



## City of Seattle

Seattle Planning Commission

Rick Mohler and Jamie Stroble, Co-Chairs  
Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director

### SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION

Thursday, April 08, 2021  
Approved Meeting Minutes

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<b>Commissioners Present:</b>	Mark Braseth, McCaela Daffern, Roque Deherrera, David Goldberg, Matt Hutchins, Rose Lew Tsai-Le Whitson, Rick Mohler, Radhika Nair, Alanna Peterson, Dhyana Quintanar, Julio Sanchez, Lauren Squires, Jamie Stroble, Kelabe Tewolde
<b>Commissioners Absent:</b>	Patience Malaba
<b>Commission Staff:</b>	Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director; John Hoey, Senior Policy Analyst; Connie Combs, Planning Analyst
<b>Guests:</b>	Diana Falchuk, Office for Civil Rights (OCR)

*Seattle Planning Commission meeting minutes are not an exact transcript and represent key points and the basis of discussion.*

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Referenced Documents discussed at the meeting can be viewed here:

<http://www.seattle.gov/planningcommission/when-we-meet/minutes-and-agendas>

#### Chair's Report & Minutes Approval

Co-Chair Rick Mohler called the meeting to order at 3:04 pm and recognized that we are on indigenous land, the traditional and current territories of the Coast Salish people. Land acknowledgement is a traditional custom dating back centuries for many Native communities and nations. For non-Indigenous communities, land acknowledgement is a powerful way of showing respect and honoring the Indigenous Peoples of the land on which we work and live. Acknowledgement is a simple way of resisting the erasure of Indigenous histories and working towards honoring and inviting the truth. Co-Chair Mohler asked fellow Commissioners to review the Color Brave Space norms and asked for any additions or amendments to those norms before stating the expectation that everyone practice those norms.

<p><b>ACTION: Commissioner David Goldberg moved to approve the March 25, 2021 meeting minutes. Commissioner Jamie Stroble seconded the motion. The motion to approve the minutes passed. Co-Chair Rick Mohler abstained.</b></p>
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#### Announcements

Vanessa Murdock, Seattle Planning Commission Executive Director, provided a brief review of the format for the online meeting, and noted that due to the online format, public comment must be submitted in writing at least 8 hours before the start of the Commission meeting.

## Briefing: An Overview of the City of Seattle Racial Equity Toolkit

Diana Falchuk, Office for Civil Rights

Ms. Falchuk introduced herself and provided an overview of her presentation on the City's use of the Racial Equity Toolkit (RET). She stated that there are four types of racism and oppression - interpersonal, institutional, structural, and internalized. There are differences between traditional Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) work and a Diversity, Access, and Inclusion (DAI) approach.

- Diversity is a numerical representation of different groups such as those related to race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, national origin, ability, age and more.
- Access represents how organizations make space for the characteristics that each person brings beyond public accommodations. This is not just about the physical environment; it is about access to and representation in content for all. This includes access to housing programs, language interpretation services, etc.
- Inclusion is the intentional, ongoing effort to ensure that a diversity of individuals fully participate in all aspects of organizational work, including decision-making processes, and existing organizational culture. This represents a deliberate effort to ensure more people feel included programs and other opportunities.

Ms. Falchuk described Equity, Anti-Racism, and De-Colonization as follows:

- Equity is when race, indigenous status, gender, class, sexuality, age, religion, ability, national origin, language, and educational attainment no longer determine one's socioeconomic outcomes, and when everyone has what they need to thrive.
- Anti-Racism includes strategies, theories, actions, practices, and culture that challenge and uproot the social and historical inequities and injustices embedded in our systems and institutions based on race and other social identities such as indigenous status, gender, class, sexuality, age, religion, ability, national origin, language, and educational attainment.
- De-Colonization is questioning and dismantling European, Christian, capitalist and nationalist ideas and structures that promote hierarchical categorizations, binary and heteropatriarchal systems and ownership and control over human and non-human living systems. De-Colonization includes fortifying ones that support non-binary, non-hierarchical, non-linear ways that lead to collective health and wellbeing for human and non-human living systems. De-Colonization is a long-term process involving the bureaucratic, cultural, linguistic, and psychological divesting of colonial power. (Adapted in part from Stein & Andreotti, 2017)

She stated that the City's work tries to focus on Equity, Anti-Racism, and De-Colonization. DAI are parts of this work, but they are not the north star we are trying to achieve.

Ms. Falchuk described a Transformational Anti-Racist Organizing approach and asked the Commissioners to reflect on what is different about this approach and how this approach would change how the Planning Commission does this work.

- Commissioners recognized the role that planning regimes have played in separating people from opportunity based on their race. We are operating from and continuing that legacy while we are

also aware that we need to change it. It has gotten harder for us in the last year to continue with business as usual. We want to stop perpetuating previous wrongs.

