

Brookings Human Rights Commission Minutes

Thursday, May 19, 2022

Brookings City & County Government Center and Go To Meeting App

Attendance: Nieema Thasing (chair -in person); Dianne Nagy (vice-chair – in person); Lawrence Novotny, (recorder and CLEAR Partners liaison– in person); Tracy Chapman (in person); Emma Qurashi (student representative – in person); Erinn Thomas (online); Charlene ‘Charlie’ Ward (county representative & Disabilities Awareness Committee liaison– in person); Mikaela Neubauer (library liaison – in person); Caleb Johnson (police liaison – online); Bruce Pengra (sustainability council liaison - online); Michele Vande Weerd (school liaison - online); Casey Bell (city human resources & staff liaison – in person);

Absent: Dan Berg; Joel Gindo; Erica Moore; Marci Gebers (sheriff’s office liaison); Alex Wood (SDSU liaison)

Chair Thasing called the meeting to order at 5:32 pm.

Ward moved, Chapman seconded, to adopt the agenda with the addition of appropriations approval. Motion passed.

Ward moved, Nagy seconded, to approve the minutes of the April 21 meeting. Motion passed.

Introduction of new members:

Emma Quaraski is the new student representative. She is pursuing a graduate degree in clinical mental health and works at Brookings Behavioral Health.

Caleb Johnson has replaced Keith Theroux as the Brookings police liaison. Caleb is a dispatcher for both the Brookings Police Dept and the University Police Dept. He has served 4 years as the communications training officer.

Bruce Pengra is a new member of the Brookings Sustainability Council. He has recently retired from EROS Data Center at Garretson.

Public Comments

Thasing mentioned an incident that happened in Elkton on May 16 whereby a white male in his 20s in a vehicle pointed a gun at 2 juveniles who were on foot. No injuries occurred. Thasing thanked the dispatcher and sheriff’s office for their quick response.

Quaraski reported an incident where a woman of color in a laundromat was the target of racist slurs by 2 white males. This was reported to the police and the woman is waiting for a follow-up report which is in progress.

Budget and appropriations

Our budget has \$11,500 in spent or committed funds and \$1100 remaining in unspent funds.

Anticipated expenses for the Juneteenth celebration are \$800 for Kas Williams speaker travel, \$150 for sound system, and \$200 for a bubble artist which makes for a total of \$1150. We already budgeted \$500 for Juneteenth. Nieema is expecting some individuals to help fund the Juneteenth event. Novotny moved, Nagy seconded, that we allocate an additional \$650 for the Juneteenth event and that any donations received will be used to replenish the \$650 allocation. Passed.

Nagy moved, Ward seconded, that we spend \$25 for a booth space at Brookings Pride. Passed.

The copyright fee for showing of the movie *Pride: the story of Jim Ellis* is \$750 and the rental of 2 theatres, which will allow the seating of 400 people, is \$200. There is some additional expense with purchase of the DVDs. We have already budgeted \$1000 for our community common read event. Nagy moved, Quaraski seconded, to allocate an additional \$100 to the common read event. Passed.

Liaison Reports:

Brookings Police Dept – Johnson was working as dispatcher last Thursday from 3 pm – midnight when the dericho storm hit. He received a 1000 calls when only 50 calls is normal. All of the police officers (both current and reserve) responded in a timely manner to handle the situation. Kudos go to all of the city's police, fire, parks & forestry, and landfill staff for their work in handling all of the downed trees. It will take weeks to get anything cleaned up due to shortage of staff.

Brookings School- Vande Weerd had nothing to report and left the call.

Disabilities Awareness Committee – Ward had nothing to report.

Library Neubauer will prepare a listing of LGBTQ+ books and videos the library has for distribution at Brookings Pride. In honor of Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, the Brookings Public Library has shared on our Facebook page some incredible resources available to provide education and enhance understanding. The intergroup dialogue series is being planned for this fall.

CLEAR Partners (Novotny) – CLEAR hosted a forum entitled “Community Mental Health Issues and the Intersection of Law Enforcement Practices: A Discourse,” on May 17, 2021. The final report was submitted to the city manager.

CLEAR is attempting to arrange a coffee with the interim police chief.

Sustainability Council (Pengra) – The council is looking at developing a climate change plan for the city. The council researched the issues around recycling of clothing and fabrics and gave a presentation to the city council.

