

REPARATIONS COMMITTEE TOWN HALL – AUGUST 27, 2020

The meeting began, via zoom, at 7:10 pm Ald. Rue-Simmons chaired the event and presented an agenda for the evening. This was the third town hall meeting, and hopefully the first grants will be available in 2021.

Subcommittee Reports:

Ald. Rue-Simmons presented **the housing policy** report. Residents responded that housing was a priority, and the committee will meet Friday morning to recommend grants of up to \$25,000 for mortgages to buy a home or rehab improvements to Evanston black residents who can prove that they themselves or they were descendants who experienced discrimination through Evanston policies in the past (between 1919 and 1969).

Ald. Rainey reported on the **financial situation**. The city is charging the maximum municipal tax of 3% on cannabis sales. Last month the sales tax produced \$35,000. There may be more licenses awarded later in Evanston, and the original dispensary on Maple is doubling its size in the next month. First revenue will be received in October, 2020.

Ald. Braithwite summarized **administration process** for the previous housing policies, and said that the city was working on a written application process right now.

Henry Wilkins presented **the Education and Wellness** report, preceded by a brief video with Evanston leaders. In it Oliver Ruff mentioned the three main issues–

1) Evanston educational “repairs” (teaching more black history)

2) Short and long term objectives

3) a STEM Community School in the “central core” of the 5th ward . (STEM = science, technology, engineering & math.) He also had a graphic timeline of progress for #3

- Vision– high family involvement
- Build support and awareness– gathered 400 emails so far
- Online presence– website is stemschoolevanston.net
- Feasibility study– how to raise \$ and land without a referendum. Create 501c3.
- Community research– help is needed here!

Dino Robinson has worked on the **historical background** with Dr. Comsted (?) of the Evanston History Center. They have produced a 74 page report on Evanston

policies of redlining, zoning discrimination and lawsuits from 1919 to 1969. He introduced the guest speaker, but Spencer Jourdain had trouble with his audio, so they proceeded and came back to him later in the program.

NAARC (National African American Reparations Committee)

Dr. Ron Daniels congratulated Evanston and Ald. Rue-Simmons on meeting the ten point criteria that is the plan other cities could follow. Kamm Howard and Dr. Caruthers (9AN Evanston resident, member of AME Church) also praised the work done to reach certification. 'Evanston is a model to start a reparation initiative.' The Evanston Community Foundation will be the fiscal holder of the reparation fund, and the city will institutionalize the application process. The City Council has been vigilant in overseeing this commitment. Nikehi Taifa also spoke enthusiastically. Also thanked Judge Lionel Jean-Baptiste for all his support (Ald. Rue-Simmons seconded that!)

Danny Glover, UN representative for reparations work, spoke of the importance of education, especially map literacy. He mentioned that as a grandson of a sharecropper, he appreciates the difference an education can make.

Guest Speaker: Spencer Jourdain (son of first Black Alderman, E.L. Jourdain)

This was truly inspiring as he detailed his father's move to Asbury Ave. in Evanston in 1924. He first worked for the *Chicago Defender*. In 1931, there was a movement to divide the 5th ward, and he used his editorial skills to oppose this move, saying that it would "chop out the heart of the community". Residents agreed and said they needed their **own** alderman – him! Once elected, he worked for the holistic development of every citizen, and made use of every part of the social culture. He integrated the theaters, the parks and sports fields. He worked on effective trash collection, electric power distribution and the community hospital. Much was done through the Emerson YMCA, and by 1948 ensured that blacks had equal access to the public library! Economic development and fair housing (especially for veterans) were issues toward the end of his life.

Spencer, a graduate of Harvard, has written a series of books called "Dream Dancers" about this family's history. He said that his father would be so proud of what is happening in Evanston today! "You represent his dream! Never stop the fight!"

Meeting adjourned at 8:50 pm.