

# Metro | Meeting minutes

Meeting: Equity Strategy Advisory Committee  
Date: Monday, November 16, 2015  
Time: 3 to 5 p.m.  
Place: Northwest Health Foundation | 221 NW 2nd Ave, Suite 300 | Portland, OR 97209

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## Attendees

Equity Strategy Advisory Committee: Carl Talton, Betty Dominguez, Philip Wu, Irene Konev, Pam Treece

Absent: Rey España, Julia Meier, Ben Duncan, Kirsten Kilchenstein,

Metro: Patty Unfred, Juan Carlos Ocaña-Chíu, Scotty Ellis, Nyla Moore, Martha Bennett, Kathleen Brennan-Hunter, Peggy Morrell, Erin Pidot, Becca Uherbelau, and Addie Shrodes

## Welcome

Carl welcomed ESAC members and Metro staff and guests to the meeting. The October 2015 meeting minutes will be provided at the next meeting.

## Conversation on equity in the Parks and Natural Areas Department

Kathleen Brennan-Hunter, Parks and Natural Areas Department Director, presented information about equity work in that department to the committee.

The Parks and Nature department stewards 17,000 acres of land including 14 parks, 14 historic cemeteries, and 170+ natural areas. The department is currently working on a system plan for these assets. Metro's park system is very different from other park systems. Kathleen presented a map of open parks and future parks that will cover all parts of the region. The work is focused on land management, conservation and increased efforts to develop MWESB partnerships. Kathleen provided examples of equity-related work in the department:

### *Conservation-*

Property disposition contract with Proud Ground; partnership with Verde for restoration projects; added and hired an Intertribal Cultural Resource Specialist position, that has concentrated in the first foods project, including finding seeds to plant camas and wapato. They are also looking at the impact of pesticides on first foods.

*Visitor Services-*

The department is increasing access to parks by communities of color. They worked with Julia Meier and Gerald Deloney to create a process to establish new partnerships, and the process ended up selecting Verde as a partner. Parks has found that we need to go to people where they are, speak their languages, and work with community-based organizations (CBOs) to increase the audiences. The process is reaching out to organizations in the locations of the region where the work is being done, so they can engage local audiences. Staff are doing a better job with people affiliated with organizations they have worked with before, and find it harder to find new organizations. So staff have started conversations with organizations that have sought partnerships in the past, but were not successful. There has been an overlap of needs met between Metro and some CBOs, like with Self Enhancement, Inc., for example.

*Conservation Education-*

This program offers educational trips for youth. The program developed curriculum for SEI Conservation Education is culturally responsive to the needs of the organizations and audiences, and have brought naturalists to Blue Lake Park to serve the diverse communities that visit that park.

*Community investments and partnerships-*

The grant programs are part of the Parks and Natural Areas department. The programs are asking the partners to indicate how their goals fit in with Metro's values. The organizations we have worked with have changed over time after the 2013 levy. Parks and Nature wants to increase access for people of color to nature and include an equity lens into the partnerships. They want for the grant work to support the grantees' visions instead of creating it for them.

*Historic cemeteries-*

Burial services can be expensive for most people, so the Parks and Natural Areas department offers reasonable prices for cemetery services. The department is flexible with the time of the services and cultural ceremonies. They have to be aware of conflicts amongst more than one cultural group that may be having funerals at the same time. They try their best to be as welcoming and accommodating as many different groups and requests as possible.

*Equity and inclusion-*

The department is proud to have made progress in increased spending through MWESB contracts.

*Questions from ESAC-*

Have you partnered with the Russian Speaking Network?

Kathleen was unsure but believes they may have submitted a letter of interest to become a partner in the Nature in Neighborhood grants.

How does Metro interface with the local parks in this area?

Metro is in a conversation with Portland Intercultural Alliance to help with facility design and architecture. Intertwine Alliance hosts a group.

Capacity as a park provider is usually low capacity and they cannot fund projects they may be interested in including culturally relevant amenities. The long term strategy has to include an interface between Metro and local park providers.

### **Review and discussion of Metro staff engagement activities**

Juan Carlos reported on the conversations the equity team has had with Metro staff. There were nine discussion groups held to gather information for the Strategic Plan to Advance Equity. The staff engagement and assessment documents are being finalized. There will be two more discussion groups for staff: one with the park rangers and the other with communications staff. The questions posed to staff are what Metro is doing well and what the organization can do better. Staff will be at the forefront of implementing the recommendations from the strategy, so they are important stakeholders and we want them to be involved with the development of the documents and direction. Community members have been involved with the design of these discussion groups, including helping create the questions and having CBO-facilitated discussions. Having the community involved at this deep level is different from what other jurisdictions have done in their processes, and is becoming Metro's hallmark, according to our consultants.

