

## CapitolRiver Council Meeting Minutes

April 21, 2020, 5:15-6:45 p.m. Board of Directors Meeting

Board members and the public were invited to attend via Zoom videoconference.

Board members in attendance: Chris Beckstrom, Nick Cusick, Sandra Erickson, John Ganey, Jess Grams, Bill Huepenbecker, Ann Idzik, Channon Lemon, Paul Mandell, Christopher Melendez, Shevek McKee, Crystal Meriwether, Jonathan Reisetter, Will Travis.

Other attendees: Jon Fure, Lissa Jones-Lofgren

- I. Call to order and introductions – Chair Shevek McKee called the meeting to order and asked attendees to introduce themselves and answer the following question: As we are spending more time at home, what kinds of things are you doing when you need to take a break? Responses included exercising, reading, listening to podcasts, playing video games, cooking large quantities of food, watching TV shows and movies, unpacking after a move to Lowertown, playing guitar, hitting ping pong balls with a golf club, walking dogs, and watching children.
- II. Motion by Paul Mandell, seconded by John Ganey, to adopt the agenda. Motion passed.
- III. Motion by John Ganey, seconded by Chris Beckstrom, to approve the Feb. 18, 2020 board meeting minutes. Motion passed.

### **Information Items** (information for board members that does not necessarily require a motion)

- IV. Chair updates: Shevek McKee asked for feedback on using Zoom for meetings. Board members briefly discussed the challenges of meeting this way compared to in-person meetings, but for now, it seems to be going fairly well. The group also briefly discussed the COVID-19 Resources page on the CRC website. Chris Beckstrom said he has been participating in a Lowertown group that is making masks and delivering them to organizations and businesses. The group has a Facebook page and is seeking donations of fabric, cash, or sewing machines. There are other local efforts to recruit volunteers, for example, to make deliveries. Board members are encouraged to continue submitting suggestions to update this page.
- V. Office Lease. Jon Fure said the CRC officers voted to accept the proposal to move to Osborn 370. The anticipated moving date is Friday, May 29. The new space will be smaller, and a desk and chair will be provided, so we will be getting rid of the three desks, two large filing cabinets, the conference table and chairs, and the refrigerator and microwave from the CRC office. Most of these items have been donated, so they will be offered to other district councils, and the remaining items will be sold or donated. Board members suggested contacting Salvation Army or Bridging as possible organizations that would accept donations.
- VI. Financial Report – Board members received the monthly Statement of Financial Position, Statement of Activities, Year-to-Date Profit and Loss by Class, and Budget-to-Actual. Anyone with questions or concerns should contact Treasurer Will Travis or Jon Fure.
- VII. Advancing Racial Equity – Racial equity during COVID-19: Lissa Jones-Lofgren led a discussion about equity in health. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 was the first immigration law that prevented an entire ethnic group from immigrating to the United States. The law embodies the tendency to look for someone to blame, or an enemy fight, during a health crisis, such as the current pandemic. In the 1880s, language about Chinese laborers taking jobs away was also used to justify the law, which fostered a sense of fear, and an impression that Chinese people are different than other ethnic groups. When people refer to COVID-19 as the “Chinese virus,” that language is creating a similar sense of fear, and an

impression that all Asian people – whether they are Chinese or not – are somehow to blame for the pandemic. She asked the group how they are doing, and whether anyone would like to talk about things they are observing that relate to equity or inequity. Board members discussed people they know who have been confronted in public because of their Asian ancestry. They also discussed the fact that tribal nations are struggling, because they have to fight with states and with the federal government for personal protective equipment, COVID-19 tests and other resources. Prison populations are also experiencing inequities. For example, a prison in Ohio recently reported that 70 percent of the inmates had COVID-19, and some are putting signs in windows that just say, “Help.” The situation exacerbates the fact that a disproportionate number of black people are arrested and imprisoned in the first place. The group also discussed challenges related to distance learning in schools, which depends on stable housing and access to the Internet and technology. Another health-related example is that in Minnesota, where you live can determine your life expectancy. A common belief is that if people are poor and don’t have health care, that only affects their health outcomes. The pandemic is making more people realize that one person’s poor health outcomes affects the rest of us, too.

### **New Business**

- VIII. Proposed new committee to address basic needs – Chris Beckstrom said he participated in a Ramsey County videoconference on responding to basic needs. Many people who represent social service agencies participated, and the discussion was facilitated by a Ramsey County employee whose title is Racial and Health Equity Administrator. The group created a list of recommendations that focused mainly on food insecurity. Beckstrom had served on the CRC board previously when the Greater Lowertown Master Plan was created (and was completed in 2012). The plan includes a proposal to introduce urban agriculture east of the Lafayette Bridge. The gardening season is just beginning, and because the pandemic is increasing the problem of food insecurity, maybe this would be a good time for CRC to try to work with other organizations to pursue that. That could involve CRC’s focus from community engagement to that of a service provider, and Beckstrom said he wanted the board’s feedback on whether that should be considered. Board members discussed the pros and cons of that, but no action was taken.

### **Committee Updates**

- IX. Public Realm Committee: Co-chair Jonathan Reisetter provided a summary of the committee’s videoconference meeting on April 2. A project matrix has been created with a list of ideas that have been suggested, based on committee meeting discussions and the recently completed survey. The group will be using that list to set priorities for next steps.
- X. Skyway Committee – Recent committee action has included a recommendation to reduce skyway hours during the Governor’s stay-at-home order. People are allowed to go to grocery stores and to drug stores, and Walgreen’s is now open until 7 p.m., the committee recommended keeping the skyways open until 7 p.m., and those hours were approved by the City Council. The hours will be in effect for about another month, unless the Governor’s order is extended.

**The meeting adjourned at 6:45 p.m.**

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