



CITY OF HENDERSONVILLE DIVERSITY & INCLUSION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Operations Center - Assembly Room | 305 Williams St. | Hendersonville NC 28792
Tuesday, March 15, 2022 – 5:32 PM

MINUTES

Present: Jayne Jennings, Chair, Josh Williams, Vice-Chair, Laura Bannister, Florence Allbaugh, Eric Gash, Melinda Lowrance

Absent: Nancy Diaz

Liaisons Present: Mayor Barbara G. Volk, and Mayor Pro Tem Lyndsey Simpson

Staff Present: City Manager John Connet, City Clerk Angela Reece and Communications Manager Allison Justus

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Jayne Jennings called the meeting to order with a quorum of members in attendance.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

Leslie Bartlett Carey addressed the board requesting to participate in subcommittee meetings to assist with diversity calendar events and recommendations. Committee members agreed to allow her participation.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Laura Bannister moved that the Committee approve the agenda as presented. Melinda Lowrance seconded the motion. The motion carried by unanimous vote of members present.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Approval of the January 11, 2022 Meeting Minutes – Angela Reece, City Clerk

Laura Bannister moved that the Committee approve the minutes of the January 11, 2022 meeting as presented. Melinda Lowrance seconded the motion. The motion carried by unanimous vote of members present.

5. OLD BUSINESS

A. Diversity Calendar Discussion – Allison Justus, Communication Manager

Communications Manager Allison Justice provided survey responses regarding recognition of various calendar events in the city to the board for consideration. Committee Member Florence Allbaugh inquired regarding appropriate timeframes for information to be provided to staff for posting on social media and Mrs. Justice advised smaller items require about a week but larger events such as Black History Month would require more staff time and need a longer timeframe to adequately prepare. Mrs. Justus suggested forming a nomination process to assist staff in determining honorees for large events such as Black History

Month. City Manager John Connet clarified staff have received criticism for some social media postings and said a nomination process would reduce staff burden and clarify the process. Manager Connet stated he desired to find a way where staff are not the ones doing research and providing photos. The Committee praised and thanked Mrs. Justice as well as City Council and community members for their efforts.

Committee Members discussed possible calendar events. Committee Member Eric Gash and others confirmed all persons are welcome to request proclamations and recognition from Mayor Volk at any time and agreed the Committee will deliberate further upon request of those persons for additional events to be included in the calendar. The Committee agreed to focus on events specific to the Hendersonville community. The Committee conceded to also have any medical related or special request types of recognitions or proclamations go through the Mayor's office. Committee members agreed to defer further discussion to the subcommittee.

6. NEW BUSINESS

A. Reparations Discussion – Jayne Jennings, Chair

Chair Jayne Jennings discussed ways to address past injustices in the African American community. Committee Members' Lowrance, Gash, and Williams stated they have not received reparation requests from the community but said they are hearing requests to address the need for affordable housing. Committee Member Eric Gash stated he has had many conversations in the community regarding various disparities and how black and brown persons are affected more than other races and suggested having the diversity staff position to take up the matter to examine it further. Committee Member Gash and others agreed it was important to have the conversation and to put it on record. Committee Member Melinda Lowrance stated she does not want reparations to turn into appropriations and said she believes the issue should be addressed by a professional and said she believes it would be appropriate for the new diversity and inclusion manager to be tasked with exploring and addressing the issue. Committee members agreed.

B. Board and Commission Handbook Presentation – Angela Reece, City Clerk

City Clerk Angela Reece presented the recently adopted Handbook and Code of Ethics Resolution to the Committee. Ms. Reece explained the handbook was created to further City Council's priority of open and transparent communication with the community and excellent service delivery and said it includes a code of ethics and attendance policy. Ms. Reece further explained the purpose of the handbook and resolution is for the documents to be utilized as a guide to answer questions about what is required and expected of any City of Hendersonville advisory board members and staff person by City Council. Ms. Reece provided an overview and training of the contents to include open meetings and meeting facilitation practices.

C. Increasing Diversity on Boards and Commissions – Jayne Jennings, Chair

Chair Jayne Jennings opened discussion regarding the need to diversify the City's advisory boards and stated according to the U.S. Census the population is not representative of African American and Asian American population in the city. Chair Jennings challenged members to propose ways to diversify membership.

Mayor Barbara G. Volk clarified the appointment process stating Council appoints persons who apply but said the challenge is increasing the diversity of applicants and number of applications received. Committee Member Eric Gash stated education is key and said having diverse people on boards allows them to feel their voice is heard and that they are seen. Members discussed barriers for participating and challenges for bilingual persons.

7. OTHER BUSINESS

A. Staff Report - John Connet, City Manager

City Manager John Connet provided updates regarding proposals from several DEI firms and said he will review and present findings at the next meeting. Manager Connet stated Council and staff are making positive steps in the organization and said the city is beginning to receive more diverse applicants but said the challenge continues to hasten the process. Manager Connet announced the city has recently signed up to participate in the Steel Bridge Program , a Military Veteran's Program which allow retiring military veterans to intern with local government during their last 180 days.

8. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chairman Jayne Jennings adjourned the meeting at 7:03 p.m.

Jayne Jennings, Chair

ATTEST:

Angela L. Reece, City Clerk