

Planning Commission Proposed Appointments – September 2017

Shannon Eckman

Ward 5

Asian American

Employer: Minnesota Homeownership Center

Occupation: Program Manager

Why are you interested in serving on a board or committee?

My lens and life experiences are skills I bring to the forefront of my work. As a person of color and a woman of color I have experienced the very inequities and racialized barriers I combat every day at work. As a Program Manager at Minnesota Homeownership Center, my main priorities are to support and train our network of non-profit housing organizations. I also co-manage a statewide housing education, counseling and technical assistance grant (HECAT). I understand the value of my voice but also its limitations to my own experiences. In my current position, I utilize my own equity framework to better access to homeownership, adapt our homeownership models, and grant facilitation. I want to apply these skills to better our city's systems and infrastructures to create equitable living for all of our communities.

Being a Korean adoptee, I have always been cognizant of the privileges and opportunities as well as the challenges that immigrants and refugees face while navigating our country, culture and systems. I have always had a strong desire to give back to my community and help advance equity in any way I can.

What skills/training or experience do you possess for the committee(s) for which you seek appointment?

I have several years of board and board advisory experience. I served and completed my term as a Vice President of KFAI, Fresh Air, Inc.'s Board of Directors (2012-2014). My main responsibilities were to chair our Governance Committee, which oversaw the board's bylaws, policies, conflict resolution, succession planning, and elections. I currently sit on the Minnesota Association of Colored Counselors Advisory Council (2014-present) and served two terms for the Minnesota Homeownership's Center Program Advisory Council. (2015-2017) I am a recent graduate from Nexus' Board and Commissions Leadership Institute (April 2017). I sharpened my skills through hands on project simulations like creating a community benefits agreement for the Ford Plant location, learning about Robert's Rules, and balancing the city of St Paul's budget. This program connected me with activists from communities other than my own. We recognized our collective power and joined forces to create more intersectionality within our sectors and professions. I started a small community garden (2015). The Green Thumb

Collective has made a small but growing impact by being green space for kids to run around, a community gathering place, a school bus pick up location, and a place where my community can interact with fresh food. Most recently, I have started to become more involved at my local District 6 Planning Council. Currently, I am working with the Vice Chair and an ad hoc committee revising our bylaws and creating stronger mechanisms for accountability. I am seeking appointment for the vacant seat for my precinct.

Eric Wojchik

Ward 4

Caucasian/Non-Hispanic

Employer: Metropolitan Council

Occupation: Senior Planner – Sector Representative

Why are you interested in serving on a board or committee?

I am interested in community cohesion, equity issues, and livability in St Paul. I would bring a diverse range of skills and interests to the Commission, including my career expertise in urban planning and design, my volunteer and advocacy work in the community, and my many years of experience working in development review and long-range planning for communities. I have worked with elected members, developers, agency stakeholders, community groups in my personal life and in my career as a public servant. Having worked with so many different groups and individuals, I understand the interplay of measured assessment and compromise needed at the Commission level in order to make sound, defensible recommendations to the City Council. I have a passion for the built and natural environment and how the improvement of these two elements is vital to livability and equity. As a career urban planner, I have served as the staff support for a City Planning Commission, so I have a refined understanding of the roles and requirements of Commission members.

What skills/training or experience do you possess for the committee(s) for which you seek appointment?

I have been a land use planner for almost a decade, and I have expertise in urban design and community development both from my experience working in Minnesota and for many years in Scotland. I know how to read and interpret technical planning and engineering plans, planning policies and implementation criteria. I know that I would be a vital asset to the Commission given my varied background in planning and community work. I also perform climate mitigation and adaptation work to serve Metropolitan Council systems, and this skill set could prove a unique asset to the Commission. My volunteerism reflects my interest in engaging in my District and Ward, as I have worked extensively, over many years with communities of color and with youth. Given my profession and my enthusiasm, I believe that I can best serve my Ward, District, and the City of St. Paul through serving on the City of St. Paul Planning Commission.