



Social Justice & Equity Commission

Meeting Summary:

General Government Committee and Founding Members Work Group Work Session on the Establishment of a new Social Justice & Equity Commission

Meeting Date: August 31, 2021

Meeting Participants

- **General Government Committee (Committee):** Councilmember Renata Rollins, Councilmember Dani Madrone, Councilmember Yến Huỳnh
- **Founding Members Work Group (FMWG) of the Social Justice and Equity Commission:** Megan Matthews, Anthony Markland, Joslyn Nelson, Rusty Shekha
- **City staff:** City Manager Jay Burney, Assistant City Manager Debbie Sullivan, Human Resources Director Linnaea Jablonski, Strategic Planning and Performance Manager Stacey Ray, Equity and Inclusion Coordinator Olivia Salazar de Breaux, Equity and Inclusion Coordinator Tobi Hill-Meyer
- **Consultant:** Meg Winch, Communication Resources NW

Meeting Purpose

The Founding Member Work Group shared what they heard from the community and learned from researching different commission frameworks and discussed with the Committee their preferred options for establishing a new Social Justice & Equity Commission.

Agenda

- Process Overview
- Commission Framework and Founding Member Work Group Preferred Option
- Recruitment & Appointment Process
- Reflections
- Next Steps

The presentation slides from the work session can be viewed at: engageolympia.com/equitycommission. A full recording of the presentation can be viewed on the City website: [General Government Committee Special Meeting on 2021-08-31 5:30 p.m. - Sep 1st, 2021 \(granicus.com\)](https://www.granicus.com/publicPage.asp?id=1&id=1)

Work Session Summary

The FMWG shared with the Committee their preferred option for establishing a new Social Justice & Equity Commission:

- **Commission Purpose:** Eliminate racism and fulfill human rights for a just and equitable Olympia for all people.
- **Commission Name:** Social Justice & Equity Commission
- **Commission Scope:** The new Commission will:
 - Investigate and mediate claims of racial discrimination and other forms of oppression
 - Be advisory to Council and City leadership on policy, planning, operations, and complaint findings to eliminate racial discrimination and systemic barriers to achieving equitable outcomes for all community members.

- Guide the education and outreach efforts of City staff
- Participate in outreach to and recruitment of future Commissioners.

The FMWG outlined how this approach will address what they learned from participants in the community listening sessions:

- Historically marginalized community members need a safe and welcoming place to issue complaints of racism and oppression
- The need for transparent investigation and resolution to individuals' claims
- Community members need to be connected to resources and assistance
- The need for education in the community on equity and racial discrimination
- Historically marginalized community members need a voice in City planning, police, and decision-making

Discussion Summary

Commission Scope

- The Commission's future work plan should include providing guidance on the update to the Comprehensive Plan (starting in 2022).
- The FMWG recommended that the Commission provide guidance to help City leadership in responding to national events, including guidance in the City providing education and outreach on topics and/or events.
- The Commission should be looking at every City policy with an equity/anti-racist lens.
- The mediation function is an opportunity to model restorative justice and new ways of problem solving. The FMWG envisions a collaborative approach to resolving complaints received by community members, including offering mediation to resolve complaints.
- The FMWG recommended the commission identify and pursue policy changes that work to eliminate systemic issues within Olympia's city government, and that reconciliation occurs when change is made.
- The FMWG recommended the Commission focus on listening to the community and ensuring that action is taken to address issues and concerns that are raised. That establishing a commission is a start to reconciling harm done, but reconciliation is based on what gets accomplished.
- The FMWG recommended the Commission serve as a safe place for community members to get help navigating a complex system—which can include working with other state and local jurisdictions, because people often don't differentiate between the different entities.

Public Safety

- The FMWG envisions the Commission receiving complaints about officer behavior; however, that it does not function as a civilian oversight board. Enforcement would fall to City leadership under the direction and findings from the Commission investigation.

Supporting the Commission

- Staff should explore the potential for partnering with community organizations, like the Dispute Resolution Center of Thurston County, to help in providing mediation.
- The FMWG wants to be cognizant of recommending a sustainable scope and workload for the new commission so that it is sustainable and effective.

- The FMWG suggests that Council can support the new commission by funding its work, so that it can accomplish transformational change, and ensure that the structures put in place are fully supported and sustainable over the long-term.

Final Recommendation

- Include a visual of the phasing of duties for the new Commission in the final recommendation
- Include a staffing model, including roles and responsibilities and how staff complement and support the commission in meeting their goals in a final recommendation.
- Include meeting frequency for the new Commission

Next Steps

The FMWG will next develop a final recommendation to share with the Committee at their meeting on October 27, 2021. The recommendation will include a Commission name, purpose, jurisdiction, membership, and scope. The recommendation will be considered by the full City Council on November 9, 2021.

It is anticipated that recruitment for the new Commission will open in November/December, with new members being interviewed and appointed January-March 2022. Newly appointed Commissioners will start their terms on April 1, 2022.