

I. Call to Order

Members Present: Parker Silver, Abdi Mohamed, Margaret Bass, Nick Woolf, Councilor Aurora Hurd (Staff Liaison)

City Staff Present: Elaine Wang, City Manager, Jenny Willingham, City Clerk

Guests Present: Councilor Bryn Oakleaf

Call to Order by: Parker Silver

Meeting Start Time: 6:05 PM

Minutes Recorded by: Nick Woolf

II. Public Comment

None

III. Approve Previous Meeting Minutes

Motion by Commissioner Chair Silver & seconded by Commissioner Woolf to approve the previous meeting minutes from December 8, 2022. Motion passed 4-0

IV. City Council Updates (Councilor Aurora Hurd)

Councilor Aurora Hurd shared updates on finalizing the budget.

Next meeting (Tuesday, January 17) focuses on overall budget discussions. This is the last chance for the public to share feedback with the City Council. Final vote from City Council on Monday, January 23, to approve the budget. This will be on the ballot on March 7, 2023.

Another area of interest for this group might be the Charter Amendment proposal for Just Cause Eviction. This was a voter-backed petition that was shared at a recent (January 3) City Council meeting.

Councilor Hurd stated the Equity Staff update as well as the next steps for Council to discuss regarding the Equity Audit.

V. City Updates (Jenny Willingham)

City Manager Elaine Wang informed the Commission there is a Public Hearing on Monday, January 23, 2023 at City Hall at 6 PM. Jenny Willingham shared an update regarding our annual Election on March 7, 2023 from 7 AM - 7 PM.

VI. How to Engage People in the Understanding of the Proposed Budget

The last day for Winooski community members to have a meaningful discussion with

community members is January 17 (Public Hearing is January 23rd). Discussion centered on ways that we can disseminate this information and how to create the environment in which people feel empowered and enabled to speak about their needs. Commissioner Mohamed proposed reaching out to religious leaders and find a way to connect with them in order for them to be an advocate.

Low voter turnout was discussed and the goal to increase participation.

Commission Chair Silver proposed an idea about connecting with cultural community centers, non-profit leaders, and other individuals to offer information to give to their constituents to help expand awareness about the budget. This might include creating resources explaining the budget and outlining who to contact with questions.

City Manager Wang shared that the Finance Director is willing to give a presentation on the budget to anyone. This might help us offer presentations at community centers or to different places where groups congregate.

City Manager Wang also mentioned that the Winooski Partnership for Prevention facilitates monthly dinners and this could give us an opportunity to give a presentation at the O'Brien Center. This could potentially be in conjunction with the School.

City Manager Wang also explained the need for staff to remain unbiased and only share facts. Council members and commissioners are able to speak more freely.

Councilor Bryn Oakleaf (guest) shared that there are opportunities for volunteers to work at polls, along with options for payment.

VII. Just Case Eviction Charter Change (Voter Backed Petition)

Jenny Willingham shared that the City received a petition on December 14, 2022 for a proposed charter change backed by voters. A factsheet was shared and linked to the agenda. The first part of the timeline was not met. The City will need to hold a validation vote to correct the rigorous timeline.

City Manager Wang elaborated that the local vote initiates the process and, ultimately, enables City Council to potentially enact this.

Additional specifics of this potential charter change were discussed related to state processes, budget implications, subsequent petition opportunities, etc.

A critique of the factsheet was raised by Commission Chair Silver to clarify the process and timeline.

Bryn Oakleaf suggested a review of the document for reading-level evaluation (Flesch Kincaid).

VIII. Stipend Pilot Funds and Input

Decision: Approval

Motion by: Parker Silver

Second: Margaret Bass

In our last meeting, we discussed ways that we might use stipend funds to have I&B commissioners act on the hiring committee for the new superintendent.

It was uncovered by City Manager Wang that the stipend process needs to be re-approved by council to continue the pilot. The goal is to share data on how the pilot went and how other committees might do the same.

Key questions:

- Will stipends help participation in commissions/help incentivize serving on commissions and increase access to public service?
- How do we improve access to shape local government around equity?

Commissioner Silver provided the opinion that their view was that the stipends did help increase participation in local government. Other commissioners shared comments and agreed to continue thinking about this. This topic will remain a standing item and will reoccur for additional I & B meetings.

Motion by Commissioner Silver and seconded by Commissioner Bass to provide up to two (2)

Inclusion & Belonging Commissioners to have the ability to join search committees for government-affiliated positions and receive the stipend. Voted and Passed 3-0

IX. Overview of Request for Inclusion and Belonging Liaison Role

Motion by: Margaret Bass

Second: Abdi Mohamed

Commissioner Silver gave a brief overview of the role of an Inclusion and Belonging Liaison Role. A motion by Commissioner Bass and seconded by Commissioner Mohamed to deny the request for a Commissioner to maintain a Liaison Role. Voted & Passed 3-0

X. Review and Discuss the Equity Audit

Decision: Approval

Motion by: Margaret Bass

Second: Parker Silver

Motion by: Parker Silver

Second: Margaret Bass

Meeting End Time: 7:20 PM

XI. Adjourn