



General Government Committee

New Social Justice & Equity Commission Development - Discussion with Founding Member Work Group

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Title

New Social Justice & Equity Commission Development - Discussion with Founding Member Work Group

Recommended Action

Committee Recommendation:

Discussion only. No action requested.

City Manager Recommendation:

Discuss with the Founding Member Work Group the development of a new Social Justice & Equity Commission.

Report

Issue:

Whether to discuss with the Founding Member Work Group the development of a new Social Justice & Equity Commission.

Staff Contact:

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Presenter(s):

Stacey Ray, Strategic Planning and Performance Manager, Office of Performance and Innovation
Meg Winch, Principal, Communications Resources Northwest
Megan Matthews, Founding Member Work Group Member
Anthony Markland, Founding Member Work Group Member
Joslyn Nelson, Founding Member Work Group Member
Rusty Shekha, Founding Member Work Group Member

Background and Analysis:

In June 2020, the City Council (Council) forwarded to the General Government Committee (Committee) a referral to develop a Human Rights Commission to support the City in dismantling institutional racism and all forms of oppression while helping build a more equitable, just and thriving

community.

In November 2020, Council approved a community-based process to establish a commission to address social justice and equity issues, including that it be led by a Founding Member Work Group (Work Group) made up of community members representing marginalized populations, with an emphasis on Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. Information about the current four Work Group members is available on Engage Olympia, including members' photos and descriptions in their own words for why the development of a new commission is important to them.

The Work Group's role was to seek out and elevate the voices of typically underrepresented and marginalized groups and learn about possible options to form a commission that could best represent and respond to the needs of community members. They would use that information to develop a recommendation that would include a new commission's: scope, make-up and terms, name, and first-year priorities. Council also approved the use of "Social Justice & Equity Commission" as a temporary name until completion of the process.

In April and May 2021, the Work Group hosted four small focus group sessions with invitations distributed to specific populations (Black, Indigenous, People of Color, LGBTQ+, Immigrant, Disabled and Neurodivergent), and one larger community conversation that was open to all community members. Attached is an overview of the focus group session methodology, and all the input collected from community members in the focus group sessions is available on the *Engage Olympia* project site.

In July 2021, the City contracted with Communication Resources Northwest (CRNW) to research municipal human rights commissions, equity and social justice commissions, and/or similar commissions to better understand and compare their scope, make-up and structure, codes and bylaws, and other applicable information. Attachment 5 is an overview of CRNW's scope, methodology, and research findings.

The purpose of this work session is for the Work Group to provide the Committee an overview of the focus group sessions with community members and research on possible frameworks and discuss the Work Group's preferred options for establishing a new Social Justice & Equity Commission. The discussion will include the commission's purpose, jurisdiction, and scope. The Work Group will also share for discussion with the Committee a recommendation on establishing the commission's first-year work plan and recruitment and appointment of the inaugural membership.

The Work Group will use the discussion with the Committee members to guide development of their final recommendation to be brought back to the Committee on October 27. Work Group members can continue to participate in the establishment of the commission; however, delivery of a recommendation to the Committee will conclude the members' commitment and the Work Group will formally sunset.

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

There is significant interest to address systemic racism and inequality through establishment of a new commission to address social justice and equity issues.

Options:

1. Discuss the development of a new Social Justice & Equity Commission with the Founding

Member Work Group.

2. Do not Discuss the development of a new Social Justice & Equity Commission with the Founding Member Work Group.
3. Discuss the development of a new Social Justice & Equity Commission with the Founding Member Work Group at another time.

Financial Impact:

Council allocated \$60,000 in 2020 Council goal funds which has been used for consultant support, reducing barriers to participation, and paying Work Group members a stipend.

Attachments:

City Council Referral

Engage Olympia

Project Overview

Community Member Focus Group Sessions: Methodology

Executive Summary of Research Findings