From: Benny Roberts
To: *CI-StPaul_Contact-Council
Cc: Anika Bowie; Rebecca Noecker; Saura Jost; Molly Coleman; Hwa Jeong Kim; Nelsie Yang; Cheniqua Johnson
Subject: Support to Reopen the Reparations Harm Study RFP and Establish a Community-Driven Selection Process
Date: Tuesday, November 4, 2025 2:02:49 PM

Saint Paul City Council
15 Kellogg Blvd W, Room 300
Saint Paul, MN 55102

Dear Council Members,

I am writing in support of Agenda Item 15, sponsored by Councilmember Anika Bowie. This resolution seeks to create a community-driven selection process for identifying the research team. I urge the Council to vote in favor of this resolution to ensure accountability and transparency while aligning with the original intent of the Reparations Commission. As a descendant and community leader, I'd like to see more transparency.

The City's current process raises concerns that this resolution aims to correct:

Obvious conflict of interest – The city cannot lead a study examining its own role in systemic racism and displacement of black Americans. The Reparations Commission's bylaws give the Chair authority to design the selection process, yet City staff have taken the lead in major decisions. The resolution restores the Commission's independence and integrity.

Lack of Outreach and Accessibility – The RFP only had three applicants, which is an indicator of the processed being rushed or not briefly advertised. Reopening the RFP allows broader outreach and a fair process to other black led/Rondo descendant partners to apply.

Where's Rondo?– Rondo is home to the most visible, nefarious, and egregious systemic harm against black Americans in Saint Paul, and no reparative acts or narratives pursuing black equity can be contextualized in St. Paul without its story. Centering Rondo and the descendants most impacted ensures the study accurately reflects the historical and ongoing harms the City seeks to address and actively works to rebuild some of the trust that that is still broken with community.

This resolution provides a clear path forward. It calls for the Procurement Office to reopen the RFP for more engagement and for a selection committee with majority

community representation, including
Rondo descendants. These steps will make the process more inclusive, transparent, trustworthy, and credible.

The Reparations Harm Study should be led by the people most impacted — not the same institutions responsible for the harm, still evolving in its generational impact of displacement, economic reckoning, and trauma. I urge the Council to vote yes on Agenda Item 15 at the November 5th meeting and support a truly community-led process for reparative justice in Saint Paul.

Thank you all for your leadership and your commitment to doing this work the right way.

Peace,

Benny Roberts
Executive Director
Hallie Q. Brown Community Center
Broberts@hallieqbrown.org
To schedule a meeting: tclayton@hallieqbrown.org
www.hallieqbrown.org
651-322-0641