

CLAYTON
COMMUNITY EQUITY COMMISSION

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

OVERVIEW

The Community Equity Commission ([Bill No. 6759](#)) was established to provide the Mayor and Board of Aldermen with insight and guidance on matters of equity, diversity and inclusion.

The Ordinance creating the Commission provides it shall serve in an advisory role to the Mayor and Board of Aldermen on ways to:

1. *“Promote community awareness and education on the value of diversity to the community.*
2. *Promote equity on the basis of economic status, race, color, religion, gender, national origin, ancestry, marital status, lawful source of income, physical or mental disability, familial status, sexual orientation, and gender identity.*
3. *Evaluate and develop actionable equity recommendations to be used to examine and strengthen policies, practices, services, and programs, which will establish the Commission as a community resource and regional leader.*
4. *Promote responsiveness of government to concerns of all minority groups and others that may be subject to bias or discrimination in the community; and*
5. *Encourage the creation and continuation of community equity, diversity and inclusion awareness efforts, programs, and activities that are available and accessible to all community members.”*

COMMISSION MEMBERS

The Ordinance provides for 7 Commissioners. During 2023 they were: Christine Schmitz, Chair; Ben Uchitelle, Frances Peres, Stuart Berkowitz, Ted Wheeler, Lauren Rodriguez-Goldstein, and Karin Schute.

Ex-Officio and Aldermanic Liaison Members

The Ordinance further provides for the appointment of Ex-Officio and Aldermanic Liaison Members. During 2023 Ex-Officio Members were Cameron Poole of the Clayton School District, Joanna Schooler of Washington University, Rob Whitney of the Clayton Chamber of Commerce, and Sarah Rugenstone, representing the Faith Community.

Alderwoman Becky Patel and Alderman Gary Feder were the Board of Aldermen Liaisons.

2023 Activities

- Continued the CEC reflection tradition: CEC opens its meetings with a land acknowledgment and a reflection of the many efforts and people who contributed to equity and diversity and inclusion efforts throughout American history as well as a reminder of that work that remains to be done. To augment this recognition, the CEC prepares an annual Diversity Awareness Calendar for use in Clayton communications. In 2023 CEC Reflections included:
 - January: National Day of Racial Healing
 - February: Black History: The 1619 Project
 - March: Nikki Giovanni, African American Poet
 - April: Arab-American Heritage Month
 - May: Jewish American Heritage Month, Emma Lazarus
 - June: Pride Month
 - July: South Asian Heritage Month
 - August: Women's Equality Day, BIPOC women activists
 - September: National Hispanic Heritage, Dr. Ellen Ochoa
 - October: National Indigenous People's Day, the Osage Nation
 - November: Recognition of the ongoing racial bias in preschool suspensions
- *Recommendation for DEI Lens on Municipal Court Judge Selection*
 - The CEC had recommended to the Board of Aldermen that principles of equity and transparency, consistent with the reforms following Ferguson, be imbedded in the selection of the municipal judge by establishing a selection committee that included the voice of defendants. The BOA largely adopted the CEC recommendation, creating a panel that includes an Alderman and other members of the community selected through a DEI lens. An attorney from Arch City Defenders now sits on the Judicial selection panel and a new Municipal Judge has been selected.

- The CEC Law Enforcement subcommittee met several times with the new judge, Steve Strumm, focusing primarily on his policy regarding issuing bench warrants.
- *Recommendation to Decriminalize Failure to Appear*
 - A recommendation from the Law Enforcement subcommittee that the ordinance that criminalizes failure to appear be repealed was unanimously recommended to the BOA. At his request, the law enforcement subcommittee met with Craig Smith, Clayton's new prosecuting attorney. He agreed that the ordinance was flawed and should be repealed but proposed a more narrowly drafted replacement. To date, no replacement has been proposed. We will continue to follow up on this in 2024.
- *Assessing the need for Social Services in Policing*
 - To better understand the social service needs of the unhoused and people experiencing emotional distress, the subcommittee along with police Chief Smith, met with the Deans at Washington University's Brown School of Social Work. Following that meeting Lauren Rodriguez-Goldstein reached out to the Social Service Coordinator for Maplewood and Richmond Heights, Ms. Culbertson, to understand her role in working with Law Enforcement in the communities she serves. During the conversation, Ms. Culbertson indicated that she does have capacity to add another city to her list. The CEC then requested data from CPD as to how many calls could have benefitted from a social worker on scene. The data showed a very, very small percentage of calls to the CPD were flagged EDP (emotionally disturbed person). Our City Manager will be talking with the Chief & MRH City Managers to further assess the situation.
- *Police Ride-Along*
 - Working with Chief Smith, members of the CEC were given the opportunity to participate in a police ride along. All members of the Law Enforcement subcommittee took advantage of this offer.
- *Review of Traffic Stop Data*
 - Police Chief Smith reviews traffic stop data on an annual basis in a public CEC meeting.
- *Recommendation for Multi-Lingual Wayfinding*
 - A recommendation was made to the BOA that when/if city Welcome and wayfinding signage is being replaced, it should be replaced multi-lingually. Clayton being the County Government seat brings a diverse group of visitors to our city. Bring able to navigate particularly the government center and downtown business district in one's native language is a compassionate, practical way to welcome visitors to our

city. The BOA agreed and passed the recommendation to City staff for implementation whenever signage is updated.

- *Affordable Housing*
 - Since allowing credits for the inclusion of affordable units (80% of AMI) in new multi-family housing developments, we have made small gains of affordable units in every new multi-family development. Thanks to our affordable housing committee, in particular members Kathleen Gund and Barbara Finch, for their persistent advocating, along with City Manager, David Gipson and the Planning and Zoning Committee for their support.
 - Clayton is in the process of creating a comprehensive Strategic Plan which will guide the direction of the city for decades to come. The CEC is participating on the Steering Committee and continues to advocate for a representative sample in polling so that all voices will be heard in the process.

- *Collaboration with the Business Community*
 - At the suggestion of Rob Whitney, our liaison to the business community. our communications subcommittee worked with DEI leaders at Commerce and Husch Blackwell to develop a questionnaire to be sent to all members of the Clayton Chamber of Commerce to assess the state of DEI efforts in the business community. After an initial poor response rate, we are in the process of sending another round of emails to see if we can generate more participation. Pending those results, we will continue to assess how best to reach the business community on matters of DEI going forward in 2024.

- *Collaboration with Clayton School District*
 - Working with our liaison, Cameron Poole, to structure a DEI project with Clayton Students in the spring semester of 2024.

- *Collaboration with Neighboring Communities*
 - The Housing subcommittee and David Gibson, Clayton City Manager, met with the Webster Groves Mayor and representatives to share information about the feasibility of Community Land Trusts.
 - Representatives from the CEC and David Gibson met with members of the Kirkwood Human Rights Commission to share ideas on furthering DEI efforts and awareness in our communities. Communication continues to inform each other of relevant events and issues.

Respectfully Submitted

Clayton Community Equity Commission

Chris Schmiz, Chair

Members: Ben Uchitelle, Stuart Berkowitz, Frances Peres, Ted Wheeler,
Lauren Rodriguez-Goldstein and Karin Schute

Ex Officio: Cameron Poole (Clayton School District), Joanna Schooler (Washington University), Rob Whitney (Clayton Chamber of Commerce) and Sarah Rugenstone (Faith-Based Community)

Aldermanic Liaisons: Susan Buse and Gary Feder