



Commission on African American Affairs Public Meeting Minutes Friday, May 20, 2022 | 1:00 pm - 3:00 p.m. In Person Meeting - Spokane, WA

Commissioner Dorian Waller, Chair
Representing Pierce County

Commissioner Rev. Walter Kendricks,
Vice Chair
Representing Eastern Washington

Commissioner Andrea Caupain
Representing King County

Commissioner Michael Bailey
Representing King County

Commissioner LeRoy Laney III
Representing King County

Commissioner Joseph Todd
Representing South King County

Commissioner Zellynda Perkins
Representing Pierce County

Commissioner Dr. Yolanda Geolingo
Representing Thurston County

Commissioner Sheila Stanton
Representing King County

Executive Director Edward O. Prince

Members present: Chair Waller, Vice-chair Kendricks, Bailey, Perkins, Todd, Laney, Geolingo, Stanton, Executive Director Edward Prince, Program Manager Charlotte Kerney, Executive Assistant Keahna Umpstead

Absent: Caupain-Sanderson

3:30 pm – Meeting called to order by Chairperson Waller

3:35pm – Roll Call

3:40pm - Motion to accept meeting minutes by Vice-chair Kendricks – Motion seconded by Commissioner Laney.

Chairperson Waller called for vote to accept January 2022 Meeting Minutes

Voice vote – no objections. Motion carried. March 2022 commission meeting minutes approved.

1:10pm – Former Commissioner and Executive Director of the Carl Maxey Center, Sandra Williams, presenting on the Carl Maxey Center

- The Maxey Center came into existence as a black focused cultural center as the answer to the question, what can be done to make Spokane better, specifically for black people? And the need to address the racial disparities that exist and have existed in Spokane for as long as can be remembered.
- The Center came to life as a small non-profit and moved into its current home in 2018 and a phase one remodel on the former 1920's body shop began in 2019 with the help of funds solely from community and private donations. Doors to the center officially opened to the public on the last weekend of February.
 - The center has since held all kinds of community events. Such as, meetings, workshops, concerts, and public gatherings.
 - There will be 2 more phased remodels to the center's location. Phase 2 will bring the addition of a cultural library which will house books by or about black people, conference rooms that will be available for public use, a permanent art gallery and coffee shop that will include a work training program. Phase 3 will bring a technology center and business incubator to the Center along with the paving for the Center's own parking lot.

- Programs currently offered at the Maxey Center:
 - Black business support group
 - Focuses on efforts to uplift the black business community that was hit hard by COVID-19.
 - Includes a black business support team that goes in to provide business assessments for business owners to help them identify the kind of help they need. This aids those businesses who were unable to get the help they needed through COVID relief funds due to lack of or no access to bank accounts or statements and there for could not qualify.
- Rent and Utility Assistance:
 - The assistance funds began at \$150,000 a few years ago and the Center just received another \$1 million grant this past year to target the black community specifically, which has never happened in Spokane.
 - Developing pilot programs.
 - Allocating funds to provide computers ab tech. equipment to black students.

1:22pm – Commissioner Geolingo – How did you come up with the name for the Carl Maxey Center?

Executive Director Williams – Carl Maxey was the first black attorney in Spokane and a champion for racial justice. During brainstorming the name for the Center someone mentioned Carl because he was from the Spokane community and represented a lot of what the Center stands for and is trying to accomplish, and it was like a light bulb went off.

1:24pm – Commissioner Laney – Is the Carl Maxey Center a non-profit and is there any civic focus or engagement the center is doing or are you planning on it?

Executive Director Williams – We are a 501-C3 non-profit. As far as the civic engagement we are not yet doing any, but we are very much planning on it. In the beginning there was this real belief that there would be this gradual business and strategic plan. Then COVID happened and then George Floyd happened and there was an immediate vertical growth with just one staff member. So since then, we have been just trying to simply stay on top of it all. Trying to get staff on board and finishing the business objectives.

