

## **Brookings Human Rights Commission Notes (unapproved)**

**Tuesday, August 11, 2020**

Community Room 300, Brookings City-County Government Building, and Zoom online meeting

Attendance: Meagan Irvine-Miller (chair – in-person); Matt Rhodes (county representative & vice-chair – in-person); Lawrence Novotny, (recorder – in-person); Kati Hanson (in person); Hanna Holmquist (via Zoom); Marilyn Hildreth (via Zoom); Jason Meusburger (via Zoom); Erinn Thomas (via Zoom); Fedora Sutton (BJET liaison – in person); Keith Theroux (police liaison – in person); Kas Williams (SDSU liaison via Zoom); Casey Bell (city human resources technician & staff liaison – in-person)

Absent: Dan Berg; Susan Rotert (city human resources director – staff liaison); Marci Gebers (police liaison); Roger DeGroot (school liaison)

Guests: Niemia Trasing, Black Justice Equity Transparency

Chair Miller called the meeting to order at 12:08 pm.

Rhodes moved, Hanson seconded, to adopt the agenda with the addition of the topic of the listening sessions. Motion passed.

Meusburger moved, Rhodes seconded, to approve the minutes of the July 15 meeting. Motion passed.

### Liaison Reports:

Williams said the SDSU Diversity Office will again be hosting the Difference Series this fall. The theme is Equity Access to Higher Education. Info will be sent out.

Theroux said that COVID has put a damper on the police department's community outreach program. Plans for it are already in place.

### Staff Reports:

Kas Williams conducted diversity training for city employees (excluding BMU employees) on August 4 & 5. Bell reported that numerous employees wanted to have discussions on diversity continue. The Brookings Health System is considering diversity training for its employees.

Only \$705 of our \$11,700 budget has been spent so far this calendar year. In the past, HRC has contributed \$2500 towards the Common Read speaker's expenses. The Honors College is asking for \$5000.

Four applications were received for the student rep position on HRC. The deadline is August 31. Irwin-Miller will send an announcement to returning SDSU students. Irwin-Miller, Rhodes and Bell were review the applications and make a recommendation to the mayor.

The HRC selected via e-mail the design for the HRC banner. Thanks to Chelsie Bakken, the city's communications director for designing the banner. The cost will be \$65.

Irwin-Miller reported that a SDSU psychology professor wants to partner with the HRC on a survey project for his research class.

Hildreth reported on these activities of the Brookings International Health Committee

- Information on COVID in Spanish was placed in Bienvenidos a Brookings kids back - to - school backpack program.
- Emailed local and state dairy owners and asked them to post attached information on COVID in their dairy farms breakrooms so workers would have easy access to the information in Spanish
- Representatives of the Avera Brookings Medical Clinic met with local dairy workers to discuss ways of improving communication issues

#### Other International Committee Reports

- Hildreth reported that Brookings Multicultural Center referred 4 international students to the South Dakota Dream Coalition (Bienvenidos a Brookings is a part of the Dream Coalition) for financial assistance.
- Zoom meetings were held with the Minnesota advocates, Bienvenidos a Brookings, Brookings Multicultural Center, and representatives of Senator Thune and Senator Rounds to discuss agriculture and other work VISA issues. Dr. Christi Garst-Santos was also on the zoom meetings.

BHRC members present signed 12 thank you cards to be sent to those individuals who made donations to replace the stolen Pride flags. A letter thanking the Brookings community for their support will be sent to the *Brookings Register*.

Irwin-Miller and Rhodes will draft and circulate to HRC a memo on HRC member expectations.

#### Bystander Intervention Training:

Hildreth reported that Willette Capers (Augustana's diversity director) is willing to do a bystander intervention training online workshop on October 3 from 9 am – 1 pm. The training will teach someone how to respond when they witness harassment or bullying. The training is open to the public and it will be free although registration ahead of time will be required. We will have to advertise the training. Hildreth moved, Meusburger seconded, that we contract with Willette Capers in the amount of \$500 to do the training. Motion passed.

#### 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 film documents how Native Americans have been portrayed in movies. The screening will take place at Brookings Cinema 8 so social distancing can be done in all eight theatres. The film will also be available through Three Canopy Streaming. Irwin-Miller is working with a social psychologist to have a follow-up event. Meusburger moved approval, Holmquist seconded, of \$500 for the screening fee and \$100 for the theatre rental fee. Motion passed.

#### Awards

The two nominations for the Butler award (which were brought forward from last year) were discussed. No new nominations were received this year. Novotny moved, Hildreth seconded, that the 2020 Butler Human Rights Award be given to Dianne Nagy for her involvement in various Brookings community activities which

included Habitat for Humanity, County Youth Mentoring Program, BHRC inclusion task force, Brookings Interfaith Council, Healing Democracy Action Circle, and the Brookings Multicultural Center. Motion passed.

One nomination was received for the youth ally award. Following discussion, BHRC determined that while the applicant was doing good work with the teen court program, the applicant did not meet the objectives of being a youth ally which are to guide youth on human rights issues.

### BJET

Fedora Sutton discussed a new non-profit that she and Niemia Trasing started as a follow-up to the Justice for Black Lives Matter march held in Brookings in June. Brookings Justice Equity Transparency mission is to amplify the power of the community to advance Justice Equity and Transparency of All Brookings City and County Entities that serve the community and to where necessary launch new entities that will serve its mission. BJET objectives are:

- to create more equal social standing for members of the general public who are treated unequally by society or governing organizations based, at least in part, on racial perceptions;
- to raise public awareness of inequitable treatment
- to advocate for just actions and policies; and
- to encourage transparency in public offices through relationship building.

Projects BJET is working on are:

- working with the Brookings County Sheriff's office
- working with the Brookings Police Department
- working with the Brookings Human Rights Commission
- working with the SD Justice Equity Coalition
- will be meeting with Minnesota's state human rights director

Rhodes will be BHRC liaison to BJET and Sutton will be BJET's liaison to BHRC.

At this point, there no longer was quorum. Remaining were Irwin-Miller, Rhodes, Novotny, Meusbarger, Sutton, Trasing and Theroux.

### Community Listening Sessions:

The first listening session will involve members of the black community and will occur within the next 2 weeks. (Date is still being scheduled.) BJET suggested that attendees be given a financial incentive to partake.

Next meeting will be determined by Doodle poll. Since the noon meetings are running long, the poll will also inquire about holding evening meetings.

Adjourn: Meeting adjourned at 1:29 pm.

Submitted by *Lawrence Novotny*, recorder