Brookings Economic Development Master Plan—The city manager appointed Nagy to a steering committee to develop an economic development master plan. The steering committee includes reps from City Council, Chamber, BEDC, Visit Brookings, local business, SDSU, Research Park, banking, BHRC. The city manager wanted BHRC's involvement in this plan because of the listening sessions we have conducted. City hired Resonance to conduct a comprehensive review of Brookings' current economic development environment; benchmark best practice strategies of peer and aspirational communities; analyze local strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT); assess all areas of existing efforts and assets, including businesses, people, and places. The results will help City Council prioritize funding allocations to meet plan goals.

Brookings Inclusive Collaborative—The SDSU Bush Foundation program hosted a meal and program at McCrory Gardens. The program featured a presentation on the Brookings schools inclusivity and diversity programs. It needs to be noted that BHRC's first inclusivity working group which included Nagy and Novotny were the ones that got the Brookings school system to look at diversity and inclusivity.

Grant funds left over will be used to conduct trainings of facilitators in August to conduct the fall intergroup dialogues.

BHRC is a co-sponsor of an Intercultural Competence Workshop to be held at McCrory Gardens on June 1.

Working Group Reports

Social media – Working on starting to collect stories for first responders recognition. Posted articles during Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Heritage Month. Need photos and bios of BHRC members.

Black cultural awareness – Nagy is trying to organize a children's readers theatre to present a dramatic reading of the story of Henry Box Brown's harrowing escape from slavery. She needs kids willing to participate. Thasing is seeking gift certificates from Runnings and Lowes to be used as prizes for fathers attending Juneteenth which is being held on Fathers Day.

LGBTQ+ awareness-- Brookings Pride will be held on June 11 in Pioneer Park from 11 am – 4 pm. A schedule of events is coming. BHRC will have an information table which Novotny will help organize but he will need people to staff the table. Novotny will be working on a mayoral proclamation.

Chapman left at this point.

Inclusivity/Community Outreach—WG met with DEI leaders from Daktronics & Bell Brands. Talked about training initiatives, needs. They would like the city to provide ESL training. The company can provide training to employees, but prospective employees need training before they can successfully apply. They are interested in meeting again with reps from more orgs.

The Working Group also reviewed action items from the listening sessions and identified recurring themes. The group recommends the BHRC do the following:

- Pass info on to BEDC and Chamber concerning the need to
 - Bring someone who does black hair to offer services at local salon
 - Revamp welcoming entity
 - Recognize businesses that are friendly to minority communities and/or provide language support
 - Provide Safe Zone, racial profiling, and microaggression training for businesses
- Reach out to BATA about expanding their services (weekends, ag producers, Sioux Falls)
- Propose service provider and budget for diversity training for city staff, city boards & committees, police, Brookings Municipal Utilities, Brookings Health System, school district, (promote through school board, new members), businesses, boys & girls club. Explore funding from the city, large employers, and the school district.
- Encourage community groups to organize their own cultural celebrations; BHRC will help promote the events and liaise with the city.

Thomas left at this point

Common Read:

Our community common read event will be the showing of the film *Pride: the story of Jim Ellis* at the Brookings theatre on Saturday, October 15. The campus events are coming together. Campus events are focusing on a theme of team activities.

Complaint Training:

An individual who is not part of the WG is looking over the documents to give a review from the perspective of “fresh eyes”.

Old Business

Statewide HRC meeting

Thasing is working on finding a date whereby all of the HRCs in South Dakota can have a joint Zoom meeting.

Renters Rights brochure in Spanish

Hugo Barron with the Sioux Empire Housing has righter rights brochures in Spanish that is based on state rental statutes. Do we have things in Brookings rental ordinance that is not included in state law that we need to have translated?

Business cards and e-mail:

Bell displayed a draft of a BHRC business card that has a QR code that links directly to the BHRC webpage. Everyone approved of the design.

It was agreed that the messages sent to the BHRC e-mail will be automatically forwarded to all BHRC members and not to the liaisons. Only the chair (Thasing) or staff (Bell) are authorized to respond to the e-mail sender.

First responders recognition:

A sub-committee is working on drafting a white paper to outline the purpose of this project. Caleb Johnson was asked to join the sub-committee.

New Business

MEI – Novotny will check with the Human Rights Campaign as to the requirements of the police liaison.

Member absence

This is what our BHRC member policy states *If any member is absent 50% or more meetings in a given twelve (12) month period, regardless of advanced notice, the member is considered to have resigned and will be notified of such in writing by the Chair, Vice Chair, or City Liaison.*

A member has missed more than half of our meetings. Thasing will visit with him to see what the problem is (such as scheduling conflict). This will be a topic of discussion and possible action at the next meeting.

Adjourn: Meeting adjourned at 7:30 pm.

Submitted by *Lawrence Novotny*, recorder