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Municipality of Anchorage Anchorage Women's Commission



AWC Meeting 2/11/2021 5:30 – 7:00 pm Microsoft Teams online meeting

Commissioners Present: Valerie Andrew, Jackie Cason, Monica Elkinton (Co-chair), Kami Hutchins (AHD Liaison), Sheri Lisenbee, Cambria Patz (AHD host), Joan Ryan (Chair), Leslie Vines

Guests Present: Forrest Dunbar (Assembly), Crystal Kennedy (Assembly), Mary-Dith Tuitt

I. Call to Order

- Quorum established & Call to Order at 5:31 pm.

II. Introduction

- Current Commissioners.
- New Commissioners: Leslie Vines & Sheri Lisenbee.
- Vice President & membership coordinator of the NACW: Mary-dith Tuitt.
- Assembly Members: Dunbar & Kennedy.

III. Approval of Agenda

- Motion to approve agenda (Valerie)
- 2nd to approve (Joan)

IV. Approval of Minutes

- Motion to approve January 2021 minutes (Valerie)
- 2nd to approve (Jackie)

V. Old Business

- No old business.

VI. Public Comments

- **Mary-dith Tuitt:** Vice President for the [National Association of Commissions for Women](#). Her role is to reach out to women's commissions across the nation & talk about membership. NACW tries to improve lives of women & girls across the nation & support all women's commissions. Mary-

dith lives in Boston, MA. They have 10 regions within the national association. Only 1 commission is from the Northwest area. They have multiple events & webinars and usually do one big conference every year. 2021 conference will be a hybrid of in-person or virtual on July 18th – 22nd in Virginia. Info is on their [Facebook page](#) and Mary-dith invites us to like their page. Membership fees are based on your commission's budget & the fees are listed on their [site](#). They enjoy being able to network & communicate with other commissions to learn from each other. They do a development conference on the odd years & a full workshop on the even years. 2021 conference will have a virtual option. The NACW is working on a resiliency piece based on the impact of the COVID19 pandemic & planning an advocacy trip to DC. They did a [Voices of Women in America](#) program. You can request this data from the NACW. They are hoping to launch a new program called "Climb" this year that will help women build & develop their businesses.

VII. New Business

- Q&A with Assembly Members Dunbar & Kennedy
 - **Monica:** What can we do to get more teachers & childcare workers vaccinated as soon as possible?
 - **Crystal:** She has concerns about having enough healthcare workers to give the vaccine & how to get people to the vaccine locations. She is encouraged by the smaller entities that are giving the vaccine, like pharmacies & Fred Meyer. She thinks the more groups we have that can volunteer those kinds of services, the quicker we can get people vaccinated. She is also concerned that a portion of the population might be having trouble accessing the registration. She wonders if we could do more outreach for that.
 - **Forrest:** He got answers to the questions from the director of the Health Department, Heather Harris. Her answer was: limited appointments will be available today at noon. Provide additional support to those who might have barriers to making an online appointment. State vaccination hotline is 646-3322. They can answer questions & assist with making appointments. There are people refusing to be vaccinated. He thinks it is on all of us to get vaccinated once we can & then communicate to our friends & family that it is safe. He did not have any

- side effects to the first shot. There is really encouraging evidence to get the vaccine.
- **Mary-dith:** Do you know why some people do not want to get vaccinated? Is there any research being done on that? It is known that the colored & disenfranchised communities are not always trusting of the medical profession. Is there any work being done for that?
 - **Forrest:** They have seen research on this. The communities of color have very good reason not to trust them. He thinks it is on the leaders to show that they are getting vaccinated on camera, like President Obama.
 - **Kami:** She can investigate if the Health Department has a direct campaign on that. Part of the national data is some of the fear is coming from the quickness of the development of the vaccine. Using talking points & motivational interviewing tools for nurses to make sure they are not arguing with fearful folks, by agreeing that yes it certainly was a quick process. Part of the statistics listed was “Just do it for Grandma” works for a lot of people. AHD PI person is doing talking points for adding the vaccine in as a general component of what they should all be doing.
 - **Forrest:** For Mary-dith, Alaska’s largest community of color is the Alaska Native community. They are a leader in getting the vaccine out because of how the Native health center works. There is a widespread uptake of the vaccine in the Alaska Native community. Their stats also showed that they were getting sick and dying at the highest rate of any community in Alaska before that.
 - **Leslie:** She agrees with feedback about how sometimes a refusal may look like a lack of information. From what she has seen, hesitant folks just need time.
 - **Monica:** We have lost so many childcare spots during 2020. Places have closed or they had to lay off workers. How can the muni create more childcare spots in Anchorage so that the mothers and single parents can head back to work with safe childcare for their kids?
 - **Forrest:** He will forward the 2-page answer from AHD’s Heather Harris on this. He does not think it is

widely understood why some of the centers closed. A big one was just a lease dispute between Hilcorp & one of the childcare centers where Hilcorp could not come to affirmative terms, so it closed. Another reason is a lot of the centers are school district based, but hopefully some of those will come back as the schools open. The assembly passed about 10% of the CARES Act distribution to go to childcare grants. They put \$15 million towards childcare.

