

Duluth Indigenous Commission
Monday, January 25, 2021
Virtual WebEx Meeting

Commissioners present: Babette Sandman, Cayla DeGroat, Amber Lightfeather, Moira Villiard, Kassie Helgerson

Commissioners absent: Roxanne DeLille, Carol Deverney, Rochelle Goodrich, Phoebe Davis

Staff Present: Kathy Wilson, Mollie Hinderaker

Note: per the request of the Indigenous Commission members, two Ojibwe language words are used in the meeting minutes: bezhig (“one”) indicates who made the motion and niizho (“two”) indicates who seconded the motion.

1. Call to order and introductions

- Co-chair Sandman began the meeting at 5:37 PM, introductions were made.

2. Approval of November 16, 2020 Meeting Minutes

- Helgerson bezhig/Villiard niizho to approve the November meeting minutes.
- **Motion Passed (5:0)**

3. Public Comment

- Staff updated the Commission that no comments were received prior to the virtual meeting
- Kathleen Spencer, a member from the public, gave updates on environmental activism in the Duluth community.

4. City Report and Updates

- Waabizheshikana Trail - The Marten Trail (Parks and Rec Division)
 - City Parks Staff, Cliff Knettel, introduced the project stating that the trail was formerly known as the Western Waterfront Trail, which currently starts around Grassy Point then end in the Riverside neighborhood. The plan is to expand the trail further west to the Fond du Lac neighborhood. As part of their 2019 mini master plan, the purpose of the interpretive trail is to recognize the rich cultural history and heritage of the area as well as enhance the St Louis River corridor and Estuary as a part of other restorative initiatives.
 - Project consultants, Sam Geer and John Koepke, from Urban Ecosystems presented the interpretive trail plan summarizing the context, story threads, and planning process. Their goal was to find a deeper, authentic way of telling the stories of people who lived and live around the trail, making a point to include women and people of color.

They requested input from the Commission on how to refine or improve the plan before it gets reviewed by City Council.

- Commissioners thanked the presenters and gave a couple items of feedback:
 1. The story poles along the trail look like they are supposed to represent Ojibwe clans. If that is the intent, they should include all of the clans, not just a select few.
 2. Some Commissioners and other Native people helped build the original Western Waterfront Trail during the 1980s. This could be another piece of history to highlight.
- Updates from City Council
 - Councilor Randorf was in attendance and mentioned an idea she received and supports from a constituent to update signs throughout Duluth to include Ojibwe language after the 2020 census data is finalized. Meeting attendees pointed to the City of Bemidji and Fond du Lac Reservation as examples of localities already implementing this idea.
 - Councilor Tomanek expressed her support for the Indigenous Commission and that she plans to attend future meetings.
 - Councilor Medved also described his plan to periodically attend Indigenous Commission meetings and highlighted his focus on mental health issues for City Council initiatives in 2021.
- Other updates/comments
 - City Attorney, Rebecca St George, told Commissioners that she is looking forward to working with them to rewrite their bylaws. City Staff will work on connecting interested Commissioners with the City Attorney to create a subcommittee to continue this process.

5. New Business

- Law enforcement accountability and reform (Blair Powless)
 - Blair Powless summarized the work he has been conducting with a grassroots organization to address law enforcement accountability. He was at the meeting to get feedback from Commissioners on the following questions: What problems do you see with police in the Duluth area? How is the Indigenous Commission working to address these issues? Do Commissioners think there is a need for more communication between groups organizing for law enforcement accountability? If so, what is needed? What is the Commission's sense of their ability to support this work right now? Do they have the capacity?
 - Commissioner discussion included: Police accountability was a former focus of the Commission, specifically the Commission had been interested in getting more Native people on the police force. In the past there was some discussion on barriers for Native people to get on the force and DPD used to attend meetings. Part of the issue with police

accountability is the level of engagement with communities of color. The police should make a point to actually reach out to community members, sit down with elders. Younger generations especially have a negative view or fear of the police. The police are generally not viewed positively and recent claims to having mental health services is misleading.

- Update on homelessness in Duluth (Helgerson)
 - Co-chair Helgerson updated the Commission that there was a recent article in the DNT on the yurt village project proposed by AIM. Co-chair Helgerson also mentioned that the project received a donation pledge from Peace Church and that MakerSpace will be used to create the lattice work for the yurts.
 - City Staff shared the letter from Mayor Larson to the Indigenous Commission that addressed the yurt village project. After some discussion, Co-chair Sandman volunteered to write a letter in response expressing support for the project.
- 2021 Workplan/Meeting calendar
 - Lightfeather bezhig/Helgerson niizho to approve the draft 2021 workplan/meeting calendar
 - **Motion passed (5:0)**

6. Action items

- Local Designation of Sacred Sites Resolution and Resolutution to Suppor Rights of Nature Group (Heady)
 - In light of Commissioner Heady's resignation, the Commission discussed who might take over this work and preliminarily designated Commissioner Davis
 - City staff will connect with Commissioner Heady to receive most recent draft documents

7. Subcommittees

- Art in Gichi-ode' Akiing
 - Commissioner Villiard updated the Commission that the application to expand the Chief Buffalo public art project in Gichi-ode' Akiing is held up or being limited by approval processes. It is unclear on why the project is being limited and that the process to get this approved has been long and complicated.
 - Commissioners suggested that they try to connect with Greater Downtown Council and Councilor Forsman (Liaison to Parks Commission) to get support.
 - City staff will look into Greater Downtown Council meeting schedule to inquire about setting up a meeting.
- Education
 - No discussion

- Police
 - No discussion
- Spirit Mountain
 - No discussion
- Opioids/AIM/Sweat Lodge/Sobriety Feast
 - No discussion
- Policy
 - No discussion

8. Old Business

- Indigenous Calendar (Heady)
 - No discussion
- Local Designation of Sacred Sites (Sandman)
 - No discussion

9. Announcements/Adjournment

- Co-chairs Helgerson and Sandman volunteered to represent Indigenous Commission at the City Boards and Commissions Q&A panel event on 1/28
- Adjourn: 7:41PM

10. Next meeting February 22, 2021 at 5:30 PM via WebEx