

FARGO YOUTH INITIATIVE MINUTES

Regular Meeting:

Sunday, February 2, 2025

A Meeting of the Fargo Youth Initiative Members of the City of Fargo, North Dakota, was held in Atomic Coffee, 222 Broadway N #100, at 1:00 p.m., Sunday, February 2, 2025.

The Fargo Youth Initiative Members present or absent were as follows:

Present*: Aiden Rosten, Ava Bach, Harper Reiniger, Isabella Meyer, Kaj Naujokas, Lucy Paul, McKenzie Olson, Minou Babingui, Setiya Hamidi, Steph Kramer

Absent: Abigail Hamilton, Ashley Hsu, Drew Burris, Erica Johnson, Justin Jiang, Kallie Anderson, Koral Siegal, Lillian Dybing, Rose Ali, Reanna Quiah

**Due to lack of quorum for an official meeting, the meeting commenced with informal presentation and discussion.*

Item 1. Welcome and Introductions

Chair Meyer welcomed Members to the meeting and introductions were made.

Item 2. Approve Agenda & Minutes

Due to lack of quorum, no action was taken. Chair Meyer noted they would move agenda items 5 and 6 up to the top to accommodate guest time constraints.

Item 3. Youth Homelessness

Commissioner Kolpack provided updates on the City's strategy for addressing homelessness and emphasized the importance of youth input. She highlighted ongoing efforts, including a 30-60-90 day plan in collaboration with United Way and FM Coalition to End Homelessness and a master leasing program to secure housing for those with eviction histories, and an upcoming expiration in March on the resolution to allow camping on public property. The City is also working with Bloomberg Association to explore relocation options for the Downtown Engagement Center (DEC).

In response to a question from Member Olson on where youth feedback could be valuable, Commissioner Kolpack encouraged members to gather and present data from community organizations and their own research to help inform city discussions.

Item 4. North Dakota Legislative Session

Commissioner Kolpack provided an overview of the City's legislative priorities at the current North Dakota legislative session, including property tax relief and funding for the Red River water supply project. She noted that among the 1,066 bills this session, key

areas of focus for the City include zoning, water, infrastructure, transit, and workforce development.

Kolpack explained that the Mayor and she lead the City's lobbying efforts, meeting weekly to determine priorities. She emphasized the need for strategic focus, as every issue could be seen as important, but prioritization is essential for the region's well-being.

In response to a question from Vice Chair Babingui on how youth can influence these discussions, Kolpack encouraged greater youth participation in boards and commissions, as well as attending City Commission meetings, noting that engagement is often low. She also highlighted an upcoming informational meeting on Wednesday, February 19 at 10am regarding results of a recent community survey on community engagement.

Member Kramer noted that youth can submit written testimony on bills, to which Commissioner Kolpack affirmed that such testimony is read and considered. Chair Meyer affirmed this and also noted concerns about city meeting notices can be difficult to find, highlighting a barrier to civic engagement.

Ashley Ladbury Hrichen, a director with the League of Women Voters of the Red River Valley, provided background on the nonpartisan national organization, which advocates for civic engagement and protects voting rights.

She provided an overview of how to track bills and submit testimony as a citizen during the current North Dakota legislative session. She noted that while testimony must be submitted before a committee hearing, individuals can still contact legislators afterward via email, phone, or postcards. She shared best practices for writing testimony, including keeping it concise, stating why the issue matters personally, and bolding key phrases for readability. She noted that testimony is published online, and that volume matters as legislators take issues more seriously when many people engage. She recommended checking out news sources and organizations for updates and resources such as bill to stay informed.

Item 5. School Engagement

Fargo School Board liaison Kristin Nelson provided information on the student engagement group, i.e., student cabinet, that meets monthly with Dr. Gandhi to give feedback. She advised that anyone interested should talk to their principal.

Discussion was held regarding concerns members have regarding class attendance and handling of trancies/tardiness; experiences adopting evidenced-based reporting grading system, current legislative topics, and the upcoming search for a new superintendent.

Item 6. Youth Public Health

No updates were heard for this item.

Item 7. Library Teen Services Discussion

Anna Lynch, Adult/Teen Services Librarian for Fargo Public Library, shared information about upcoming teen programming and solicited feedback from members on what they would like to see, how to best reach students, and how to get feedback in the future. Members shared a variety of ideas such as movie nights, speakers on college readiness, usage of social media for marketing, and offering feedback forms at events or via school email. Discussion was also held regarding how current legislative proposals could affect youth access to libraries in the future.

Item 8. MLK Jr. Day Debrief

Members who participated in the City's MLK Jr. Day celebration shared a brief recap of their experiences.

Item 9. Staff Report

No reports were heard for this item.

Item 10. Adjourn – Next meeting March 2, 2025

The time of adjournment was 3:04 p.m.