- **Monica:** As a follow up to that, there was a proposal at one time to reallocate the childcare funding to police body cams. What happened with that? Is that incorrect?
 - **Crystal:** No, that was to take some of the early education funding that has been appropriated out of what will be the revenues coming from the alcohol tax. There is a \$2 million allocation in that funding as those funds come in. They just started collecting that money this month. It was an idea of taking about 25% of that because it's going to be a while before they're using any of that funding & an idea of using some of that now to start the APD IT upgrade & bodycam project. They will find more sustainable funding in 2022 rather than having to take from other sources. They had an ordinance introduced last Tuesday night that continues some of the CARES Act funding they have not expended yet. When they reallocated the source of a lot of that funding, it was coming out of the general fund, so they were not tied to the deadline to expend all that money on December 30th, 2020. There were several million dollars' worth of that funding that is still available so they can continue that program through 2021.
 - **Forrest:** The money is yet to be expended. It is dedicated to rental assistance, small business grants, or childcare grants. He did not support the early childhood education proposal that Miss Kennedy brought & it did not pass. If bodycams go forward, they will be funded by a special tax levy that will be on the ballot. There was about \$250k from a grant for a certain type of homelessness housing that was reallocated to that & they were able to do that because they received some

- additional funds. The early childhood education is still \$2 million.
- **Monica:** What is the status of the properties that have been purchased to help the homeless population? Is the Sullivan Arena going to continue as a shelter?
 - **Crystal:** Two of the facilities have fallen through, but the muni is still looking at other potential facilities. The Sullivan will stay a shelter for a while yet. The interesting thing about the Sullivan is that some things have worked wonderfully, but there are still daily challenges. It has been interesting to see the different groups cooperatively try to address the aspects of homelessness and the kind of care & services required.
 - **Forrest:** The Sullivan is funded by FEMA money & his understanding is that the \$ will last for quite a while so they will probably keep the facility open for a while. At some point it will be converted back to an arena. They have learned a lot about placing folks. The muni is also putting people in hotel rooms & having real success with that. Of the 4 buildings, they purchased one of them, the Golden Lion Hotel which will be a treatment facility for all different people. The other two, the day shelter in midtown & the transitional housing facility in Spenard, fell through. They are no longer planning to purchase Beans Café, but there is a nonprofit that is interested. They passed the [Pay for Success](#) program in recent years & he thinks it has real potential. Anchorage must be looking for opportunities for non-congregate housing, supportive housing, & transitional housing. We are going to see some number of shelter beds increase after COVID, but he does not think we will ever get back to the numbers pre-COVID.
 - **Monica:** It sounds like there are some CARES Act funds that have been designated but have not been distributed. Are there more funds to be distributed? Is there more state & federal COVID relief coming to the Assembly?
 - **Forrest:** The short answer is yes, but they do not know exactly what it will look like yet. Details need to be worked out at the federal & state level. There was a change in policy where cities that were bigger

than 200k (instead of 500k) could apply directly, so Anchorage applied. They have \$35 million in rental relief that is on its way to the renters in Anchorage. They are partnering with the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation and Cook Inlet Housing Authority. They leveraged other state funds so it will turn into \$70 million available for Anchorage, not \$35 million. They designated about \$30 million towards rental relief from the CARES Act funding. There will be a new application under one portal. Mortgages are not eligible, only rent. On top of that, there will likely be additional funds coming to the city from the most recent act. The last estimate he saw was \$98 million.

- **Mary-dith:** Does anyone know how evictions have been going in Anchorage?
 - **Leslie:** 211 still has funds, but appointments are out 3 - 4 weeks. 211 is like a hub and they direct you to wherever the funding is at the time. They are sponsored by United Way.
 - **Forrest:** He has not heard about a large wave of evictions. There were always the cases of for-cause evictions not based on rent but on property damage or something like that. The court system is very backed up.
 - **Crystal:** She has not heard of many evictions either. She has heard that many landlords and their tenants are working very well together right now so that no one ends up in an eviction situation. The only concern is how long it takes someone to get the funding, but landlords seem to recognize that as an issue.
- **Monica:** What measures are being taken to reduce the spread of COVID and increase vaccine availability for BIPOC and other minority groups in Anchorage?
 - **Forrest:** Dr. Zink presented about hospitalizations and death broken out by demographics. One of the interesting things was that the African American and Latino communities were about the same as Caucasian. Those that were disproportionately affected are the Pacific Islander and Samoan population and the Alaska Native population. The EOC Public Information Team maintains a list of

over 30 key leaders in our BIPOC communities.

Information is being shared through these leaders.

- **Monica:** How can the AWC support the Assembly members, and help them support Anchorage women and families?
 - **Crystal & Forrest:** They want to know what women and families are concerned about. Encouraged coming to the Assembly with policy ideas.

VIII. Adjournment, 6:58 pm

- Motion to adjourn (Jackie)
- 2nd to adjourn (Valerie)

IX. Next Meeting – March 11, 2021 5:30 to 7:00 pm