

Brookings Human Rights Commission Minutes

Wednesday, June 30, 2021

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

Attendance: Jason Meusburger (chair – in-person); Nieema Thasing (vice-chair - in-person); Lawrence Novotny, (recorder – in person); Dan Berg (in-person); Michele Vande Weerd (school liaison - online); Kas Williams (SDSU liaison - online); Casey Bell (city human resources & staff liaison – in person)

Absent: Meagan Irvine-Miller; Zahra Najl; Erinn Thomas; Marci Gebers (police liaison); Jennifer McLaughlin (sustainability council liaison); Keith Theroux (police liaison);

Guest: Donald DeNais (observer)

Chair Meusburger called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm.

Thasing moved, Berg seconded, to adopt the agenda as amended by the addition of magnets and HRC vacancy. Motion passed.

Thasing moved, Berg seconded, to approve the minutes of the May27 meeting. Motion passed.

Pride:

Brookings Public Library hosted the Brookings Pride event which was organized by community services librarian Mikaela Neubauer. It was a panel discussion on Thursday, June 10, that was held at Swiftel Center and also online. Around 60 people attended. Novotny represented the BHRC on the panel. Theroux represented the police department. There also were panelists from Brookings PFLAG and the Transformation Project.

At the June 22 council meeting, Mayor Niemeyer issued a proclamation proclaiming June pride month.

Novotny and Berg put out 11 pride flags on Friday, June 4 on Main Avenue. Next morning there were 6 flags left. By Tuesday, 4 flags were left. Police found 3 on the ground. Novotny replaced some. Citizens returned some flags they found. There were 7 flags flying when Novotny took them down on Friday, June 11. Overall, we lost 4 flags. The city manager encouraged immediately replacing flags that disappear to show that city will not tolerate theft.

Bell reported that after June 11, the city received calls from citizens who were concerned that the city took down the flags as a measure of preserving them. Novotny will draft a letter to the paper explaining that the flags were displayed for only a week during the pride event.

Bell reported that there is \$886 in funds that citizens donated last year to replace stolen flags. Berg moved, Thasing seconded, to expend these funds to purchase replacement progress pride flags. Motion passed.

Juneteenth celebration:

It was held at Pioneer Park on June 19 from 11 am – 4 pm with a nice turn-out.

The main event was a panel discussion. There was 1 food truck which ran out of food. There were several merchandize vendors and several non-profit information booths.

Thasing gave a debriefing report with recommendations for next year from the Juneteenth committee:

- Want to see a broader composition on the panel besides SDSU staff
- More food vendors; add authentic African foods
- More dance; add poetry and arts
- 2.5 mile run to commemorate the 2.5 years between the proclamation announcement and Juneteenth date
- Step contest involving students which will bring out the parents
- More activities for youth
- Explore role of black fathers
- Loop in awards

The committee will start planning next year's event in January.

The BHRC received a \$1000 donation from an individual to found the celebration.

Novotny and the BHRC legislative sub-committee will contact our legislators about sponsoring a Juneteenth holiday bill next year.

Media Strategy:

The media sub-committee is proposing having a photo and bio of each BHRC member on the facebook page and also on the website. Nametags need to be obtained for the newer members. The media strategy discussion will continue in future meetings.

Magnets:

500 magnets were purchased by BHRC that lists community resources in English and Spanish. The cost (\$375) came in under budget. Berg has been distributing the magnets to the Brookings Multi-cultural Center, the ESL classes and to the local dairies.

The Watertown Multi-Cultural Center would like to create a magnet similar to ours. We will share the format file with them.

Commission vacancies:

It was agreed that the BHRC will hold a special executive session to review and select candidates for the 2 open community member and 1 student member slots on the Commission. This meeting should occur within a few days of the closing date for applications.

Chair Meusburger announced that he has accepted a job in Minnesota starting in August. He will be resigning at the end of July. Vice-chair Thasing will become chair at that time.

A work session will be scheduled after the open positions have been filled.

Thasing would like to see several student members on the BHRC. This would require a change in our operating ordinance.

Other New Business:

The city budget process will be starting. We need to have line items in our budget for common read, Juneteenth, and Pride.

We will look at resuming the fall diversity potluck in October. Bell will check on availability of McCrory Gardens on Sunday late afternoons.

Liaison Reports:

Bell reported that the police department will be re-starting its “Coffee with a Cop” monthly events. The first one is this Friday at Kool Beans.

Vande Weerd reported that the school board is considering having a board member be the BHRC liaison instead of a school staff member.

Other:

Members present signed thank you cards to be sent to people involved with donating to the Juneteenth celebration and for being on the panel.

Next meeting will be determined by Doodle poll.

Adjourn: Meeting adjourned at 6:25 pm.

Submitted by *Lawrence Novotny*, recorder