priorities are due on or before September 31, 2020 and Committee could look at that as well for address with racial equity. Council Member Dunbar referenced an earlier comment by some of the speakers about other organizations and discussions that are being held, she encourage the Committee and council members to listen in all settings.

The Committee consensus was to review and discuss the CSO report at the next meeting, which was determined Wednesday August 13th at 6 pm.

Ms. Boak read into the record the emails that were sent to the Committee before the meeting from Dinah DeWald, Chase Halsne, Culver Ganem-Redd, Sarah Savage, Marilyn Irvine, Sam Inglot, and Simon Marshall – Shah. Council Member Spitzley added that some people do not feel comfortable speaking in public, and Council has received emails from both sides of the opinions and those are all taken into account.

Adjourn

Adjourned at 7:32 p.m.

Submitted by, Sherrie Boak

Recording Secretary, Lansing City Council

Approved by the Committee August 12, 2020