- Commissioners noted the way that we have worked in the past in comparison to how we want to work. We are trying to reimagine the work in a way that has not been done before.
- Commissioners stated that this work requires continuous effort to find allies. Racism and oppression are in everything, including our meetings, how our government works, and how people make money. People of color are targeted if they are trying to fix this and are effectively pushed out of those conversations. The Commission has demonstrated a mindset of learning and growth even as we have been struggling to bring in diverse perspectives over the years.
- Commissioners acknowledged that doing this work requires people feeling comfortable communicating their feelings and their experiences. This approach is ill-equipped for introverts and others. In our society where capitalism reigns, this culture of anti-racist work is at odds with the dominant paradigm.
- Commissioners stated that online communication makes this work even more challenging.

Ms. Falchuk provided the following steps for setting up a RET process:

- Form a team and appoint co-leads/coordinators.
  - Share about the process with others for transparency and in case you may later seek support (Change Team, OCR Race and Social Justice Initiative Liaison, CORE Team members, community partners, etc.).
  - Set expectations for process timeline and staff capacity.
  - Secure a budget.
  - Gather the history of the issue, the City's role in it, which communities have been most negatively impacted/which have largely benefited.
  - Understand and discuss the structural conditions that are perpetuating racism at all levels.
  - Train and build community for your team – develop a shared, structural racial analysis; develop relationships; develop group agreements.
  - Design a process that allows for depth, emergence, and flexibility.
- Commissioners asked if the RET team has explored methods for de-centralizing and spreading power. Ms. Falchuk stated that inside government there is often a single person working on something. It is important to form a team with distributed leadership.
  - Commissioners reflected on experience working with government, recognizing that it is virtually impossible to move a process forward without the blessing of someone higher up. Leadership in government has the power to put bounds on a process or program, or even shut it down completely. Having that support and authority from leadership is so critical.
  - Commissioners noted that the Planning Commission is uniquely positioned to rethink structures and guide our own decision processes. We are not beholden to the City. We can take unique steps, but we also still function within the structure of the Council and Mayor, as they appoint individual Commissioners. We need to operate strategically according to that reality
  - Commissioners noted that this discussion reinforces why we are talking about this subject. The Comprehensive Plan update will have a RET process. We will have the chance to review the RET and we want to understand what we should be looking for.

Ms. Falchuk encouraged the Commissioners to think about the opportunity of their role in the upcoming Major Update to the Comprehensive Plan. Michael Hubner from the Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD) stated that the Major Update is launching this year. OPCD has been intending to do a RET throughout the update process. Prior to the RET process, a racial equity analysis that was introduced by the City Council will be completed this spring. Applying a RET is forward-looking, which is consistent with the purpose of the Major Update. The racial equity analysis is a backward-looking analysis, looking at previous planning and the history of the Comprehensive Plan. The racial equity analysis will set the tone for the RET.

Ms. Falchuk presented one iteration of how the Transformational, Anti-Racist Organizing Approach might be infused into a Racial Equity Toolkit process. These questions are not the same as those in the Racial Equity Toolkit itself.

#### I. Set Racial Equity Outcomes

- What do you notice about the differences between outcomes and strategies?
- What do you notice about how to decide when an RET is necessary/useful?

#### II. Involve stakeholders/analyze data

In this step we try to see the whole so we can understand the problem correctly

- Identify specific data we need to pull together about our racial equity outcome(s) for this RET.
- Gather information on root causes of disparities from communities who are most impacted, helping us to uncover complexity, understand interconnection and integrate all 4 levels of racism and oppression in our analysis later in the process.

How do we do gather information from those most impacted in transformational, anti-racist ways?

- We organize, we move people, in relationship.
- Center relational, creative, mindful, and body-connected ways that serve as antidotes to the culture of white supremacy. (As opposed to being extractive.)
- Emphasize a whole body and soul approach, one that takes into account the wholeness of our living systems.
- Recognize and name how other oppressions intersect with racism, historically and what is perpetuated in the present.

#### III. Determine benefits/burdens

- What benefits or opportunities for equity, collective care, healing, repair, and transformation may result?
- What are potential burdens or consequences (harms), including perpetuating or not addressing existing racial inequities?
- How will we align the policy, program, service, budget issue or other City action with our racial equity outcomes and BIPOC community priorities? How will we hold our decisions to a structural racial analysis?

#### IV. Advance opportunity/minimize harm

- How will we ensure that we are building racial equity? How will we integrate an understanding of how racism and oppression are playing out at all 4 levels?
- What strategies will address immediate impacts? What strategies will address root causes of inequity?
- How is the interconnection of all living systems (human and non-human) and the health and wellbeing of the whole taken into account in our strategies and how we implement them?
- How will we build relationships with stakeholders for long-term change? How will this affect the ways we do our work at the City?
- If the actual impacts are not aligned with our desired racial equity outcomes, how will we re-align our work?

