**COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT COMMISSION**

**MINUTES**

November 18, 2019

6pm-8pm

Washington State Labor Council, 321 16th Ave S, Seattle, WA 98144

**Commissioners present:** Ben Mitchell, Carol Redfield, Emily Kim, Felix Chang, Julie Pham, Karyn Kubo Fleming, Natalie Curtis, Sharif Mahfouz, Thais Marbles  
 **Commissioners not present:** Alison Turner, Chris Maykut

**Staff present** Hilary Nichols

**Opening**

Agenda for the meeting is approved. Minutes for both September and October were approved.

**Public Comment**

No public comment.

**Community Discussion**

The CIC hosted its second community discussion/listening session in 2019 with representatives of three nearby community organizations. The organizations represented were St. Peter’s Episcopal Church represented by Dawn Blanch, Casa Latina represented by Marcos Martinez, and the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists represented by Kevin Allen. To begin the discussion, CIC Co-Chair Felix Chang presented an overview of the Community Involvement Commission and its mission, and then each CIC member introduced themselves, and each shared a positive experience they’ve had with community engagement. After introductions, the CIC opened the floor for the three guests to provide recommendations for how the City can improve its outreach and engagement practices. In summary, the key points that were recorded from this listening session were:

**Casa Latina**

* **Experiences with the City:**
  + The City of Seattle has been good partner to Casa Latina in the creation of the Office of Labor Standards, which has been helpful for working folks.
  + One major Issue is that our society is structured with inequities, and nonprofits must work as a band aid. But non-profits are often so underfunded that staff are underpaid to do the work.
  + The money received from City grants and other sources are not adequate to fairly compensate the people working in the organization. The City also often expects the nonprofit to do much more work that the amount of money can support. This creates an unstable and difficult working environment.
  + For example, workers who provide homelessness services work in a high stress, high turnover environment, and a lot of those people who are doing the work are just a paycheck away from being homeless themselves.
  + Grants usually must go to a 501c3 or at least a fiscal sponsor, however lot of people doing the groundwork are not officially staff of the nonprofit, but rather community people who have another 9-5 job and do the community work on their own time. These people are then not compensated for the work they are doing.
* **Recommendations to improve community engagement:**
  + Firstly, the City should work to define “engagement”, and ensure that definition is consistent across the City.
  + The City should consider including salary to nonprofit staff in grant allocations, so that nonprofit workers can be fairly compensated to continue doing the work.
  + City Council should continue the discussion and negotiations around providing raises for staff working in nonprofits.
  + The City Council could support nonprofit workers establishing a union.
  + The City can create structures to get resources to the people who are actually doing the work, not just the groups with official nonprofit status.
  + City shouldn’t be given over to interest of big companies like Amazon

**Coalition of Black Trade Unionists**

* **Experiences with the City:**
  + Because Seattle doesn’t have affirmative action, it’s good that the City passed Priority Hire to recruit people by zip code. This initiative aims to get local people hired for a contracting job.
  + The City has taken a step in a positive direction by setting up Priority Hire, and these policies have expanded into the County and hopefully will continue to be implemented in Seattle Public Schools and the State.
  + The average person feels disoriented going through many City processes, including applying for community grants.
  + The process is not friendly to those that don’t already know the process.
* **Recommendations to improve community engagement:**
  + You don’t get engagement without orientation.
  + One thing that the City should consider is building/supporting programs that teach regular people how to be involved.
  + Community centers would be a good place to have a City staff whose job it is to inform people about new opportunities like grants, programs, etc. The City could use the community centers as centralized information hubs.
  + Just like when people came to the neighborhood center to pay their bills, community centers are a structure that people already go to.
  + Personal relationships with City staff and elected officials are what has proven to be most effective and useful for our community, so City staff and elected officials should invest more in interacting with people. City Staff should find a way to make an open-door policy, and to be more visible and integrated into the community.

**St. Peter’s Episcopal Church**

* **Experiences with the City:**
  + We’ve sent letters to planning people about a 30-unit apartment building with no parking, and we only got a canned reply and no changes to plan were made.
  + It’s heartbreaking with you reach out to the City with a real concern, only to get a canned response or no response at all.
  + The City often comes to community and says, “we’re here to listen,” but a lot of the planning has already happened before the City reaches out to the community.
  + Neighborhoods and neighborhood plans used to be better funded.
* **Recommendations to improve community engagement:** 
  + The Community Involvement Commission is a really important resource to connect the City to the broader community, so long as elected officials are listening to the CIC and taking their recommendations seriously.
  + The City could be more transparent about where the real estate excise tax going.
  + The City could take a lead on making a system to inform any person who has been connected to grant money at any time about upcoming grant opportunities.
  + The City could post important information at bus stops.
  + Religious leaders are important community players that the City could be involving to help spread the word about City policies, programs, and opportunities.
  + The City could do a better job of communicating and partnering with schools so that important information is disseminated to parents and students.
  + The City should consider giving space in the community centers to each City Council District representative so that they can have an office to meet with constituents.

Another comment that was made is that there are not enough Community Engagement Coordinators, and they can’t be at all the meetings all the time which creates a gap.

The CIC sincerely thanked their guests for attended their meeting, and for being generous enough to share their experiences with the Commission.

**Annual Report Event Planning**

The CIC took time to plan their Annual Report Event, which will happen from 5-7pm on Wednesday January 29th in the Bertha Knight Landes room at Seattle City Hall.

This event is an opportunity for the CIC to talk about the work they’ve done over the year, report on lessons learned, and create a space for City staff, commissioners, and community members to share best practices in roundtable discussions.

The CIC discussed what went well at last year’s Annual Report Event, which included inviting the other Seattle boards and commissions, having good food, the layout of the Annual Report, the facilitated small group discussions, and the survey.

The CIC then delegated tasks for the event.

**Grantmaking Workgroup Update**

On Thursday November 21st, 2019 the Grantmaking Workgroup hosted its first Roundtable Discussion with multiple City grant programs. Three grant programs were represented; the Neighborhood Matching Fund, the Technology Matching Fund, and the Equitable Development Initiative. A total of 8 staff participated. The Grantmaking Workgroup gave a presentation on their research findings from doing light audits of City grant applications and talking with community members about their experiences with City grants. The workgroup then facilitated a discussion to share best practices and troubleshoot challenges. The workgroup felt the roundtable discussion went very well and will be evaluating the survey sent out to participants.

**CIC Co-Chair Nominations**

Co-Chair nominations are due by end of November. CIC members can nominate each other, or themselves. Nominations should be sent to CIC Staff Liaison Hilary Nichols.

**Public Comment**

There were no public comments.

**Adjourn**