

Cultural and Ethnic Communities Leadership Council

MINUTES

JUNE 21, 2019 11:30-2:00

COUNCIL CHAIR	Vayong Moua
ACTING CHAIR IN COUNCIL CHAIR'S ABSENCE	Vayong Moua
TYPE OF MEETING	CECLC Monthly Meeting
NOTE TAKER	Nicole Juan
ATTENDEES	Vayong Moua, Beverly Bushyhead, Pastor Emory Dively, Dr. Brendabell Njee, Rev. Dr. Jean Lee , Maret Banks, Dr. Pahoua Yang, Michael Birchard, Dr. Chirpich, Kia Moua, Lucas Peterson, Adesola Oni, Titilayo Bediako, Maria Sarabia
NOT IN ATTENDANCE	
DHS STAFF	Nicole Juan, Robert Downing, Helly Lee, Diego Diaz, Mohamed Mourssi-Alfash, Christa Spielman, Wendy Plager, Rebeca Sedarski, Sophie Burnevak, Beth Dansie, Sarah Lent, Michaelyn Bruer, Jennifer Blanchard, Charles Lawler, Amanda Calmbacher, Dan Pollock,
SPECIAL GUEST PRESENTERS:	Antonia Wilcoxon
PUBLIC:	Melvin Giles, Antonia Wilcoxon

Item	Notes	Action Needed
Review/approve minutes from previous meeting	Motion by Kia Moua, second by Dr C. Approved by voice vote.	
Review/approve today's agenda	Motion by Kia, second by Dr. C. Approved by voice vote.	
Introductions	All attendees gave introductions and shared what they are doing with regard to 'equity' over the summer months.	
Guest speaker, Dr. Antonia Wilcoxon	<p>Vayong provided background and introduction to guest presenter, Dr. Antonia Wilcoxon. He reminded the room that Antonia is the architect of the council, and a great inside champion for equity. She created a council that was not a token body, and fought to make sure it was a leadership council and not purely advisory. Dr Wilcoxon is one of the greatest champions in country on how to systematize equity into governance. Her blueprint is something to be modeled and tailored to other public agencies. This is a homecoming for Antonia at the council today. Vayong looks forward on her updates, what she is doing, and how she continues the fight for equity.</p> <p>Dr. Wilcoxon began her time giving a brief history of the CECLC. The first meeting of this council was in November, 2013 at Wilder. Chuck Johnson made an introduction to leadership at DHS, to all council members, etc. Commissioner Jesson and Assistant Commissioner Anne Barry were champions of equity at DHS and this council, and provided space and autonomy to be creative as they listened to community voices. The work Antonia practices is informed by Paolo Freire (Pedagogy of the Oppressed – see attachment for a sample); this theory underscores that people need to become aware of situations for themselves to then be the ones to change it. People live inequities on a daily basis, they are felt profoundly. Everyone is entitled to the same outcomes when visiting health care and other government systems, but unfortunately in Minnesota this is not the case.</p> <p>When Antonia started at DHS in 2004, she managed a national program in children's mental health. They were fostering change in clinics and hospitals so young children's needs are identified early. After working</p>	 <p>freire_pedagogy_of_the_oppressed_ch2-</p>

	<p>on this grant, she left that division to become a Disparities Reduction Project Manager. Leadership at DHS created a strategic plan process and identified disparities reduction as one of the primary strategies to attack, as the agency was not meeting its mission as promised to people of MN. Antonia's work prior to that at DHS had been in community, and community-based organizations in Frogtown. Valuing wisdom and lived experience of community members is integral to this work. She spent eleven years in the disparities reduction position; at first it focused on internal changes and work, but she pushed for more intentional community involvement.</p> <p>Community feedback and relationship building work culminated in a set of recommendations. These included: DHS needing to have staff that looks like the people it serves; leadership needs to understand the reality/lived experience of folks DHS serves and should take anti-racism training that includes discussions on historical trauma. The final recommendation was that community would like to have more space within agency to give recommendations and feedback, and the idea for the CECLC was born. Antonia and Anne drafted language for legislation, went back to community for input, and created an example for community to learn about the legislative process and policy making.</p> <p>It has been a deep honor for Dr. Wilcoxon to work with the council since its inception. The council and DHS learn together, challenge each other, talk about difficult issues, and respect folks' own lived experience.</p> <p>This work a labor of love and learning. Dr. Wilcoxon's current role is a community engagement specialist with Ramsey County. She is working on a project around alternative programming for youth (black and brown) ages 10-17 to move away from the juvenile justice system and toward being children of hope.</p>	
<p>Comments from CECLC</p>	<p>Titilayo Bediako: What Antonia put together for this council is historic. This is the first council she has been on where there is an intentional multicultural group of people having a true voice and working together. Nobody tries to speak for anyone else. People's voices are respected. The council can ask authentic questions of heads of departments at DHS and are able to create relationships from folks across cultural lines. There is space to disagree but members still have respect and love for others who are a part of the group. Hopefully this can be a model across Minnesota for giving community voice and for being an equal voice. Antonia had everything to do with it making this council effective; her leadership was magnificent and incredible and helped empower the council as it moves forward.</p>	

