

## **Notes from Special Committee on Council Processes Meeting**

December 10, 2024, 8:00 am, Hooker Conference Room

CMs present: Matt Flaherty, Isak Asare, Isabel Piedmont-Smith (chair), Dave Rollo

Staff present: Lisa Lehner (Council attorney), Nicole Bolden (Clerk), Jennifer Crossley (Deputy Clerk)

### **1. Code of Conduct updates (CM Rollo)**

DR reported that he talked with Margie Rice re. just copying what the personnel manual says. He said that Margie will get with Lisa to discuss this from a legal perspective.

### **2. Operationalizing equity in city government (CM Flaherty)**

#### **Introduction to the Issue**

Matt talked about making equity part of the city's public engagement, policy development, the way we engage with staff, the way we hire. Currently, there is no coherent equity policy applied.

#### **CURRENT LANDSCAPE**

Comp Plan – minimal emphasis

Transportation Plan – does talk about access

Climate Action Plan – equity considerations for each chapter

SS4A Action Plan – appendix all about equity, but not tied to city policy

City council resolution against white supremacy

Board and commission work to address inequities

No formal definition, no framework. Different ways of looking at equity, like distributed equity, are not mentioned. No intersectionality. Need more up-stream, values-driven, cohesive policy.

EQUITY TOOLS (links added post-meeting)

[GARE racial equity toolkit](#)

[Race Forward equity assessment](#) for proposals

[Urban Institute equity resources navigator](#)

Training: Center for Equity and Inclusion provided 10-month training for the city 2021-22 >> but how did that flow through to implementation?

Needs to be ongoing

Staffing: Do we need dedicated staff to implement an equity approach?

Current staff/department heads need support

30 cities have equity offices, not only big cities

#### **ADMINISTRATION**

Need buy-in from the mayor's administration

Task force convened in 2020-21 on racial equity – what happened to this?

#### IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation can't just be top-down

What form would be best? Task force? Academic expertise from IU?

Long-term implementation plan

Legislative equity assessment for each piece of legislation would be a good start

Just like requirement for a fiscal impact statement

Council could pass resolution to ask for action in the executive branch

#### Discussion

IA: Need a clear definition of equity. Need to find ways to hold ourselves accountable, for example a scoresheet for legislation.

For JHSSF, he drafted an equity framework to evaluate proposals. But adding such a thing in a vacuum would politicize the issue. We risk arguing about equity with each piece of legislation.

Equity as it relates to different departments varies greatly, e.g. CBU vs. City Legal.

Research shows that training doesn't really do anything.

IPS: We may need training just to understand equity and develop or adapt a scoresheet.

DR: Interested in income equity, especially among city staff.

IPS: Comes back to definition of equity.

MF: Training needs to be targeted to goals

IA: Not just "we've done the training; look how great we are" (paraphrase)

MF: So, for example, applying an equity scorecard to legislation would need training.

IA: Think about first steps. For example, equity considerations in the budget book and presentations.

MF: Would the Comp Plan be a good place to start, with inserting equity goals? For example, police reporting race of people arrested or involved with police.

IPS: Need to meet with OOTM, first to define equity (w/help of experts?) and to get buy-in for legislative scorecard and other actions.

IPS: Define goals and desired outcomes. How to measure progress?

IA: Use boards and commissions in this work (implementing and assessing). A policy statement would help them in their work.

#### Public Comment

Terry Amsler: It certainly relates to public engagement. Pairing equity with justice. Not just the input but the output. Don't go too narrow in your equity definition.

Taylor Brown: Note that on the Human Rights municipal equality index Bloomington again got a perfect score this year.

Christopher Emge: This seems to be expanding beyond the scope of the committee, beyond council processes.

### **Final Comments**

MF: He didn't want to shoehorn a piece of council process without a deeper look at the whole system. We probably do need a separate task force on equity, but it does relate to this committee.

IPS: We could have a deliberative session of council with the mayor on this topic.

## **3. Deliberative sessions of the Council (CM Piedmont-Smith)**

### **Discussion**

IPS: Concerned about who would decide the topics and who would organize the meetings.

DR: CMs could propose such a session to the president, who could gauge the temperature of council as far as interest.

IA: In a regular session, a motion could be made to hold a session on a certain topic, based on legislation coming through the schedule or based on what council committees bring forward.

MF: It will take more time and practice to see what works best as far as organizing these sessions. Concerned about workload to plan and run public engagement sessions. We could engage CJAM or another facilitator.

IA: Yes, if we will have deliberations with the public, we should hire expert facilitators who could also suggest topics to engage in.

IPS: Isn't that our job, defining the topics?

IA: It allows the public to help determine what they talk with CMs about.

Actively during regular sessions, something could be referred to a deliberative session.

IPS: Concerned about work load on CMs for deliberative sessions with the public.

IA: Depends on how structured it is. Wary of over-engineering the sessions.

MF: Heard feedback about the discussion at Sept. 11 CBA - that it didn't lead anywhere specific, no action.

LL: Has worked with govt bodies to accomplish deliberation. It would be good to reach out to professionals in this field.

MF: Collaboration with the mayor's office on these public engagement sessions.

### **Public Comment**

Terry Amsler: Important for the Council to move forward with deliberative sessions in a systematic way. Issue identification is important. Facilitation is important too, and there's a lot of research on this. We could help CJAM develop its capabilities.

Christopher Emge: The first CBA was a big lift. Perhaps two such sessions per year would be good. Preferred the ATC discussion among council members in November. Likes work sessions where CMs talk among each other. Illusion of public engagement does not benefit anyone. CMs can engage with the public in all kinds of ways.

## **Final Comments**

IPS: Boards and commissions could propose topics too

### **4. “Reports from the Mayor and City Offices” in regular sessions (CM Piedmont-Smith)**

#### **Introduction to the Issue**

IPS: This year, the president has offered this section of the agenda to non-city offices, specifically non-profits that are supported by the City in some way. So we should look at this regular agenda item, which is specified in Title 2 of the BMC, since those reports didn’t really fit the heading.

#### **Discussion**

MF: BMC is too prescriptive as to the agenda items. We could revise BMC to say “reports from the mayor, city offices, other reports of interest.” Concern about time taken during meetings – extension of 20-minute time always given, but shouldn’t be necessary.

IA: Why do we receive these reports? Implied that best use of our time might be written report and then just Q&A with presenters. What is the purpose of public reports during our meetings? If it’s to inform both council and the public, then we are not doing it well.

(back and forth with IPS)

IA: If goal is informing the public, note that the public that follows council meetings is not the general public. We would need to advertise what the presentation is about to get more people to tune in. Else make it a deliberation session. Or make it a presentation where the office/organization report should lead to Council action.

MF: Maybe a short set of guidelines for presenters, including what they want council to do as a result of the presentation. We might employ the following way of thinking here: POP = Purpose, Outcomes, Process

IPS: Let’s continue this discussion into the new year then.

LL: It’s unusual to have such detail as to agenda in the municipal code.

#### **Public Comment**

Christopher Emge: Reports under “mayor and city offices” are of variable value.

Could be posted on council website. They should not be weighted all the same. For public comment, there should really be a name attached in any case. (NB: This was an agenda item we didn’t get to in the meeting.)

#### **Final Comments**

DR: A report should be made prior to submission of an ordinance when a council committee proposes legislation.

Adjourned approx. 9:35 am.

Notes submitted by Isabel Piedmont-Smith, Committee Chair