

Brookings Human Rights Commission Minutes

Wednesday, February 24, 2021

Community Room 300, Brookings City/County Government Building and Go To Meeting App

Attendance: Matt Rhodes (county representative & chair – in person); Jason Meusburger (vice-chair – online); Lawrence Novotny, (recorder – in person); Marilyn Hildreth (online); Meagan Irvine-Miller (online); Zahra Najl (online); Nieema Thasing (online); Erinn Thomas (online); Marci Gebers (police liaison - online); Keith Theroux (police liaison – in person); Kas Williams (SDSU liaison - online); Nancy Olson (city human resources & staff liaison – in person)

Absent: Dan Berg; Shedrick Flournoy (student representative); Roger DeGroot (school liaison);

Guests: Andrew Sloss, executive director of Brookings Economic Development Corporation (online); Jennifer McLaughlin, chair of Brookings Sustainability Council (online)

Chair Rhodes called the meeting to order at 5:01 pm.

Meusburger moved, Thasing seconded, to adopt the agenda as amended by the addition of the listening session. Motion passed.

Thasing moved, Najl seconded, to approve the minutes of the January 29 meeting. Motion passed.

Sustainability Council Liaison:

Jennifer McLaughlin, chair of the City of Brookings Sustainability Council submitted an application for the Sustainability Council to have a liaison with BHRC. Also submitted was the Sustainability Council's 2021 Strategic Plan. The sustainability stool has 3 supporting legs: environmental issues, economic issues, and social issues. McLaughlin related what some of the Sustainability Council's issues that would relate to BHRC:

- Waste reduction – the impact of the Council's proposal to ban plastic straws would have on people with disabilities
- Energy – what impact would conservation measures or energy production have on various communities
- Local foods – the promotion of foods grown by minority cultures
- Educational outreach on various issues

Rhodes relayed some of BHRC issues

- Our current listening sessions to assess the needs of minority communities
- Renters rights issues
- Complaint resolution process
- BHRC is a leader on human rights issues in SD, e.g., MEI score

The BHRC will vote on the Sustainability Council's application next month.

The Sustainability Council will discuss if it wants to have a BHRC liaison on their council.

MLK / Black History Month contest

Ten essays have been received so far. The deadline to submit essays is this Friday at 4 pm. The essay announcement stated that the winners will be notified next Monday. Thasing moved, Irvine-Miller seconded, to give the MLK sub-committee authority to select the winners and grant approval of awarding of the cash prizes. Motion passed. The sub-committee consists of: Rhodes, Novotny, Meusburger, Thasing, Williams, Irvine-Miller. A rubric will be used to score each essay. Sub-committee members are to submit their scores to Rhodes by noon on March 1. Rhodes will compile the scores in a spreadsheet. Cash prizes (\$100 first place, \$50 second place, \$25 third place) will be awarded to the top three scorers in both the middle school and the high school. The winners will be recognized at the March 9 city council meeting. We will seek to have the winning essays published in the *Brookings Register*.

Note: The winners were:

High school (only 1 entry) Zoey Henderson (score of 17)

Middle school (18 essays submitted)

1st place – Kendis Sackreiter (score of 19)

2nd place – Shae Legers (score of 17.5)

3rd place – Alex Kidangathazhe (score of 17)

Bystander Intervention Training

Hildreth reported that Diversity Council of Rochester MN will conduct the training via Zoom on Saturday, April 10 from 9-11 am. Participants will be asked to complete a Monkey Survey prior to the training. The survey results will help to decide what role-play scenarios the trainers will use. The training is limited to 40 participants and it is free to them. We need to guarantee that there will be 40 participants since people will sign up but not show. If more than 45 register, we need to add them to a waiting list. The training needs to be promoted via press releases, media, and e-mail.

Legislative Update:

Rhodes submit comments via e-mail on behalf of BHRC to the respective committees where indicated.

Bills dealing with human rights issues:

- HB 1076 requires that birth certificates reflect biological sex. Passed House (Reps. Reed & Tidemann voted no.) Killed in Senate Health & Human Services. BHRC opposed this bill Comments submitted.
- SB 166 would add LGBTQ and Two Spirit to the state hate crimes statute. Killed in the Senate by 8-27. (Smith voted yes.) BHRC supported this bill. Comments submitted.
- SB 90 recognizes hair discrimination as an unfair and discriminatory practice. Killed in Senate State Affairs by 8-1. BHRC supported. Comments submitted.
- SB 71 designates Juneteenth as a working holiday. Rep. Reed is a co-sponsor. Passed House. BHRC supports. This bill will most likely pass.
- SB 89 designates Juneteenth as a state holiday. Killed in Senate State Affairs 8-1. BHRC supported. Comments submitted
- SCR 701 asks Congress to conduct an investigation into the awarding of Medals of Honor given to US soldiers involved in the Wounded Knee Massacre of 1890. Passed Senate unanimously.

- HB 1217 prevents trans girls from participating in female sports. Pass House 50-17. (Reed & Tidemann voted no.) BHRC opposed. Comments submitted.
- HB 1247 would have allowed healthcare providers to refuse service based upon their conscience beliefs. Killed in House 25-41. (Reed and Tidemann voted no). BHRC opposed. Comments submitted.
- SB 190 would add LGBTQ and Two Spirit to the state non-discrimination statute. Bill tabled upon request of sponsor.
- HCR 6005 was a terribly written resolution celebrating Black history month. Killed in House 64-4. (Reed and Tidemann voted no.)

BHRC is invited to be part of a “Trans People Belong in South Dakota” rally that will be held at the corner of 17th Avenue and 6th Street (Hillcrest Park) on February 27 at 10 am. The rally is 1 of 7 events that will be held that day around South Dakota. The rally is a protest against the anti-trans bills.

Thoughts for 2021:

- Rhodes would like to have a virtual town hall meeting.
- Irvine-Miller brought up the idea of a seal of bi-literacy that would be placed on the transcripts of high school students to show appreciation for the students that speak 2 different languages. How would this play into the English as a Second Language classes being held around Brookings?
- We need to determine if BHRC would be participating in the Common Read. Is BHRC committed to financially help with the Griffin Honors Lecture as we have done in the past?

Listening Session:

The report on the LGBTQ+ listening session held on February 04 was distributed. There were 14 participating. Williams stated that we need to inform the various groups what BHRC is doing as far as the recommended action items. How will this be communicated? The sub-committee will consider this.

Liaison Reports:

Those present had nothing to report.

Next meeting will be determined by Doodle poll.

Adjourn: Meeting adjourned at 5:56 pm.

Submitted by *Lawrence Novotny*, recorder