

A Mayor for Change: Tackling National Issues at the Local Level

A Study Group with Betsy Hodges

Mayor of Minneapolis (2013-2017)

Thursdays | 4:15 - 5:45 pm | Harvard IOP

February 15 – Mayoring in America Right Now: Trump, Policing, #metoo, and the American People

This session will be a chance to talk about what it means to be a regular person who leads a city in irregular times and will set the stage for the rest of the semester. Mayor Hodges can share insight about leading through #pointergate, officer-involved shootings, Donald Trump coming after cities and people who live in them, being an elected official open about being a survivor of sexual assault, and transformational change in a time of great tumult in our country.

February 22 – Using Local Government to Create Systemic Change: Building Your Values Into Government

Conversations about Big Ideas are crucial to shaping thought, but in local government – as anywhere - one must use the tools one has at hand to make change happen. Tools like budgets, hiring, managing through resistance to change, ordinance changes, the bully pulpit, and cross-sector collaboration are what local leaders have to work with to make a difference. Mayor Hodges can talk about using those tools to bring Earned Sick and Safe Time to Minneapolis, increase the Minimum Wage, put racial equity into the Public Works Capital Plan, support immigrant entrepreneurs and entrepreneurs of color, support trans and gender-nonconforming people, and more.

March 1 – Allyship, Uncomfortable Conversations, and Talking Across Difference: A Conversation with Ana Marie Cox

How do we come together to have the difficult conversations necessary to make change? What does it mean to be a committed ally? In her Crooked Media podcast “With Friends Like These,” Ana Marie Cox explores questions of allyship and uncomfortable conversations, especially in the current political climate. Ana Marie Cox is a distinguished journalist, podcaster, and media all-star. Founder of Wonkette, she has written for a variety of news outlets and is currently a writer for Syfy.

March 8 – A Conversation with US Congressman and DNC Vice Chair Keith Ellison (tentative date, guest invited)

March 15 – Spring Break

March 22 – Twenty-First Century Policing – Both Community and Law Enforcement as Requirements for Public Safety: A Conversation with Minneapolis Chief of Police Medaria Arradondo (date tentative, guest invited)

Building trust between police and communities of color and others is top-of-mind for many Americans. In recent years Minneapolis has seen two tragic, high-profile officer-involved shootings that killed Jamar Clark and Justine Damond. Mayor Hodges and Chief Arradondo were at the center of the city's response to those events and implemented some of the most forward-thinking policies, procedures, and ordinance-changes in the country. Minneapolis Chief of Police Medaria "Rondo" Arradondo is a leader in the nation in pursuing effective strategies to build trust and will be here to talk about policing in the 21st century.

March 29 – The Personal, The Political, The Police, and The Precinct (guest: Mayor Hodges' Chief of Staff John Stiles and SEIU Local 26 President Javier Morillo, Husbands to Each Other and Friends of Mayor Hodges)

Every elected official is a human being, and every elected official has to govern regardless of personal comfort or convenience. In November of 2015, Jamar Clark was shot and killed by members of the Minneapolis Police Department. His death was followed by an unprecedented 18-day occupation by demonstrators of the grounds of the Fourth Police Precinct. It was a time that tested alliances and friendships, including in Mayor Hodges' personal and professional life. Her Chief of Staff John Stiles and his husband, President of SEIU Local 26 in Minneapolis, both close friends of the Mayor, were at the heart of that moment and those tensions, and the three did not always agree with one another. How does a public servant navigate those waters? How does the community?

April 5 – Sexual Assault, Sexual Harassment, and Personal Disclosure: Before and Beyond #metoo

In April of 2017, before #metoo was a viral hashtag, Mayor Hodges publicly disclosed that she is a survivor of childhood sexual assault. What happened in the aftermath of that disclosure holds stories of great compassion and great ignorance, and presages the current conversation about disclosure, politics, sexual harassment, sexual assault, and systemic change.

April 12 – Moving Forward From Here

In our final session, we will explore the current moment in America and the role local government and local leaders can and should play to move to a brighter future.