



CITY OF HENDERSONVILLE DIVERSITY & INCLUSION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Operations Center - Assembly Room | 305 Williams St. | Hendersonville NC 28792
Tuesday, September 12, 2023 – 5:30 PM

MINUTES

Present: Josh Williams-Vice Chair, Laura Bannister, Nancy Diaz, Eric Gash, Melinda Lowrance, Florence Allbaugh and Richard Reagan

Absent: Jill Murray, City Clerk

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

Staff Present: City Manager John Connet and Communications Manager Allison Justus

1. CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chair Josh Williams called the meeting to order at 5:34 p.m. with a quorum of members in attendance.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Committee Member Melinda Lowrance moved to approve the agenda as presented. A unanimous vote of the Committee followed. Motion carried.

3. NEW BUSINESS

A. Introduction of Richard Reagan- *John Connet, City Manager*

City Manager Connet introduced Mr. Reagan and suggested that everyone go around the room and introduce themselves.

B. Election of New Chairman – *John Connet, City Manager*

Laura Bannister nominated Josh Williams as Chair, seconded by Eric Gash. Motion carried unanimously.

Eric Gash nominated Nancy Diaz as Vice Chair, seconded by Laura Bannister. Motion carried unanimously.

C. Review of Community Conversations – *John Connet, City Manager*

City Manager Connet explained that they completed the contract with Akhirah. We had roughly 8-10 community conversations and we had an average of 20-30 people at each event. We thought they went well and had a diverse group at each meeting with diverse thoughts. We're expecting one final report from Akhirah that will include a synopsis of the conversations and I think it may lead to future conversations that we'll have ourselves.

The Committee gave some feedback of the community conversations. Everything was positive.

D. What's Next? – John Connet, City Manager

John Connect said we've got foundation under us and I had no idea how to lead an effort like that but now our staff can lead some of the conversation and we can go from here and deal with some of the issues that arise in our community from time to time. So, what do we need to do now to keep the conversations going and keep the community engaged. What would you like to see us do? How can the committee help City Council?

Laura Bannister said there is a lot of distrust in the police, especially the transgender community. So I met with Chief Myhand. The police department here is more than willing to help the transgender community feel safe walking the streets. So that's my goal to use this committee to bring information to my people and show them that the police is our friends.

Eric Gash said we need to be careful to not compare what goes on nationally to what's going on here in Hendersonville because its not the same. Chief Myhand's door is open to speak to him.

Florence Allbaugh said even having the SRO's talk to the kids in the schools and communicate to the youth, that also goes back out to their parents.

John Connet asked how do we build the confidence in our community to speak with us, their local government about what's going on around town. How do we educate folks in our community how to access their government and how to ask questions. How do we provide that access?

Florence Allbaugh suggested something like a "welcome wagon" like sending something to new homeowner's in the area but doesn't know how much that would cost. John said prior to Covid, that when we get new water accounts we could give out an information packet that gave all the info as to who they contact for certain services. Also, County Planning vs. City Planning etc. Melinda added that we need to be mindful of people who don't use electronic communication.

Richard Reagen said WHKP Radio has a report every day before 7am that states the crimes in Hendersonville and Henderson County. We have to get to the kids, not to the parents. Do an outreach with the police.

Florence and Nancy suggested translation services available.

International festival in town

4. OTHER BUSINESS

A. Comprehensive Plan Update – John Connet, City Manager

City Manager Connet introduced Allison Justus to give an update on the comprehensive plan and said if you have not taken our survey, please do. Allison said that the survey launched on August 14th and that was the first day of our Community Advisory Committee meeting made up of stakeholders and they will meet four time throughout the process. The survey is the biggest public input portion and was have about 2100 people who have taken it so far, which is a strong start, but we'd like to hear from the people that we normally don't hear from. We've done a variety of outreach so far with a pop-up at places like the Farmer's Market, Rhythm & Brews, we have a resource table at the

workshops, we made a presentation at the Building Bridges workshop and we'll continue doing different events but the next four big input meetings are the Council Comp-versations. The council members do a series of meetings across the community every years but this year we're tying them in with the Comp Plan development. Debbie Roundtree held hers at Back-to-School Fest at Sullivan Park, our next one will be hosted by Lyndsey Simpson on Tuesday and hers is a little more focused on downtown and our remaining council members have meetings throughout the year. Mayor Volk will be hosting hers at IAN, Jerry Smith will be hosting his at the Earth Sciences Center and our final one will be hosted by Jennifer Hensley at Hendersonville High School.

The Committee thanked us for the appreciation dinner and said it was very good.

Jeff Groh asked for them to consider the City paying for classes regarding the U.S. Constitution.

5. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chair Josh Williams adjourned the meeting at 6:42 p.m.

Josh Williams, Chair

ATTEST:

Jill Murray, City Clerk