- Just hired two new employees. One focused on business and workforce development and the other focused on community engagement.
- There has been a grant that will allow to hire a community navigator to connect our people, black people, to resources in the community. Often by the time the black community finds out about available public assistance funding the resources and the money is already gone.
- One specific thing that we do want to have here directly regarding civic engagement is a racial justice legal clinic. No one wants to touch race here in Spokane and it is greatly needed. Simply due to the number of phone calls I get personally regarding discrimination in employment, housing, school, jobs, yet no one seems to be addressing it. So that would for sure be the next big thing for us.

1:28pm Commissioner Todd – Besides the grants that you are getting, what kind of State funding are you tapping into?

Executive Director Williams – We have gotten the Capitol Budget money and a couple of State grants from the Department of Commerce for Business Development along with a few other ones from the State, but that is about it for State funded money. This is because the problem with State money is that it comes with so much additional work compared to the money you are receiving. So, I would rather go for private money for that reason. I do not turn down State money, but I do not actively seek it out because we are so small and the amount of work that State money creates vs. the amount of money, we receive just does not equal out once we complete all the reporting and things that go along with it. Especially when we could get funding somewhere else and be able to just focus on the work we are trying to do within our community. The Group Health Foundation was the first to donate by giving us a general operations grant for 3 years which then opened the door for others to begin to believe in us and what we are doing here.

1:31pm Commissioner Geolingo – How are you partnering with other non-profits that are African American?

Executive Director Williams – We are open to partnering with everyone but there is a difference between being African American focused and African American led. In Spokane we are one of the few organizations that are explicitly black focused. The challenge with partnership is the focus, our focus is black, some people shy away from that.

1:33pm – Betsy Wilkerson, Board President of the Carl Maxey Center and Spokane City Council Member, is introduced.

Five people came together on Sandra's vision of this place that we now know as the Carl Maxey Center and today there are only six individuals who are working to execute what our community needs through this organization. It is important that this space caters to the needs of the community but that it is also welcoming and intimate and fosters partnership between these community members. And allow the Center to be the hub of that work.

1:45pm – Attorney Denis Cronin, presenting on Civil Rights and the Spokane experience.

Discussion – On Carl Maxey's background as an attorney and his accomplishments, and fight against racism in Spokane beginning in 1951 when he became the first African American lawyer in Eastern Washington.

1:53pm – The Blueprint for Reform

- Published in 2013 by the Spokane Regional Criminal Justice Commission with the goal of creating an efficient and effective regional criminal justice system.
- To this day in 2022 it has yet to be implemented.

1:55pm – The MacArthur Foundation

- Came to Spokane in 2015 and granted \$150,000 for criminal justice reform to those in power.
- By April 2016 the grant was \$1.75 million
- By January 2019 the grant was now \$1.09 million

- In 2021 the foundation began talking about taking back \$700,000 because nothing had been done in terms of creating any reform and no one could account for the money that had been spent.

2:08pm – Spokane Judicial System

- Operates on a white, elitist value system that does not operate on an intersectional focus to solve issues. Instead, they continue to focus on the superficial surface level causation of problems rather than the systemic racism that continues to exist within the system.
- Instead of focusing on a solution they are focusing on the punishment, causing more issues.

2:17pm – Chair Waller – A lot of the narrative but what are the statistics, what is the incarceration rate for African American males in Spokane?

Attorney Cronin – I cannot answer that question for a couple of reasons. The first is that they will not give these stats to us. At one-point Vice-chair Kendricks and myself along with the MacArthur Foundation inquired about these statistics by putting in a records request for evidence proposes to show the disproportionality of incarceration rates. They told us that they could not access that information because it would take too much money and time for them to compile it all as the information is held in multiple silos. However, if you live here in Spokane or work here at the court room, you can see it every day. Even without the numbers the level of disproportionality.

2:23pm – Public Comment – 4 individuals in audience, 3 left public comment.

3:00pm – Meeting Adjourned