

Brookings Human Rights Commission Minutes

Thursday, October 21, 2021

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

Attendance: Nieema Thasing (chair - online); Lawrence Novotny, (recorder – in person); Dan Berg (online); Joel Gindo (in person); Erica Moore (online); Dianne Nagy (online); Charlene ‘Charlie’ Ward (county representative – in-person); Casey Bell (city human resources & staff liaison – in person);

Absent: Meagan Irvine-Miller (interim vice-chair); Erinn Thomas; Jennifer McLaughlin (sustainability council liaison); Mikaela Neubauer (library liaison); Marty Stanwick (sheriff’s office liaison); Keith Theroux (police liaison); Michele Vande Weerd (school liaison);

Guests: Ishmael Collzao (in-person); Lantry Salinas (in person)

There were problems with the electronic communications making it difficult for the online people to hear the people in the meeting room and vice versa.

Chair Thasing called the meeting to order at 5:37 pm.

Nagy moved, Ward seconded, to adopt the agenda with the addition of upcoming vacancy. Motion passed.

Nagy moved, Berg seconded, that the minutes of both the September 28 and the July 29 meetings be approved. Motion passed. (Approval of the July 29 minutes was previously overlooked.)

Public Comments:

A father brought this concern to BHRC. His son has been undergoing bullying at the Mickelson Middle School for the past 1.5 years. The son has been physically attacked several times. He was kicked to the ground. There were at least 3 assaults before the family moved to California due to the COVID situation. The family returned to Brookings this fall and the bullying resumed. The son no longer wants to go to school and has been out of school for around 2.5 weeks pursuing alternative education. The family is a member of a minority community.

The father has been in e-mail communication with school administration and he feels like he is not getting a satisfactory response. The MMS vice-principal asked to have a paper report be filed but the son does not want to do the paperwork. The father believes that paperwork will not correct the bully’s behavior. Was the school resource officer informed? Was the counselor informed? It is BHRC understanding that they were not.

Another parent who was at the BHRC meeting stated he doesn’t want his 12-year old daughter to experience similar behavior.

BHRC will contact Superintendent Willert about this issue. What is the school’s policy regarding bullying?

Common Read:

Around 113 people attended the community common read panel discussion on October 13 that was held virtually. Around 65 stayed to the end. The forum title was “Everything Including the Kitchen Sink: The Science and Governance of Your Drinking Water”. The moderator was Jay Gilbertson, manager of the East Dakota Water Development District. Panelists were: Chad Bachman, engineer and manager of Brookings Municipal Utilities water and wastewater systems; Chris Schmit, director of SDSU’s Water & Environmental Engineering Research Center; Guanghui Hua, professor of civil and environmental engineering; Kathy Taylor, a Dakota Rural Action member who lives in Grant County and is an activist against CAFOs (confined animal feeding operations); Daniel Grassrope, a member of the Cheyenne River Reservation grassroots collective.

There was good discussion. However, not all of the submitted questions were addressed. We will see if there is some way these questions can be answered. A link to the forum recording is available under the Common Read tab on the BHRC webpage.

The Brookings Sustainability Council was a co-sponsor of the forum. The Council split the cost of the \$75 honorariums that were given to the panelists and moderator.

Vice-chair:

Irvin-Miller reported via e-mail that Nagy was the only person that expressed interest in the vice-chair position. Ward moved, Berg seconded, that Dianne Nagy be elected vice-chair. Motion passed. Nagy can start her position immediately.

Working Groups:

Members selected which working groups they want to be involved with.

No more than 4 BHRC members can be on a working group. Otherwise there would be quorum and each working group meeting would have to follow public meeting rules. There is no limit on the number of community people that can be on a working group. Each working group has to have at least 1 BHRC member. Ideally, the chair of each WG should be a BHRC member. Someone in each WG needs to take the responsibility of calling the WG together.

The renters rights brochure was added to the responsibilities of the community outreach WG.

The Heart of the City Award for Juneteenth was made the responsibility of the Black Culture Awareness WG.

Budget:

Bell reported that there is an estimated \$1692 left in our 2021 budget that needs to be expended by the end of December. Some proposed expenditure items are welcoming neighbor signs, pride flags, thank you cards and other swag. Members are to bring proposed recommendations to the November meeting.

Miscellaneous:

Novotny will compile the PR regarding the Butler and Youth awards.

BHRC members are to send a headshot to Thomas for posting on the facebook page.

A special meeting will be held to review and rank the applicants for the upcoming vacant member position.

Novotny has proposed having a statewide meeting of the state and local human rights commissions. Thasing was asked to initiate this by contacting the chairs of the various commissions.

Liaison Reports:

McLaughlin e-mailed the Brookings Sustainability Council (BSC) report.

- BSC partnered with BHRC in organizing and co-sponsoring the common read water forum.
- Brookings Municipal Utilities gave a presentation about water treatment processes and usage in Brookings.
- BSC recommended to the Electrify America to place an electric vehicle charging station right off the 6th Street I-29 exit.
- BSC is working on several educational ads to appear in the *Brookings Register*

Neubauer e-mailed that the Brookings Public Library received a \$3000 grant to do Black History month programming and community conversation in February 2022.

Lt. Marci Gebers resigned from the Brookings Police Dept and is no longer a liaison. Officer Keith Theroux will continue to be a liaison.

Novotny contacted the SDSU Multi-Cultural Center to see about the status of SDSU appointing a liaison to replace Kas Williams. He had not heard back as of this meeting. Note: An individual contacted Novotny the next day to inquire about the liaison role.

Next meeting Thursday, November 18, 5:30 pm. A special meeting will be scheduled via Doodle poll to review and rank the applicants for the upcoming vacant member position.

Adjourn: Meeting adjourned at 6:48 pm.

Submitted by *Lawrence Novotny*, recorder