

**Charter Commission
Information Gathering Subcommittee Meeting
with City Equity Managers
June 9, 2021, 3:30 p.m.
Minutes**

Attendance

Commissioners Present		
Salome Chimuku	Melanie Billings-Yun	Andrew Speer
Debra Porta	Amira Streeter	Candace Avalos
Hanna Osman	Angela Jones	Raahi Reddy
Anthony Castaneda	Vadim Mozyrsky	Yasmin Ibarra

Staff Present		
Name	Name	Name
Julia Meier	Diana Shiplet	Ariella Frishberg (JLA)
Sofia Alvarez-Castro	Markisha Smith	Angela Henderson
Thuan Duong	Erich Pacheco	Tosin Abiodun

Welcome

Julia welcomed the group, gave an overview of the format for today’s meeting, and reminded everyone that the meeting will be recorded. She acknowledged the challenges of equity managers balancing open communications with concerns around how their statements may be perceived by city leadership.

Equity Managers introduced themselves.

Question and Answer Time

Question: Several groups have suggested the commission consider adding a preamble to the Charter with either an equity statement or the City values. If equity managers could include anything, what would that be?

Erich: A requirement to have a workforce that reflects the diversity of the community we serve. We currently don’t reflect current demographics as a whole, and in particular are missing the mark on the even more diverse under 25 population of Portland. We as a City need to invest upstream in the things necessary to have those future employees, “in the pipeline”.

Angela: There needs to be a sense of accountability through all levels of City leadership. We need a broader network of equity champions to do the work in all bureaus. This work should be supported intentionally across the whole institution.

Question: Do you have ideas on what the City or the Charter can do to get people in the employment pipeline?

Erich: The City does have some programs in place with local schools, but needs to expand this to grant funding, job training, or creation of incubators to increase both future employee diversity and diversity in contracting.

Question: We have heard multiple times now that there are overarching issues, including the current form of government, which need to be fixed in the Charter. In what ways would it be helpful to use your equity lens/framework to assess input on the Charter? Where does the Charter help or hurt you work as equity managers?

Angela: Equity and Disability Plans are created and specific to select bureaus – not all bureaus even have them. Its one thing to have the tools those provide, but another to have those tools “baked into” all City rules and requirements. If equity and disability work could be written into the charter, we as equity managers could make more progress. If the Charter were more explicit, we could have greater expectations for bureau work.

Thuan: Equity managers can do the work in their own bureaus but are limited by the form of government. The cross-bureau work we have to do now is very time and labor intensive and often where challenges arise.

Erich: Equity in the city is two-pronged; Workforce (hiring, retention, promotion, discipline, etc.) and Community Services (permitting, planning, parks, streets, etc.) The City is lacking in partnerships with communities of color. With out support of central service bureaus, such as budgeting or purchasing, it’s hard to advance equity in the community. He gave an example of community volunteers only being paid \$2/hour for their work with the City.

The form of government leads to lots of inequities because communities of color don’t know how to get their voices heard. Directors, commissioners, and the Mayor don’t have accountability to advance equity work, so bureaus can’t advance the work internally or with the community.

Dr. Smith: There are lots of tools and resources available for the bureaus to use but there is no accountability so no way to operationalize these tools as a means for change. Often we get stuck on the implementation of ideas and can’t change practices or policies. If Council is not tuned into equity, then no progress can be achieved. It would be exciting to have the work in the Charter to give equity managers some “teeth”.

Thuan: An equity lens is needed, but how does a preamble alone create the mechanism for implementing change?

Question: What does implementation or operationalization of equity look like? We’ve seen lots of ways the City cares about equity but how do we help operationalize it? Do we need to add, for example, contracting thresholds in the Charter?

Erich: Any kind of measurable target (moveable as city demographics change) would be a start. The problem is not in setting a target but in ignoring all the other exterior issues which exist. The City needs to do things like create an incubator to improve contracting or employment by helping the upstream reasons those things are challenging. We need to combat historic misallocation of resources. We can’t address our issues without addressing all the other issues.

Question: From your lens as equity managers, have you considered what parts of the charter can help or hurt overcoming these inequities?

Erich: I currently don't know enough of the full charter to speak to this question. I do think that there is too much legalese. Making it more understandable to everyone would be helpful. Maybe the commission should consider starting from scratch in order to for an equitable form of government. What would a blank canvas look like?

Question: How do we balance the end goal of getting change passed by voters without causing issues which would make voter go against the change? How can the equity managers help this commission understand better how to do this [charter review] work better?

Erich: Today can be the start of a conversation over the coming months. Perhaps the equity managers can provide input on proposed changes and what outcomes those changes may have to the community.

Angela: I'm not sure there is anyone in the City who knows the charter well but building a relationship with the commission in order to give feedback or input on proposed changes would be the most efficient use of everyone's time. At a higher level, if the commission is going to build accountability and equity into the charter, it will need to be in the opening chapters as all other chapters stem from those.

