

Brookings Human Rights Commission Notes (unapproved)

Wednesday, November 18, 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 - online); Lawrence Novotny, (recorder – in-person); Shedrick Flournoy (student representative – online); Hanna Holmquist (online); Jason Meusburger (online); Marilyn Hildreth (online); Erinn Thomas (online); Kas Williams (SDSU liaison - online); Marci Gebers (police liaison - online); Casey Bell (city human resources technician & staff liaison – in-person);

Absent: Dan Berg; Roger DeGroot (school liaison); Keith Theroux (police liaison)

Chair Irvine-Miller called the meeting to order at 5:31 pm.

Meusburger moved, Hildreth seconded, to adopt the agenda. Motion passed.

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

Liaison Expectations:

Novotny and Hildreth submitted a draft document outlining the role of liaisons to BHRC and how the liaisons will be selected. BHRC members offered comments. The document will be revised and submitted at the next meeting. An application form for the liaisons will need to be developed.

MLK contest

Bell felt that the staff will be able to handle the workload of administering the contest.

Will teachers have time or want to take on an extra task of providing educational info on Martin Luther King, Jr. during this COVID pandemic?

Concerns with handling of posters during the pandemic.

- Wear gloves while handling and wash hands.
- Display posters in downtown store windows instead of an indoor space
- Display posters on social media
- Consider cancelling poster contest this year and focus on essays instead (which are submitted electronically)

Another option (instead of working with teachers at the schools) would be to advertise the contest to the community via press releases and social media and have students directly submit their entries.

Rhodes volunteered to reach out to school liaison DeGroot and Superintendent Willert to determine if teachers want to handle the MLK contest this year. If they do, then a MLK sub-committee will select a theme and proceed with the contest. The sub-committee consists of Irwin-Miller, Williams, Meusburger, Thomas, and Flournoy.

Bystander Intervention Training

Hildreth reported that she participated in an online Washington DC training session that featured role play scenarios. She has an inquiry in to the instructor about providing such a training for us. One of the training scenarios was dealing with people who are carrying guns. Rhodes stated that this sounds more like a self-defense training which can be provided by local personnel. We are looking for training in how to respond to racial, ethnic, and cultural slurs and incidents. Williams then mentioned that Taneeza Islam with SD Voices for Peace in Sioux Falls does similar training. Hildreth will contact Islam

Liaison Reports:

Williams reported on the last SDSU Diversity Dialogue series. The daughter of George Wallace (deceased governor of Alabama during the school de-segregation area of the 1960s) spoke about reconciliation and her friendship with John Lewis.

Gebers had nothing to report.

Staff Reports:

Holmquist will be resigning from the HRC at the end of the year due to time commitments. Katie Hanson submitted her resignation from the HRC. Miller, Rhodes & Bell selected 2 names from applicants and forwarded them to the Mayor who will bring them before the City Council.

Holmquist is in the process of selecting someone to become vice-chair in January.

The City Manager reported that Brookings MEI score for 2020 is 102.

Common Read

About 30 people (mainly students) attended the film showing of *Reel Injuns* on November 07. Irwin-Miller, Holmquist, and Novotny also attended.

Tommy Orange, the author of the Common Read book, *There There*, gave an insightful online Griffith Honors Lecture on November 17. The BHRC was recognized several times during the lecture for our sponsorship assistance. Orange said a lot that lined up with BHRC goals.

BHRC donated \$2500 towards the Griffith lecture and spent \$600-700 on the film. There is a question with how much we can spend on the common read next year with our budget being reduced.

Listening Session

The mugs, pens, stickers, and thank you cards have arrived and will be delivered to the participants of the two listening sessions held so far.

Irwin-Miller forwarded the action plans of the black and Hispanic listening sessions to the city council with a note asking them to see what they can do to help implement some of them. The mayor replied that he is open to helping and Councilor Brink replied that she is interested.

Brookings Inclusive Collaborative:

South Dakota State University, Brookings Economic Development Corporation, Brookings Area Chamber of Commerce, Vision Brookings, and the Brookings Human Rights Commission have formed the Brookings Inclusive Collaborative, a community coalition that is taking a comprehensive look at workplace diversity and inclusion in the Brookings area. Right now Irwin-Miller will serve as the BHRC representative on the collaborative.

The Brookings Inclusive Collaborative has been holding a series of focus group discussions to learn more about communication surrounding cultural diversity and inclusion in Brookings. There are two, 60-minute focus groups in early-mid December with 6-8 people each, who represent long-term (10+ years) Brookings County residents. Participants will receive a \$50 Walmart gift card for participating! BHRC is being tasked with recruiting Brookings residents for the focus groups.

Next meeting will be determined by Doodle poll.

Adjourn: Meeting adjourned at 6:39 pm.

Submitted by *Lawrence Novotny*, recorder