March 19, 2019

Dear Mayor Frey and Minneapolis City Council,

We, the members of Neighborhoods 2020 (N2020) Governance Structure Work Group 2 (WG2), came together at the call of the City of Minneapolis from our diverse set of life experiences, representing the various stakeholder roles set out in the Work Group selection process (representatives of neighborhoods, cultural communities, undoing racism/equity, and NCEC and NRP Policy Board). We commend city representatives for understanding in theory, if not in practice, that the knowledge base, criteria, and improvement recommendations for well-functioning community groups should come from the people with recent and relevant experience in grassroots organizing at the hyperlocal level. We are writing to thank you for the opportunity to serve and to express strong concerns regarding the *process* we experienced as participants in a work group run by the Neighborhood and Community Relations (NCR) department.

WG2 members were enticed to participate in a "transformative" process to help shape the future of our unique network of neighborhoods and community cultural organizations. We were told that we would play a "vital role" in "providing judicious advice" to the City Council, and that our recommendations could be transmitted as part of a staff report or as a distinct memo of our own content. Given these roles and expectations, in the beginning we were excited by the idea of creating an autonomous and independent set of recommendations. However, transparency was soon lost in the way we were managed and our ability to readily address our clear directives were thwarted by NCR.

From the outset, NCR dominated WG2 meetings: they created and ran agendas without input by WG2 members, and predetermined topics and content of presentations, some of which were not relevant or helpful to our discussions. WG2 did not have the latitude to structure meetings, locations, or times that would better achieve *equitable* work group and public involvement. Time and scheduling pressures were constant. WG2 members felt disempowered and distracted from our stated primary purpose.

Prior to the first draft recommendation being written, WG2 asked for several items that would help us form a more equitable and clear policy recommendation. We wanted to hear from the public in listening sessions. We asked to collaborate, interact, and integrate ideas with our colleagues on Work Groups 1 and 3. Later, we requested an extended deadline for drafting recommendations and/or the ability to phase in recommendations per sensical order following the products developed in other work groups. Our "homework" never included the two years of public comment already received on the subject (only documents submitted by NCEC and individual neighborhood organizations). WG2 members worked well together and came to consensus decisions but did not feel our "concerns and aspirations [were] consistently understood and considered" by NCR. Our role in IAP2 public participation was presented to us as being "involved" and "collaborative" but our work group requests were denied, put off until an unspecified time, or left unanswered.

The drafting of "our" initial set of recommendations was done without WG2 members being included, and the recommendations were presented at the (only) all workgroup meeting on November 19, 2018. Having work group drafts available only at the November 19 joint Work Groups meeting, and not in advance, appeared intended to discourage true synergy, integration, and coordination among the three Work Groups (or perhaps it was an indication of the project being under-resourced). We felt the WG2 material was misrepresented, diluted, and not ready for collective work group or public review. We received similar feedback from other work groups regarding their prepared packets. This shared sense of dissatisfaction resulted in an extra meeting for WG2 where we went through our document line by line to ensure an accurate product for presentation at the Community Connections Conference.

After WG2 meetings were over, we discovered NCR had created their own recommendations which were an impossibly generalized and abbreviated version of our work. Their version was a repudiation of our efforts. While NCR touts the Principles of Community Engagement from IAP2, in our case, we do not believe these principles were honored. Our contributions were not thoughtfully considered as promised (Principle #2), nor was WG2 respected or provided with an explanation of how our input affected NCR's decision (Principle #7). NCR's recommendations became the featured content on the Neighborhoods 2020 website and at the Community Connections Conference. Our work was reduced to two short paragraphs, sidelined and buried beneath NCR's version. We did, however, receive a sound bite explanation that the Governance recommendation was judged "too complex."

We volunteered for what we thought would be a worthy and inspiring process. By our calculation, WG2 convened for a total of 19 hours including orientation and extra meetings. At a rate of $27.58 per hour (value of volunteer time in MN in 2017, most recent data available), each person's involvement can be monetized at a minimum of $542.02. If we include an additional 8-10 hours for homework and materials review plus time spent preparing our applications, the per person service value climbs to about $775. (We are not including here the time we stayed late, worked on our own, and an engaged with others outside of WG2). There was a total of 11 resident/non-elected volunteers in WG2, and we estimate the total full value of WG2 time given to the city to be $8,525. Though it was our desire to achieve full value by making sure diversity factors were met in WG2 composition, this was not achieved due in part to NCR's unwillingness to be creative and flexible with our ideas to meet inclusivity objectives which was noted in a Southwest Journal article; the city, not the work groups should be held accountable for this misstep.

We believe goodwill was extracted from each and every one of us since our recommendations were not considered or accepted nor was this fact disclosed to us in time to transmit our recommendations as a separate report and response to City Council. We feel N2020 work groups in general and WG2 specifically were set up to be a "check box" in the due process of public participation and that NCR had no intention to work with us in the creation of a robust framework "reflective of the city's population diversity and demographics...marshaling the resources, energy and creativity of all its residents for a better future."

The City, through its NCR department, only offered the illusion of inclusion and empowerment in regard to this very important structural asset to the people of Minneapolis. We respectfully request that our individual names and the association of Governance Advisory Structure/Workgroup 2 be removed from the "Neighborhoods 2020 Recommendations" dated January 28, 2019, specifically on pages 2 and 14.

We request a deadline extension for the N2020 recommendations review so that WG2 may have time to present the inspired, creative, and comprehensive work we actually did. If we receive this extension, we believe we can deliver an independent set of Governance Advisory Structure recommendations by June 30, 2019.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Neighborhoods 2020, Work Group 2
Nick Cichowicz, 5th district NCEC Commissioner
Janet Court
Shauna Dee
Nikki Lindberg
Alexis Pennie
Saralyn Romanishan
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Kelley Skumautz
Jeffrey Strand, At-large NCEC Commissioner

Cc: NCR
Neighborhood Associations
Peter Eichten, 7th district NCEC Commissioner
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