



Multnomah County Charter Review Community Engagement Subcommittee

March 10, 2022, 5:15 – 6:00 pm

SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING 5

Purpose: Provide progress updates and discuss whether to move forward on issuing County email addresses or having the Zoom chat function open to members of the public during meetings.

Attendees

Committee Members:

- J'reyesha Brannon (she/her)
- Jude Perez (they/them)
- Maja Harris (she/her)
- Theresa Mai (she/her)
- Ana González Muñoz (she/ella)

Absent:

- *Donovan Scribes (he/him)*

Staff:

- Kali Odell (she/her), Charter Review Committee Program Coordinator
- Dani Bernstein (they/them), Director of the Office of Community Involvement

In addition, members of the public were welcome to observe the meeting as non-participatory attendees. No one observed this meeting.

Welcome

Kali opened the meeting.

Staff report on community engagement partnership

Dani explained that usually when the County spends an amount of money over \$10,000 there is a long procurement process that includes a competitive application for groups that want to bid on the contract. Consulting with other County staff, Dani and Kali learned there is an exemption process the Office of Community Involvement (OCI) can pursue on the subcommittee's behalf, which would allow for a quicker timeline while pursuing a contract for more than \$10,000 with a partner who can help with community engagement.

Dani reported that OCI is working to find a community partner that can provide overall strategy and also subcontract with some culturally specific organizations. They had already reached out to the Coalition of Communities of Color (CCC) to explore a partnership, but CCC responded that it did not have the capacity.

Dani said that OCI is looking at other partners. They have reached out to JLA Public Involvement, which would need to be open to subcontracting with culturally specific groups to help with engagement.

Maja mentioned Brink as the next partner the City of Portland plans to work with in their process while the CCC wraps up its work. She also mentioned NextUp, Apano, and the Urban League.

Jay suggested a Black-owned group that is similar to JLA, although smaller, called Espousal Strategies, run by Johnell Bell.

Ana asked if the subcommittee had settled on a definition of what they are looking for in a community partner. She said that one criteria for her is a partner that can deliver messages in different languages.

Maja suggested someone with the capacity to develop a social media strategy.

Jay said they needed to prioritize a partner that brings a racial equity lens that aligns with the values and goals the MCCRC has identified. She wants someone who matches the group's passion for equity. Also, a partner that is able to move in a timeframe that works for the MCCRC.

Jude expressed concern about the timeline and not asking for more than was reasonable given that constraint.

Dani agreed that the timeline is tight and that will need to be considered. They also pointed out that how things proceed will depend on the capacity of the subcommittee members.

Jay said that if there is support and the subcommittee members are not asked to carry all of the weight on their own, she feels like she will be able to make more time to contribute to outreach efforts like survey development and focus groups.

Ana asked whether the plan was to find someone to develop an engagement plan and then guide the subcommittee through it.

Jay said that she thought the partner would develop the strategy and then implement it.

Ana said that she does community engagement professionally and thought that they would be discussing how each subcommittee member does community engagement and provide the strategy that the partner implements.

Jay said she was concerned about how to make this work when the subcommittee is so limited in the ways members can communicate with each other.

Kali affirmed that member communication would be challenging, but that they could proceed however the subcommittee wants.

Maja suggested they could work with the community partner and County Communications to set up some general guidelines and then hand things over to the partner. That way the subcommittee is providing guidance, but the individual members are not expected to do things like draft social media posts. She asked how others felt about that approach.

Jay raised what they have already developed for social media so far. She suggested moving forward under the assumption that the subcommittee was not going to get the resources they were asking for, so they could start designing the process, and then see what happens.

Dani suggested brainstorming what strategies the subcommittee feels are most important in terms of activities for engagement and then prioritize which ones to focus on first.

Kali provided an update on working with County Communications: they shared the subcommittee's graphic about Charter review on social media and wanted to create a video featuring MCCRC members.

Maja said she would like to move forward with posts about subcommittees and their work.

Kali also raised the possibility of issuing a press release and said the subcommittee could write a press release or develop language that she could use to work with Communications on developing a press release.

Jude asked about what goes in a press release.

Kali responded with the kind of information they might include in a press release: what Charter review is, the timeline, what the subcommittees are focused on, and perhaps some quotes from members. That would provide media some content to use if any outlets are interested in writing about Charter review.

Adoption of county emails

Kali reminded subcommittee members that at the last MCCRC meeting a member of the public had suggested the adoption of County emails for Charter review members. She asked if this was something the subcommittee wanted to recommend to the full committee. She explained that they could have County emails, although this is not a general practice for County advisory committees. She mentioned that with a County email address comes a lot of County emails that are targeted toward employees.

Ana felt like this was not the best use of resources given the short timeline they are working on.

Jude asked if having a County email would expand committee members' ability to communicate more freely with groups of each other outside public meetings. Kali said it would have no impact on that.

Jude said they were not particularly in favor of the change.

Maja also said she was not in strong favor.

Jay said she just wanted to ensure they were following up on the public comment made on the topic.

Theresa said she thought it would have been a good practice from the start, but it did not seem worth the investment at this point in the process.

Subcommittee members decided not to pursue this further.

Communication with the public during meetings

Based on several committee meetings in which members of the public communicated directly with committee members in the Zoom chat, Kali asked the subcommittee what they thought the practice should be going forward. She explained that it was never intended for members of the public to use the chat to communicate with subcommittee members. This is not a practice allowed in other public meetings and being able to interject at will is similar to an audience member shouting comments in the middle of an in-person meeting. She said she had left the chat restrictions flexible because she wanted community members to be able to send her a message if they were experiencing technical problems, but this had not been well explained at some of the MCCRC's recent meetings and there had been some disruptive communication. She proposed that going forward, she could restrict the chat to members of the committee, staff, and invited speakers, and open up the

Q&A so that if attendees had an issue come up, they could communicate that and she could respond. Committee members would not be expected to respond to any questions in the Q&A.

Ana said that public communication in the chat was disruptive.

Maja supported having attendees not participate in the chat. She said that going forward they could be more explicit in meetings about how people can provide comment. She also brought up the difficulty the committee would have in a situation where many community members attended a meeting and all tried to participate in the chat. That would be chaotic.

The subcommittee supported restricting the chat to committee members, staff, and invited speakers.

The meeting was scheduled until 6:15, but the subcommittee lost its quorum at 6:00 and adjourned then.