	<p>Jennifer Blanchard: Noted that she has worked with Antonia at DHS and has learned so much from her; mentioned that Antonia has had profound impact at DHS and the seeds she has planted have grown in many ways and has sparked leadership of so many people to do this work – from the Bush Cohort to other community engagement projects to the equity policy.</p> <p>Brendabell Njee: Mentioned that this group not only a group to support health equity in MN but it is also to support health equity in the world. She also mentioned the profound impact members, such as Dr. Susie Nanney, have offered to DHS and beyond.</p> <p>Vayong spoke of this space for the council to honor its origin while thinking of the future. He asked Antonia, as she’s viewed the council’s growth and evolution, if she has any insights/advice to not lose sight of this work?</p> <p>Antonia: Reminded the council that organizational culture changes very slowly; DHS is responsible for so many vulnerable populations, from babies to elders. It’s a big responsibility. She urged the council to continue to nudge so change moves forward. She reiterated that this is a very powerful body and encourages members to talk more about the work via conferences at the state and national level. This work takes patience and persistence. This is long term work. She hopes to have helped put some building blocks on so others can come and continue the work.</p> <p>Helly Lee recognized that this work is on shoulders of those who came before us who have planted seeds for this work to grow. She hopes to build a relationship with Antonia and become good friends and colleagues; everyone holds on to energy in our lives from people and they never leave us – we will continue to reach out to Antonia and hold her wisdom as dear to our work.</p>	
<p>Chair Remarks <i>Vayong Moua</i></p>	<p>June is World Refugee Month. While Minnesota is 2% of the country’s population, it holds 13% of the refugee population in the country.</p> <p>Many negative things have been happening related to refugees in Minnesota. There has ban a ban/moratorium on refugees in Saint Cloud; last session there was legislation on refugees; there has been talk of refugee cost audits (the cost to place refugees into public programs); there have been local legislative campaigns explicitly stating that the candidate will not let refugees settle in their districts; the American Refugee Committee changed its name to Alight because of the baggage and negative energy with the term refugee.</p>	

At the same time, DHS houses the Refugee Resettlement Program – 100% federally funded – and highlights the importance of DHS being a leader and shaping the narrative on our refugee population in Minnesota. There needs to be a celebration of refugees – and redefining what it means to be a refugee. The shift needs to recognize noble warriors who fled their country and not simply displaced peoples. DHS has received a lot of heat for abuse and fraud as it relates to refugee populations, but this is a great opportunity to challenge that narrative, especially since refugees usually come to the U.S. due to preexisting engagement commitment with country.

Lisa Bayley noted that earlier this week, she along with the Commissioner, met with the recipients of the Outstanding Refugee Awards. Vayong Moua was recognized with an award for civic engagement, and spoke about collective impact, the CECLC, and honoring his ancestors.

Chair Discussion:

Many council members are rotating off next meeting, and there needs to be continuity in spirit and momentum for the next council. With that in mind, is important to discuss how leadership will look in the next council.

Legislative language states that the commissioner of DHS appoints the chair of the council; in honoring that, there is space to define how we want to lead ourselves. What is the best way to be structured and lead ourselves? Look for DHS advice and council on how to navigate that;

Antonia shared that initially, a council vote via email was conducted, and a recommendation was made from the community relations director to the commissioner.

If anyone has interest, important to throw your name out there. The council has a deep pool of wisdom and talent. It is important to make sure there is a genuine process moving ahead.

The council discussed forwarding two names as co-chairs. (No vote was taken).

Rev. Dr. Jean Lee prepared recommendations on how new group could get on board on what our membership has done and from the beginning; Jean came on and didn't know what happened in past or what issues worked on so these recommendations would help orient the new council.

Titi and Michael mentioned that nominations began at the previous meeting and are noted in the minutes.

	<p>The council held a discussion on the decision making process for council applications and potentially reviewing for gender (and other demographic) balance in the potential appointee list. It was</p> <p>Looking into a more robust review process should be on the list for the next council to take up to insure balance (gender, age, race, ability, etc.).</p> <p>The council would like recommendations on process for selecting chair and next steps.</p> <p>Vayong summarized the discussion and focused on core values and what folks are looking for in a process to select/recommend chair(s):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broad agreement on key principles • Self determination • Shared responsibility • Continuity/new perspective 	
DHS Updates	<p>Helly Lee provided an introduction of herself to the council as the new community relations director.</p>	
DHS Legislative Proposal	<p>The council was asked to review a handout highlighting the basic changes in the proposed 2019 legislation and contact Nicole Juan if there are any other changes sought by council members.</p>	
Community Input & Concerns, Announcements		
Adjourn	<p>Meeting adjourned at 2:02 p.m.</p>	