Erich: There are lots of important things never considered by those who created the charter. I'm sure there are ways to address those issues, but I don't want to bind the group by what has already been put in place.

Question: It seems we are trying to balance efficiency versus equity. How should we consider those when evaluating changes put forth by the bureaus?

Angela: Choose substance over efficiency at all times. We as a city should seek to be and have quality information, products and services for our community. Don't be bound only by choosing the most efficient route. I also support the idea of having equity managers or other staff involved with the commission during this process.

Commissioner Chimuku stated that we might consider having an equity subcommittee to continue to understand and contextualize input with help from the equity managers.

Erich stated that equity isn't just a moral imperative, it's an economic one. It's in everyone's best interest that communities of color in Portland succeed.

Meeting adjourned

Minutes respectfully submitted,
Diana Shplet, Executive Assistant to the CAO and CFO

Meeting Chat

15:29:48 From Markisha Smith to All panelists : I am just here early! Hello everyone :)
15:30:20 From Ariella Frishberg, she/her, facilitation support : Hi Markisha! :)
15:30:27 From Debra Porta (Commissioner) to All panelists : My apologies-my camera is having issues today. I am here though.
15:33:10 From Candace Avalos (Commissioner) : I can only stay until 3:58

15:34:39 From Raahi Reddy (Commissioner) to All panelists : Hello Dr. Webster!

15:34:47 From Hanna Osman (Commissioner) to All panelists : '

15:36:54 From Angela Henderson to All panelists : I'm having connectivity issues and need to sign off and rejoin. BRB

15:39:52 From Thuan Duong (she/her), PHB to All panelists : I'm not sure if it's Tosin or Kenya, but if you used Angela's link to join, you're tagged as Angela H.

15:40:21 From Markisha Smith to All panelists : Hi Raahi! :)

15:41:08 From Raahi Reddy (Commissioner) to All panelists : Hi Angela-which Bureau do you work in?

15:42:12 From Comm. Chimuku, She/Her (Commissioner) : I thought I saw Tosin pop in on video.

15:44:57 From Angela Henderson to All panelists : Erich, would you mind placing the questions in the chat, please?

15:45:35 From Erich Pacheco PWB (he/him) to All panelists : What are your dream goals for the City from an equity perspective?

15:48:38 From Julia Meier (Project Manager) : Here are the questions Commissioners sent ahead of time:

15:48:43 From Julia Meier (Project Manager) : • What bolsters your ability to deliver on racial justice outcomes?

- What limits your ability to deliver on racial justice outcomes?
- What changes would help you deliver on racial justice outcomes?
- How can the Charter Commission use the City's racial justice framework to review the charter?

15:56:12 From Amira Streeter (Commissioner) to All panelists : It would be really helpful to have folks keep raising their hands to keep track of who wants to speak - thanks

15:57:44 From Candace Avalos (Commissioner) : I've gotta run, thanks again for sharing your work with the commission.

15:58:21 From Candace Avalos (Commissioner) : also - that 20% thing is bogus >:(

15:58:25 From Candace Avalos (Commissioner) : okay bye for real now

16:08:35 From Comm. Chimuku, She/Her (Commissioner) : Great points

16:10:36 From Debra Porta (Commissioner) She/Her : Thank you Andrew

16:10:43 From Raahi Reddy (Commissioner) to All panelists : excellent question Andrew

16:12:06 From Melanie Billings-Yun (Commissioner) : One thing I would like to discuss at some point is whether we can move beyond what is in the current charter to take on the sorts of issues being raised today.

16:19:16 From Andrew Speer (Commissioner) : I need to step away for another meeting. Thank you all for the conversation and engagement!

16:21:44 From Melanie Billings-Yun (Commissioner) : Agreed with all!

16:21:52 From Amira Streeter (Commissioner) : Maybe help provide input on how to make the Charter more accessible?

16:22:01 From Amira Streeter (Commissioner) : Agreed with Comm. Reddy

16:23:20 From Raahi Reddy (Commissioner) to All panelists : Love the concept of what could be "inalienable rights: in our Portland--very interesting frame.

16:24:35 From Debra Porta (Commissioner) She/Her : Agreed

16:29:16 From Debra Porta (Commissioner) She/Her : Absolutely

16:30:17 From Debra Porta (Commissioner) She/Her : Yes Erich!

16:30:48 From Comm. Chimuku, She/Her (Commissioner) : Couldn't agree more

16:31:02 From Raahi Reddy (Commissioner) to All panelists : spot on Erich!

16:31:52 From Amira Streeter (Commissioner) : Thank you all very much!!

16:31:54
thoughts!

From Raahi Reddy (Commissioner) to All panelists : Thank you for your time and

16:31:58

From Yasmin Ibarra (Commissioner) to All panelists : thank you all!