

Minutes

Equity Advisory Committee



Meeting date: September 16, 2025

Time: 6:00 PM

Location: Virtual

Members present:

- Co-Chair, John Pacheco Jr., District 5
- Co-Chair, Carmeann Foster, District G
- Yassin Osman, District 7
- Dr. Tyronne Carter, District 3
- Toni Carter, District 14
- Michael Luseni, District A
- Vacant, District B

- Samirra Isse, District C
- Anita L. Urvina Davis, District D
- Zakariya Abdullahi, District E
- Vacant, District F
- Vacant, District H
- Vacant, at large

- Mitchel Hansen, at large
- Markeya Knight, at large
- Astrid Benedetto, at large
- Vacant, at large
- Vacant, at large
- Vacant, at large
- Vacant, at large
- = present, E = excused

Dakota Land, Water, and People Acknowledgment

The Metropolitan Council acknowledges that the land we currently call Minnesota and specifically the seven-county region is the ancestral homeland of the Dakota Oyate who are present and active contributors to our thriving region. As part of the Metropolitan Council’s commitment to address the unresolved legacy of genocide, dispossession, and settler colonialism and the fact that government institutions, including the Metropolitan Council, benefitted economically, politically, and institutionally after the forceable removal of the Dakota Oyate, the Metropolitan Council is dedicated to instilling Land, Water, and People Commitments in regional policy. These commitments support the Dakota Oyate, the eleven federally recognized Tribes in Minnesota, Ho-Chunk Nation, and the American Indian Communities representing over 150 diverse Tribal Nations that call the seven-county region home.

Call to order

A quorum being present, Co-Chair John Pacheco called the regular meeting of the Equity Advisory Committee to order at 6:03 p.m.

Dakota Land, Water, and People Acknowledgment

The Dakota Land, Water, and People Acknowledgment was read by Co-Chair John Pacheco.

Agenda approved

It was moved by CM Dr Tyrone Carter, seconded by Anita Davis to approve the agenda. Committee Members did not have any comments or changes to the agenda. **Motion carried.**

Approval of minutes

It was moved by CM Toni Carter , seconded by Co Chair Carmeann Foster to approve the minutes of the August 19, 2025, regular meeting of the Equity Advisory Committee. **Motion carried.**

Public invitation

No conversation here.

Information

Presentation Title-

State Disparity Study Results, Ashanti Payne, Assistant Director | Office of Equity and Equal Opportunity

Presentation Overview-

- Presentation of the State of Minnesota Disparity Study, conducted by Keen Independent Research LLC.
- Purpose: To analyze whether minority- and woman-owned businesses (MBEs/WBEs) are equitably utilized in Metropolitan Council contracts and subcontracts.
- The study also examined small businesses, veteran-owned, service-disabled veteran-owned, and disability-owned firms.
- Conducted jointly with **15 other public entities** across Minnesota (including cities, counties, MnDOT, MnSCU, and others).
- Timeframe analyzed: **July 2016 – June 2023**.
- Follows up on the **2017 joint study** led by the Minnesota Department of Administration.

Meeting Notes-

Tyronne Carter – 27:04

I'd just like to say kudos for the job that you all have done, especially with the project bank accounts idea. As you know, that's been a point of contention because of slow pay issues. As a small business owner myself, I can understand the reluctance many small businesses feel about entering into financial partnerships on projects only to experience delayed payments and the negative impacts that come with that. So, I just want to say thank you for addressing that, and I hope the initiative moves forward successfully. I'm crossing my fingers that it's going to work.

Ashanti Payne – 27:57

Thank you.

Carmeann Foster – 28:13

Alright, Anita, did you have a comment? Otherwise, Mitchell has the next item.

Anita Urvina-Davis – 28:16

Yes, it just came to mind. I'm sorry I didn't raise my hand earlier. I was looking at the materials and was wondering: what is Hennepin's Elevate program, and how does it differ from what the Met Council is doing? Is there something in their program that the Council hopes to model or adopt?

Ashanti Payne – 28:39

Yes, Hennepin County's Elevate program is a small business support services initiative. I've had several in-depth conversations with the team that runs it. It's similar to some of the work we do we've actually incorporated a few of their ideas—but we don't want to duplicate services. Instead, we aim to leverage resources with partners like Hennepin County. Elevate, MnDOT, and the Department of Administration all offer various small business training and resources. One of our strategies is to continue funding our own support services program to provide similar assistance to small businesses interested in working with the Council.

Anita Urvina-Davis – 29:44

One other thing Hennepin County does a lot of community engagement and outreach through its programs. That may make a difference, especially when people have someone from the County consistently reaching out, providing information, resources, and assistance. That personal connection

really helps small businesses succeed. Maybe that's something the Council could also consider building more direct community engagement into its approach.

Ashanti Payne – 30:21

Thank you for that recommendation. The good thing is that our Engagement and Development Unit Manager, Tomas Mebrahtu, is also on this meeting, so he heard your suggestion as well. Thank you.

Anita Urvina-Davis – 30:41

Mm-hmm.

Ashanti Payne – 30:45

Thank you for that recommendation.

