

Brookings Human Rights Commission Notes (unapproved)

Wednesday, July 15, 2020

Council Chambers, Brookings City-County Government Building, and Zoom online meeting

Attendance: Meagan Irvine-Miller (chair – in-person); Lawrence Novotny, (recorder – in-person); Dan Berg (via Zoom); Hanna Holmquist (via Zoom); Marilyn Hildreth (via Zoom); Jason Meusburger (in person); Casey Bell (city human resources technician – staff liaison – in-person); Keith Theroux (police liaison)

Absent: Matt Rhodes (county representative & vice-chair – in-person); Kati Hanson; Erinn Thomas; Susan Rotert (city human resources director – staff liaison); Kas Williams (SDSU liaison); Marci Gebers (police liaison); Roger DeGroot (school liaison)

Guests: Brookings Police Chief Dave Erickson

Chair Miller called the meeting to order at 2:06 pm. The published agenda had a typo of starting time at 2 pm instead of the regular 12 pm time.

HRC members introduced themselves.

Chief Erickson introduced Keith Theroux as the new police liaison with BHRC. Theroux is replacing Derrick Powers who will be retiring. Theroux joined the BPD last year. He previously served 19 years on the Aberdeen police force as part of that department's community outreach group. Theroux's comments:

- He is impressed that Brookings has a HRC.
- It was difficult to connect with the various cultures in Aberdeen. Aberdeen went through challenges and growing pains to connect with its diverse population.
- He wants to work with all members of the Brookings community.

Meusburger moved, Hildreth seconded, to adopt the agenda with the addition of the banner topic and to table 7b (mayoral proclamation) and 11 (add members/liaisons). Motion passed.

Meusburger moved, Holmquist seconded, to approve the minutes of the June 17 meeting. Motion passed.

Police Report: by Chief Erickson

The police department's community outreach group has meet. A planned project has been put on hold due to COVID-19.

The HRC was contacted by a community member regarding the July 03 drowning death of 10-year old Molu Zarpeleh. The family immigrated from Liberia. Rumors are circulating that foul play may have been involved. Erickson reported that the BPD will be holding a press conference on Friday to lay out the details of their investigation. Officers have been in contact with the family every day since the death. Erickson stated that there is a lot of false information being circulated and that the investigation is ongoing. Erickson stated that this incident has affected the entire Brookings community. Erickson left at this point.

Staff Reports:

Bell stated that 2 applications were received so far for the student vacancy on BHRC. The deadline for applications is August 31.

Bell reported that Kas Williams will be conducting diversity training for city employees on August 4 & 5. She will be presenting the training starting at a ground (101) level and continuing with additional future training sessions. Williams believes it is better to do the training in-person rather than via Zoom. Eight different sessions are being planned that will include 20-25 people to allow social distancing. Meusbarger requested to see if employees of Brookings Municipal Utilities and the Brookings Health System can be included in the trainings.

The HRC proposed budget for 2021 has been reduced to \$7000 from the current \$11,000 due to the economic impact of COVID-19. The city staff looked at historical expenditures in determining the new budget.

Irvine-Miller did a 15-minute interview on Brookings Country Radio (102.3) on June 24. She discussed HRC's mission, contact info & social media, members, liaisons, future plans for listening sessions, student rep vacancy, awards open for nominations, and briefly discussed Justice for Black Lives march and Juneteenth event.

Novotny posed the idea of having a weatherproof table banner to use when BHRC has an information table at events. Estimated cost is \$50-60. Novotny moved, Berg seconded, to purchase a BHRC banner. Motion passed. Novotny will work with Chelsea, the city's graphic designer, to design the banner. The design will be submitted to the BHRC for approval.

Awards:

Two nominations submitted last year will be considered this year for the Butler award. Since no nominations were received this year, the deadline was extended to July 31 with press announcements to be sent out again.

No nominations were received for the youth award or the youth ally award. We will reach out to the Boys & Girls Club for nominations.

Community Listening Sessions:

Irvine-Miller, Novotny, and Hildreth meet to plan the format of the community listening sessions. Purposes are:

- Give people from diverse backgrounds opportunities to express their views
- Help understand the community's needs and resources
- Explore local issues and strengths of the community
- Identify broad goals and action steps

Three or four identified members of a minority community will be invited and these members will be asked to bring 3 additional people. The group will meet with several members of BHRC. There will be a known respected facilitator who is neutral on the topic and has good listening and group processing skills. The sessions will be recorded to ensure an accurate summary is reproduced. The recordings will not be made public. Participants will attend either via in-person or via Zoom conference. The sessions will run from 7 – 9:30 pm and will be held in the Community Room of the City/County Government Building. Topics to be covered in each session are:

- Issues and Concerns
- Barriers faced in Brookings
- Experiences of the community members
- Alternatives and Solutions

The first listening session will involve members of the black community and is tentatively scheduled for the week of July 27.

Pride Flags

Irvine-Miller and Novotny placed 10 city-purchased Pride flags on streetlight poles on Main Avenue on Monday, June 22. During Saturday night, June 27, 9 of the flags disappeared. One of them was found lying on the street. Police investigator Marci Gebers reported that she is following up on a lead that was reported to the BHRC Facebook group. The *Brookings Register* had article about the stolen flags <https://brookingsregister.com/article/lgbtq-pride-flags-missing>

Several individuals (one donating \$550) donated a total of \$886 to replace the stolen flags. The BHRC unanimously approved via e-mail on July 1. \$430 to purchase 10 replacement flags. Meusbürger moved, Berg seconded, to carry over the remaining \$456 of donations for future flag replacement. Motion passed.

Bystander Intervention Training:

Hildreth sent an e-mail to BHRC on June 16 from Willette Capers who offered to conduct a 1-day bystander intervention training workshop for a \$1000. The training will be done online. Members felt a full day online session was too much. Hildreth will check about having a condensed 4-hour session. If it goes well, we can consider having a follow-up session in the spring. We are looking at holding the training on a Saturday in October from 9 – 1. It was decided that charging for the training would be a barrier to participation. However, we will require people to pre-register.

Brookings International Healthcare Committee

Hildreth reported that the committee's goal is to use open communication for improving health care with Brookings international community members and with farmworkers within our community. The committee consists of representatives from Bienvenidos a Brookings, Brookings Multicultural Center, Brookings Human Rights Commission, a medical doctor from Uruguay, SDSU Extension Dairy Specialist, Brookings Health System, Avera Brookings Clinic, Brookings Community Health Nurses and local dairy workers. The committee meets on the third Thursday from 7 – 8:30. Berg volunteered to represent BHRC on the healthcare committee.

Community Common Read:

Free copies of the common read book *There There* are available to BHRC members in Bell's office. The community common read event will be the screening of the film *Reel Injuns* on November 7 at 10 am. The screening will take place in Brookings Cinema 8 theatres so social distancing can be done. A follow-up panel discussion is being considered.

Next meeting Scheduled for Tuesday, August 11.

Adjourn: Meeting adjourned at 3:15 pm.

Submitted by *Lawrence Novotny*, recorder