

Social and Economic Justice Advisory Committee
DRAFT Meeting Minutes 5/22/19

Chair: Julia Chafets

Present:

Voting Members (7): Julia Chafets, Michael Sherman, Peter Kelman, Sigrid Olson, Lalitha Mailwaganam, Shaina Kasper, Janell Perry; Jamie Granfield (staff)

Absent

Voting Members: Lauren Hierl (City Council)

Guests/Observers: None

STANDING PROCEDURES

1. **Meeting called to order:** 5:31
2. **Introduction of observers and/or new committee members:** None
3. **Note-taker/Minutes-writer:** Peter appointed for tonight's meeting
4. **Agenda** was approved with following additions:
 - Doodle Poll for summer retreat
 - Quorum
 - Living Wage Report

5. Minutes:

No vote on 4/25 minutes taken. They will be re-written in keeping with a newly adopted form/template/style so that our minutes:

- (1) insure that any and all committee votes are recorded with names of persons making the motion and seconding, as well as the exact wording of the motion, and/or attaching the final version of the documents being approved
- (2) may also provide brief and clearly written descriptions of discussions that may be narrative or in list form and may include: major points, itemized components, important information, and/or member assignments
- (3) do not contain any verbatim statements unless made by committee members who request that they be entered into the record and attributed to them
- (4) may contain paraphrased statements, although these should be without attribution except when made by a person in an identified capacity, such as the Chair, the author of a document, or a spokesperson for a sub-team or outside organization
- (5) use abbreviations only after they have been previously introduced in association with the full word or words in that meeting's minutes

Peter will write up tonight's minutes in the above form & style so it may serve as a suggested template for future minutes.

6. Public Comment: none

7. Check in:

- The importance of adhering to our norms and guidelines were cited by many
- The Chair will act as own time-keeper but help from others to keep us on time is appreciated

MAJOR AGENDA ITEMS

1. Living Wage Report (added to Agenda)

As author of the report, Michael Sherman explained that the document before us is substantially the same as we had previously seen and read with a few minor editorial changes and the addition of a cover letter to the Mayor and City Council.

After we had all read the letter to ourselves, Michael requested that the committee vote to forward the report and cover letter to the Mayor and City Council.

A question was raised about the need to submit this report to the City Council *at this time*. Jamie, as city-management staff, reported that the Council does intend to consider some kind of living wage and/or responsible employer ordinance this summer and that City Manager, Bill Fraser has asked staff to gather information on such ordinances.

Some concern was expressed about the last paragraph of the cover letter and the chair ruled that in the interests of the remaining agenda, we would table the matter until later. (See Business Thread: item #6 below)

2. Review Equity Tool

After a brief orientation and review of the process we have been following over the past month to develop our own Montpelier equity tool, the committee divided into 2 working groups to brainstorm a list of possible uses of the tool, encourage its use by our community.city government, and identify parts of it that need more work.

Some important takeaways were:

- We should begin by using the evolving toolkit ourselves, as we observe City Council and other city committee meetings and in our own work as we consider issues before us. This will enable us to refine the tool and will demonstrate to others in city government how we are looking at equity issues, which may inspire them to do so as well.
- As we draw upon ideas from equity toolkits designed for other cities (e.g., Seattle), we need to be certain that all elements of our equity toolkit reflect the needs and experiences of impacted populations in our own city of Montpelier.
- The role of data needs to be more prominent than it is in the draft version we have been considering, which was based largely on the Seattle Racial Equity Toolkit.
- We need to resolve some key terminology that we will use in our toolkit:
 - (1) Justice and/or equity?
 - (2) Do we add “racial” to “social and economic”?
 - (3) If we do add “racial” what about other impacted populations like “disabled,” LGBTQ, elderly, etc. ?
- How do we plan to “walk the walk” in terms of involving impacted populations in our work, possibly including even toolkit development and decisions on terminology?