Anita Urvina-Davis – 30:47

Alright, you're welcome.

Carmeann Foster – 30:50

Wonderful. Mitchell, you had your hand raised.

Mitchel Hansen – 30:55

Yes, I just want to say I appreciate the depth of the executive summary and how comprehensive it is. It's a very complex topic with a lot of data, and seeing the real feedback and comments included was great.

We don't often see that level of authenticity it really stood out. One comment that especially struck me was, "I still feel like it's an old boys' club out here." That echoes what many people experience and helps guide our work. Another powerful comment was from a South American female business owner who said, "If it's a woman-owned business, people assume it's a passion project. They don't think I can run it like a business it's just me having fun." That really hit home.

Overall, I appreciate how the summary highlights recurring themes access to capital, bonding, insurance, prompt payment, information gaps, and bid-shopping in subcontracting. These are the same issues we see across all access points. I just want to thank you for putting together such an honest and detailed summary. It really helps us understand where we are and what needs work. I look forward to continuing the conversation on these major issues.

Ashanti Payne – 32:50

Thank you, Committee Member Hansen. A big part of our responsibility is rebuilding trust—making sure we can communicate and demonstrate real progress and improvements. We're trying to break down barriers and rebuild confidence in doing business with a large public entity like the Council. That's a big part of this work, and I appreciate your comments.

Mitchel Hansen – 33:39

I appreciate you.

Carmeann Foster – 33:50

Are there others who would like to speak on the presentation?
Alright, I see a hand Anita, did you want to add something?

Anita Urvina-Davis – 34:04

Yes, just one quick thing. Thank you, Ashanti, for listening to us and for hearing our feedback last time. While there are still areas for improvement, I was very happy to see how thorough this report was. It's a big step forward from the last report we received, which I think was a year and a half or two years ago. I really appreciate all the work that's gone into this. Thank you.



Ashanti Payne – 34:33

Thank you. Just as a note, if you'd like to see the individual reports from all the agencies that participated, they're available on the Department of Administration's website. That department led the statewide disparity study, so if you want to see other cities', counties', or entities' reports, you can find them there.

Anita Urvina-Davis – 35:07

Thanks.

Michael Luseni – 35:11

I just want to echo Anita's comments about the report. We've come a long way, and it's great to see how coherent and unified this one is. It's not disjointed between departments or groups it really makes sense. Of course, there are still areas we need to work on, but the focus on addressing disparity really comes through in the reporting. Kudos to you, Ashanti, and your team for the hard work.

Ashanti Payne – 35:58

Thank you.

Carmeann Foster – 36:07

Alright, do we have anyone else? Seeing none, Ashanti, we want to thank you again for taking the time to present to us this evening and for all the wonderful work you're doing with the Council. We've now concluded all scheduled agenda items, but before we adjourn, we'd like to open the floor for brief announcements from committee members or staff. Anita, go ahead.

Anita Urvina-Davis – 36:47

I'm just full of information tonight excuse me but I had a discussion on Facebook with some seniors here in North Minneapolis. We were talking about Metro Transit and the safety concerns they've been experiencing on buses. They mentioned feeling unsafe and said they'd actually like to see more police officers or uniformed personnel present. I remember a few years ago when there was discussion about removing uniformed presence from buses and light rail, but now, the people I talked to—about seven seniors—said they'd feel safer if someone in uniform was around. They also mentioned wanting bus drivers to receive training on what to do when passengers feel threatened or unsafe. Another concern they raised was fare prices. As seniors, they'd like to see more discounted rates to encourage them to use the bus for errands like grocery shopping. So, between safety and fare affordability, those were the main issues they raised. I just wanted to share that here in case it's something this group might want to discuss further.

Carmeann Foster – 39:05

Thank you so much, Anita. I know that our staff, Tori and Lila, appreciate hearing what topics committee members are interested in exploring, so I'm sure they'll take note of that. Thank you, Mitchell.

Anita Urvina-Davis – 39:20

Thank you.

Mitchel Hansen – 39:21

Yes, I'm hearing the same concerns. The recent loss of Sergeant Rodriguez really hit hard because programs like his are so important they connect people in need with housing and other supports. If those efforts decline, it can create ripple effects across the system. I ride public transportation myself, and while experienced riders know how to avoid certain issues, many people especially vulnerable ones don't. There's definitely a need for continued focus on safety and support programs. I completely agree with what Anita said, and I hope we can look at strengthening similar initiatives, especially for seniors and others who rely heavily on public transit.



Carmeann Foster – 40:52

Thank you for sharing that, Mitchell. Do we have any other announcements? I'll share one: The Minnesota Association of Black Social Workers is hosting their annual conference on **October 3rd**. There will be opportunities for tabling as well as general attendance. I know many of us look for ways to connect with the community, and this could be a great one. That's my announcement.

Announcement

New members have been selected and interviewed.

Adjournment

Business completed; the meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Certification

I hereby certify that the foregoing narrative and exhibits constitute a true and accurate record of the Equity Advisory Committee meeting of September 16, 2025.

Approved this 21 day of October 2025.

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