Scotty shared the 30+ themes that were identified during the staff discussions. Nyla categorized those themes into six overall themes, including:

- Training and processes for staff
- Diversity in the Metro workforce
- Curiosity around the equity strategy efforts at Metro
- Interest in DEI work as a part of Metro-diversity and inclusion efforts
- Bold leadership and being brave
- Internal dynamics between staff

Recent events at Metro have created a new awareness around racism and also discomfort about the current situation. We want to take advantage of this situation to move these issues forward. The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) will dedicate its upcoming retreat to address these issues and try to move forward. DEI program staff will support these efforts.

### **Connecting historically underrepresented communities to Metro's decision making process**

Becca Uherbelau, Peggy Morell, Erin Pidot and Addie Shrodes from the Communications department presented to ESAC on the work they have been doing to help connect historically underrepresented communities with Metro. They partnered with DEI to set up the community-based discussion groups and they like to think of themselves as the "I" in DEI. Erin and Addie are developing recommendations to present to the SLT. Metro's Communications department received an Oregon Innovation Award for 1000 hours of consultation and facilitation from Erin, who is a Hatfield Fellow with the Center for Public Service at Portland State University. The award ends on December 31, 2015. Metro was the inaugural winner and chose to look at engagement work with people of color and youth for

this project. Communications is also focusing on the Metro brand and how people see our agency from the outside in.

#### Community Engagement

Erin has been spearheading this work. The ultimate goal is to reach out to and hear from communities we have not usually heard from and connect them to Metro's decision making processes. 1000 Friends and Center for Public Service have been working with staff around Metro to get a better understanding of our engagement practices. All of the information gathered will be shared with organizations in the region. Recommendations include: make a shift by opening doors to the community in new ways such as hosting quarterly community forums, creating pathways from public engagement to public service, and implementing leadership programs with CBOs. Communications and DEI staff are looking for ways for these efforts to inform the equity strategy (goal 4).

#### Youth Engagement

Addie has been leading this work. Youth engagement is another aspect of equity, but they don't often have opportunities to be engaged. The youth engagement strategy is being co-created with youth leaders and is also connected with the Environmental Literacy Framework work happening at Metro. The youth engagement strategy is guided by three focus areas: education, civic engagement, and employment for specific age ranges. Departments involved in this strategy are Communications, Parks and Natural Areas, Planning and Development, and Property and Environmental Services.

#### Questions-

Will already engaged youth be involved in Metro decision making? Is there any effort to engage the group of kids who are not already involved or have the educational background?

- We need to introduce the kinds of leadership opportunities that they did not realize were available.

How will you recruit the youth?

- Ambassador network approach: Building a relationship with the organizations that work with youth. A problem that we see with engaging youth is that the processes take so long that they are no longer youth or affected by the decisions when those are made. It is important for staff to have training around working with youth. We had over 12 SummerWorks interns and are wondering how to we can move that relationship forward and get them in the pipeline.

How does the Parks and Natural Areas youth work overlap with the youth engagement work?

- There is overlap with the Environmental Literacy work. Staff is also consulting with organizations that have been leaders in this work, such as the Boy Scouts, but the challenge is that there are not many people of color within these groups. We have to think of different ways to engage youth.

Juan Carlos indicated that during the public comment period staff will need guidance and support from ESAC and will also want your help weighing in on the development and review of the plan we are putting together.

**ESAC Recruitment and selection update**

Patty Unfred indicated that ESAC is down to nine members and staff wants to bring in more members to fill the gaps. We started the recruitment process and have received 22 applications by the deadline. A group of ESAC members and staff reviewed the applications and forwarded six names on for Martha's review. We were looking for representation from these core areas: Clackamas and Washington counties, business sector, public sector, research and/or education and arts and culture. The business representation is still lacking. Carl is working to bring in someone that can provide this perspective. With that we may end up with 16 members instead of 15.

We will be providing an orientation session at the beginning of December and would like current members to be involved in that meeting. The new members will have time to catch up on the work that has been done so far and they will join us at the next meeting on December 16. Following the regular ESAC meeting we are planning to have an option social time with you all.

The next ESAC meeting will take place on Wednesday, December 16, 2015, 3 – 5 p.m., Metro Regional Center, Council Chambers.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Meeting minutes prepared by Nyla Moore.