As a next step in our toolkit development, over the next 2 weeks, a sub-team (Julia, Janell, & Jamie) will work up a draft, based on these and other takeaways, as well as other more granular suggestions made in small groups at both our May 7 unofficial meeting and today’s regular meeting. This draft will be distributed to all committee members by June 4. Everyone will review the draft and send comments back to the sub-team by June 14 in preparation for the June 18 meeting. Our goal is to have the toolkit in a form that we can begin using it over the summer as we observe City Council and other meetings and as we consider major equity issues that come before us.

BUSINESS THREADS

1. Ongoing: Website

There was some confusion about what part of Peter and Lalitha’s sub-team Report on internet tools they were seeking committee feedback on. To clarify this and get the feedback they need, Peter will send all committee members an email containing

just the part requiring committee feedback at this time: a web-based Communications tool.

In the meantime Peter & Lalitha will continue to investigate the viability of Google Docs and Slack to provide us with a work-sharing tool that will allow a below-quorum number of members to work on documents together without violating of Open Meeting rules.

2. Ongoing: Conversation about Homelessness in Montpelier

Following up on the “Warming Shelter” discussion at our 4/25/19 committee meeting, a sub-team consisting of Julia, Janell, and Peter met to discuss written background information Janell had provided for us and to think about a possible role for our committee in this issue.

Julia reported on one of the outcomes of that meeting: the possibility of our committee sponsoring a facilitated conversation among the organizations involved in this complex issue. The City Manager’s office recommended that we approach Yvonne Bird, Director of the Montpelier Community Justice Center, about serving as a facilitator.

Janell (who is a staff member at Another Way whose members were heavily impacted by the early closing of the warming shelter) provided the committee with some additional background regarding the warming shelter at Bethany Church in Montpelier as follows: sheltering chronically homeless people is a complex state-wide problem, involving numerous agencies and the vagaries of state and federal funding and regulation. The particular challenge for homeless people in Montpelier is that Good Samaritan, is the only approved organization to run shelters in Washington County and all of its shelters have for years been located in Barre where it has had very strong community support. In contrast, the warming shelter located at the Bethany Church in Montpelier was set up by Good Samaritan in the fall of 2017 rather hurriedly to handle some of the overflow from the various Good Samaritan-managed Barre facilities. This was done largely with the blessings of the Housing Task Force and the City Council and, although immediate residential and institutional neighbors of the Church were consulted, there has not been much of an effort to develop the kind of community support for a homeless shelter that exists in Barre or to raise general community awareness of homelessness in Montpelier.

It was suggested that perhaps a role of our committee might be to address this minimal community awareness and involvement in some manner.

3. Ongoing: Tax Stabilization Conversation

This item is tabled for now. [I didn't write down the reason given for tabling this; if anyone recalls what it was, please let Jamie know so she can add this to the minutes.]

4. Ongoing: City Council Meetings Guidelines

On the whole the committee thought the proposed outline for observing City Council and other meetings was a good start, although there was some debate about how much detail needed to be provided in the final document. Peter will work on drafting a full guideline and share it with committee members to try out as they observe meetings over the summer. Based on feedback from using it, we can revise it and eventually provide it on our "site" and elsewhere for possible use by others.

Committee members "signed up" to attend the following City Council meetings: May 22 Janell, June 12 Sigrid, June 26 Michael, July 10 Shaina, August 14 Julia

5. Ongoing: Recruitment plan for 2 committee vacancies

There have been no applicants thus far, although one or two people have shown some possible interest. When applications are received by the City Manager's office, they will be shared with Julia, as Chair, and she will arrange to meet with the applicant to be sure the person understands our charge and the amount of work involved.

In the meantime, members should reach out to individuals and organizations who might know of people who would have the interest and time to be a member of our committee.

6. Other Business: Living Wage Report

This issue had been tabled earlier. After some further discussion, it was agreed that Julia, as Chair, should rewrite the final paragraph of the cover letter to underscore to the City Council that in considering any kind of living wage or responsible

employer ordinance, (indeed any issue with social and economic equity implications for populations in Montpelier) they need to state clearly the intended (measurable?) outcomes of the ordinance, the possible unintended outcomes, and what mitigating steps might be taken to address the latter.

The committee agreed to extend the meeting until 7:45 to reflect on how we did on our norms/guidelines.

Meeting adjourned 7:45 PM