

EOC Staff Letter Regarding Alternative Proposal

Initially I would like to apologize for Ariel Ford's absence. She is attending the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's mandatory Annual Training Conference in Georgia. My name is Eric Kestin. I am an Investigator/Conciliator with the EOC.

As a staff we met and discussed the Alternative Proposal presented by Alders Konkel, Benford and King and we have prepared the following statement.

As the EOC staff stated before the Ad Hoc Committee, the Mayor's proposed Department of Civil Rights raises many concerns for us. These concerns include:

- The discussion being focused on race and national origin ignores the other protected classes outlined in the Equal Opportunities Ordinance.
- There is no evidence that combining the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) and the Affirmative Action Department (AAD) will address the concerns raised in the Comprehensive Survey supporters of DCR continually reference. No one has ever gone back to these individuals and asked them, "What do you feel you are missing out on in Madison that would improve your quality of life?" Maybe the answer is gangs in school, or not enough buses come to my area – neither of these concerns would be addressed by the Mayor's proposal.
- A reduction of front-line services to the citizens of Madison:
 - The proposed structure eliminates the EOC Investigations Supervisor position, the AAD Contract Compliance Officer position and the vacant EOC clerical position. That is a loss of 3 positions that provide direct, front-line services to the community.
 - The proposed structure has one director and 2 managers in place of the 2 current directors. This means 3 management positions, rather than 2, taking away more resources from direct services.

Until promoting human and civil rights becomes a part of the City's core mission and the City's level of commitment reflects that value, the quality of life for communities of color will always be lower in Madison. The Alternative Proposal being presented by Alders Konkel, Benford and King appears to make a stronger commitment to these values than the proposed Department of Civil Rights.

We believe that this alternative proposal is a collaboration that pulls in many of the most important ideas and suggestions raised in the public conversations regarding the EOC and the AAD. We are pleased that these Alders have listened to concerns raised by the public at the various hearings on this issue as they crafted their alternative proposal. We feel that this proposal has a much higher chance of success in meeting all the needs of the citizens of Madison.

We are encouraged by the inclusion of the Contract Compliance Officer position and the Investigations Supervisor positions in this proposal, which increases our effectiveness by maintaining resources rather than eliminating them.

We appreciate the consideration of a full-scale evaluation of both EOC and AAD (to be completed by January 2006) to determine ways of enhancing the agencies' services and improving effectiveness, and wish this would have been done prior to any proposal regarding these agencies.

We agree that a Civil Rights Task Force may be an important step toward increasing the commitment the City has to dealing with these issues. We suggest that the findings from the Race Relations Task Force in 1999 be used as a foundation for the work this Task Force would do.

We support the allocation of funds towards Fair Housing Testing and the Language Assistance Program. We emphasize that this level of funding will require a commitment that extends beyond one year if the City truly wants to make a difference in these areas.

In conclusion, the EOC staff supports the Alternative Proposal being presented tonight.

Thank you.