

Minutes of the Meeting
Equity and Empowerment Commission
June 18, 2020

Submitted by Joan Taylor

Attending: Jane Grover, Chair; Timothy Eberhart, Delores Holmes, Kathy Lyons, Alehandra Ibanez, Melissa Wynne; Shericka, Kimberly Richardson, Pauline.

Language Access Guidelines Update: Pauline reported on the contract with CityFront/Voyce.

The City of Evanston signed a 60-month agreement with CityFront/Voyce, for over the phone and video interpretation services. The service was rolled out in mid-March 2020. To date, 64 over the phone interpretation calls have been made, primarily by Public Health staff; 96% of the callers have requested assistance in Spanish, and 4% assistance in Arabic.

The other plans such as the posters and translation of documents has been delayed because of the virus.

The Commission members had a number of questions: What about the police? Not many of the police are comfortable translating. In order to control the quality, guidelines call for using CityFront rather than staff to interpret.

What is the next step? Staff training for all public facing employees before the end of the year.

How is the public made aware of the service? Spanish newsletter and posters in building.

It was also suggested that this information go to the library, Ms. Mendoza, (The Latino Congress), the school district , Interfaith Action and the Haitian Congress.

Reflection on Racial Inequality: Each member of the Commission spoke of their personal reactions to the recent events. Alehandra Ibanez spoke of the urgency to get something done. Delores Holmes said that “Nothing will happen until the system changes.” She thinks Evanston made a good move in taking advocacy out of the police department. She thinks the Commission should go back to the original plan of dealing with race and calling a spade a spade and get it done.

Kathy Lyons said that technology is being used to reach more people. 8500 people listened to the lecture on White Fragility.

Operations Equity Update: Kimberly Richardson said that we need to fix our internal structure. She wants to create a staff equity committee. They need an equity coach to do training and then an assessment. They need to change from a line item to an outcome budget.

She spoke in positive terms of the Human Services and Health Committee rebuilding. And in negative terms that the training budget had been cut. She will be presenting these ideas to City Council on Monday.

Jane asked how the Commission Members could help. Kimberly asked for help in establishing Indicators. She wants to work collaboratively. It would be great to come up with guidelines for our Boards and Commissions. She mentioned that there is a surge of interest in applications for the Police Review Board, ninety applications. Maybe some can be redirected to other committees.

Then the members discussed materials that are already available that can be used to decide on indicators: The E plan, YWCA, Parks and Recreation, NAACP, The Latino Congress, Cradles to Careers, Housing Commission, Districts 65 and 202, the Community Foundation. Several members offered to contact organizations and ask for their priorities. Kimberly will draft something so the members are using the same language in approaching organizations.

Jane asked Kimberly if this would be considered an action step. Kimberly said yes.

Jane suggested that Commission Members study the meaning of Community Indicators.

Jane said we need a meaningful policy regarding public engagement. Kimberly said they have a draft but it has to be to the public, staff, other Boards and Commissions before finalized.

Reparations Subcommittee Report: A report will be submitted to City Council on Monday. Alderman Simmons was on the cover of Chicago Magazine and has been getting national attention.

Other: Alehandra asked about the working committee on Truth and Justice. She will contact Eileen of the YWCA.

The Environmental Justice Resolution is ready to be approved after legal goes through it.

There will be Juneteenth Celebrations this weekend, prayer vigils at each of the hospitals and a Real Men Pray walk.

There will be focus groups around the hiring of the City Manager.