



African American Resources Advisory Commission

MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, December 5, 2017

The African American Resources Advisory Commission convened in a meeting on Tuesday, December 5, 2017 at Street-Jones Building, 1000 East 11th Street, Room 400-A in Austin, Texas. The meeting was called to order at 5:30 by Chair Kenneth Thompson.

African American Resources Advisory Commissioners:

Present: Chair Kenneth Thompson, LaTisha Anderson, Jessica Faith Carter, Miriam Conner, Aaron Demerson, Clifford Gillard, Tam Hawkins, Marissa Jones, Nelson Lindner, Farah Muscadin, and Gregory Smith

Absent: Vice Chair Chiquita Eugene, Daryl Horton, and Ruthie Redmond

City Staff in Attendance: Economic Development Department (EDD) Assistant Director Sylnovia Holt-Rabb, Assistant City Manager Mark Washington, EDD Small Business Program Manager Vicky Valdez, EDD Small Business Program Manager III Joy Miller, and EDD Small Business Information Specialist Jackie Mayo.

1. Approval of Minutes:

The minutes of the November 14 regular meeting were approved unanimously following a motion by Commissioner Jones, seconded by Commissioner Muscadin.

2. Chair's Report:

Chair Thompson provided an update on a proposed Legacy Mural Park, a joint project on East 12th Street with Six Square and with the Masons in their vacant lot. This would be a mural park representing masons and veterans, and called the Richard Overton Park at Mount Carmel Lodge.

Chair Thompson also met with the City's Equity officer Brion Oaks to discuss the Carver complex, and how to obtain \$1.5 million for phases 2 and 3. He and Commissioner Conner have met with the Bond Oversight Committee in an effort to get the project included in bond package and other Commissioners are encouraged to do the same.

Mr. Thompson also met with a veterans' art group about the upcoming Veterans' Art Festival and attended the NAACP banquet where Dr. Mark Washington and Commissioner Smith were recognized.

3. Citizen Communication:

- a. Margaret Curtis signed up not wishing to speak.
- b. David Colligan provided an update on the economic development policy currently under development and how the policy can connect to the overall community. He has met with advisory groups, including Six Square, the minority contractor associations, the Black Chamber of Commerce board and Community Advancement Network, and provided the feedback received to City Council today. He asked if the Commission has any questions.
- c. April Sullivan signed up not wishing to speak.



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4. Presentations:

- a. **Latreese Cooke with Minorities for Equality in Economy, Education, Liberty and Justice (MEEELJ)** spoke to provide an overview of MEEELJ, which serves people who were previously incarcerated. The organization works with area employers to find employment opportunities for people. In quarter 4 fewer people were able to be served. Ms. Cooke seeks continued funding and said there are problems associated with one-year funding which include requests for payment being returned or payments being held up because reimbursement was requested for sales taxes or expenses paid with cash or travel expenses. The City performed on-site monitoring this, a process which began in July and concluded in October, during which time MEEELJ received no payment. They have received payments beginning in October, but were informed this morning that they will not receive further payment until monitors have reviewed prior submissions. Downtown Austin Community Court Director Pete Valdez clarified that all Community Court contracts were monitored in July and August. He said that when invoices are returned it is because they are not consistent with the City's standards. These are reimbursable contracts. ACM Washington offered to explore the possibility of releasing payment for approved items in advance of resolution of questioned items. Equity Office proposals include technical assistance to new small and minority businesses.
- b. **Glen Towery, chair of the AVA Fest Committee** provided a progress update on the upcoming Veterans Arts Festival. The committee made a proposal to Laura Esparanza, who is in charge of museums for City of Austin PARD. Ms. Esparanza granted four museums, including Carver, MACC and Asian American Center, for a festival to occur in October 2019. The festival has been scheduled for October 18 – November 17, 2019. Mr. Towery spoke about how art can benefit veterans and noted that art is a form of therapy for many veterans who suffer from PTSD. Art will be placed in the centers consistently with their mission statements. Mr. Towery asked for a letter from the Commission supporting the festival when they go to City Council on December 14 to ask for support, including funding.
- c. **Marjorie Flanagan, Art in Public Places Project Manager** made a presentation on the **Colony Park District Park Project – Call-to-Artists**. Colony Park is in District 1, adjacent to the Turner Roberts Recreation Center. The artwork opportunity for the park has a \$39,500 budget. This opportunity is open to artists in the Austin area. There is a strong preference for art that incorporates lighting to make the park more visible. The City is working to get the word out to Austin artists, especially artists in the Colony Park neighborhood. Ms. Flanagan also spoke about two ongoing AIPP programs. The first is a pre-qualified pool – these artists will be fast-tracked for projects over the next two years. More information is available at publicartist.org. AIPP also operates LaunchPad, a program to grow Austin artists to compete nationally. LaunchPad pairs a local artist with a commissioned artist to provide the local artist an opportunity to learn what it takes to manage a large project.

Commissioner Smith spoke about the recent announcement that EDD Director Kevin Johns is retiring. C Smith said that EDD is a key piece in solving economic disparity for African Americans in Austin. He said that whoever is made director, including interim needs to be sensitive to issues of disparity and recommended EDD Assistant Director Sylnovia Holt-Rabb as the Interim Director of Economic Development.



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- d. **2018 Commission Meeting Calendar** – Commissioner Muscadin made a motion which was seconded by Commissioner Gillard to designate October meeting as the annual date for the Commission to discuss and evaluate its strategic plan.

5. Working Groups:

- a. Mural:
- b. Health and Mental Health:
- c. Public Safety: None
- d. Expansion of the Carver Library:
- e. Solar and Economic:
- f. Youth and Education: None
- g. Urban Music/Other Cultural Activities:
- h. Affordable Housing and Equitable Planning Group:

6. Old Business:

- a. Recommendation or resolution on Veterans' Arts Festival

7. New Business:

- a. Soul-y Austin (Challenge)
- b. SMBR - Disparity Study (2018): sponsored by Commissioners Anderson and Muscadin
- c. Budget Discussion: sponsored by Commissioners Muscadin and Anderson
- d. Mission Possible

8. Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned following a motion by Commissioner Smith seconded by Farah Muscadin