#### V. Evaluate and raise racial awareness

- How will we evaluate and report impacts on racial equity, including in our process / how we implement strategies, over time? How can we do this in ways that promote relationships and engagement (vs. merely issuing a report)?
- How will we continue to build relationships with those who participated in the process and accountability both to our internal and community stakeholders?
- How will we raise awareness about racial inequity and opportunities for racial equity, healing, repair, health, and wellbeing related to this issue? What is our ongoing commitment as advocates and organizers for racial justice?
- What resources, partnerships or collective will do we still need to make the necessary changes revealed by this RET process? How are we naming this explicitly and what are our ideas for securing/building these?

#### VI. Report back

- How will we share analysis and report responses back to stakeholders and leadership in ways that are transformational and anti-racist?
- Commissioners asked if a RET is done whenever there is a policy change or procedure and asked if the City returns to communities multiple times for input. Ms. Falchuk stated that OCR requires all departments to do a minimum of four RETs per year. Some struggle to meet this requirement. Some attempts at returning to the community for input have been successful and some have been less successful.
  - Commissioners requested clarification on the difference between a racial equity analysis and a RET. Mr. Hubner stated that a RET is a process of discovery with community input, used for formulating alternatives for policies or plans. A racial equity analysis was requested by the City Council to look at the Seattle 2035 Comprehensive Plan. A RET was not a good fit for this as the scope was much more limited. A RET is more appropriate for the Major Update as we are working with community to develop a new Comprehensive Plan.
  - Commissioners asked how the Planning Commission can help to make this process more meaningful and yield the results we are looking for. Ms. Falchuk stated that there are many nuances in the process, and it is difficult to point to any one RET that achieved intended results at every step

in the process. Upon request, the Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI) Strategy Team at OCR would be able to identify some case studies of RETs that had successful components.

- Commissioners noted that some departments may do the minimum through a RET process to meet the requirements. We would love to see community organizations do their own RET work, especially if we want to change the way these documents are created. Most people do not even know what the Comprehensive Plan is. The Plan should be written in plain language to make it more equitable. Ms. Falchuk stated that a 2015 policy required departments to perform four RETs per year. Some departments have not been meeting that annual requirement, while many have or have tried. OCR offers RET training for departments as part of a larger anti-racist capacity building effort that includes supporting departmental RSJI change teams, caucus facilitators, and department directors. Mr. Hubner stated that OPCD is committed to reviewing opportunities for new tools, including both OCR and input from the community. OPCD is especially interested in new ideas for the community engagement process, including using plain language that people understand and empowering community members to provide input.
- Commissioners expressed interest in creating opportunities to work through this process. This is equitable planning, not just an add-on to the typical planning process.
- Commissioners noted that a RET for a planning process is radically different than for a capital project. We will want to look at the racial equity analysis to inform future decisions. We should make time as a group to think about our approach and how the RET can help us get there.
- Commissioners recognized that working toward undoing structural racism will take more than these tools. We will need to approach this work with a holistic perspective and bring in outside expertise or defer to community when necessary.

### **Public Comment**

Executive Director Murdock read the following public comment, which was received by email:

*The MHA targets communities of color in Seattle's CD, Southend and several smaller communities of color around the City. The MHA is not delivering on its promise of providing affordable apartments in Seattle, even though many Seattle residents have been displaced. Most of the developers are opting out of having affordable units on site. This past summer the council rejected Peterson's bill to study MHA's performance. Now we see the ramifications of the MHA on Seattle Homeowners in Upzoned neighborhoods. Parents attempting to upgrade their homes to allow for additional family members sent home because of COVID, are met with thousands of dollars in MHA fees over and above regular permit fees.*

*Some homeowners in D2 had their perfectly good homes devalued to \$1000, with most of the value being placed on the land. "Assessed for Highest and Best Use", The property is assessed as if it were vacant, and a perfectly good home is a tear down. This creates a problem for black and brown homeowners with insurance, accessing their home's equity in order to rebuild to create more density, to sell to the person of their choosing, or to pass their families wealth to their children. All of the above are burdens that Seattle's wealthier, whiter homeowners don't have. Seattle creates barriers so that Black and Brown Homeowners can't rebuild our own property for its "Highest and Best Use", and then punishes us for not doing it. The MHA is a Land Grab, pure and simple. "For too long we have used our procedures, our systems which were designed, literally legally designed to hold people back and discriminate" 9/25/20 Jenny Durkan.  
Ruby Holland*

**The meeting was adjourned at 5:21 pm.**