



CITY OF HENDERSONVILLE DIVERSITY & INCLUSION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Operations Center - Assembly Room | 305 Williams St. | Hendersonville NC 28792
Tuesday, November 09, 2021 – 5:30 PM

MINUTES

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

Liaisons Present: Mayor Barbara G. Volk, and Mayor Pro Tem Jerry Smith

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

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Jennings called the meeting to order with all members in attendance.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Florence Allbaugh moved that the Committee approve the agenda as presented. A unanimous vote of the Committee followed. Motion carried.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. August 23, 2021 DRAFT Minutes - Angela Reece, City Clerk

Melinda Lowrance moved that the Committee approve the minutes of the August 23, 2021 meeting as presented. A unanimous vote of the Committee followed. Motion carried.

4. NEW BUSINESS

A. Adoption of Annual Schedule of Meetings - Angela Reece, City Clerk

Melinda Lowrance moved that the Committee approve the 2022 Annual Schedule of Meetings. A unanimous vote of the Committee followed. Motion carried.

The following Regular Meetings of the City of Hendersonville Diversity & Inclusion Advisory Committee are held Bi-Monthly on the second Tuesday of January, March, May, July, September, and November at 5:30 p.m. in the Assembly Room of the City Operations Building located at 305 Williams St. Hendersonville NC unless otherwise noted. The regular meetings will be conducted in person.

The 2022 Annual Schedule of Meetings are as follows:

January 11, 2022
March 15, 2022 (third Tuesday)
May 10, 2022
July 12, 2022
September 13, 2022
November 15, 2022

B. Presentation Regarding the Hiring of a Consultant to Assist with Diversity and Inclusion Work – John Connet, City Manager

City Manager John Connet provided a brief history of the roots of this committee and discussed the difficulties of recruitment of someone with any substantial experience. Manager Connet advised this is a new field and said what he has found is that people who have had experience are focusing on the larger metro region. Manager Connet said he feels the work of the Committee needs to be at the management and City Council level in order to successfully set up a program to combat systemic changes. Manager Connet also advised the amount work the Human Resources Department is required to do has increased threefold due to the efforts to recruit a diverse workforce and COVID and said he was afraid if he utilized current human resources personnel to focus on diversity and inclusion then the mission would be lost due to the heavy workload. Manager Connet discussed the tenants of selecting a consulting firm to assist the Committee during the first year and said hiring an Human Resources Analyst will allow the city to recruit a diverse workforce while keeping in line with recruitment and retention of more diverse candidates.

Patti Digh of Strong Offer Consulting discussed her thirty years of experience in diversity work with nonprofits, community and educational institutions hand of the eight books she has written on DEI. Ms. Digh discussed training and design, strategy creation, and integration and the need to educate employees and community members as to what DEI is.

Eric Gash inquired how many responses to the ads the city received, and Manager Connet advised there were ten to twelve applicants but said none had any DEI experience and only one had some human resources background. Manager Connet clarified he desires a candidate with at least two to three years of experience and said in order to make systemic changes the city needs someone with experience.

Chair Jayne Jennings stated she attended the DEI workshop the city offered and said she feels it is appropriate to bring a consultant in. Manager Connet discussed the process of proposal submittal and work plan formulation to guide and inform what the Committee wishes to accomplish.

Mayor Volk confirmed the role of the Committee is to recommend policy and not to recommend or choose the consultant.

Jayne Jennings moved that the Committee recommend that the City Council hire a consultant to assist with the development of a comprehensive diversity and inclusion strategy. A unanimous vote of the Committee followed. Motion carried.

C. Comprehensive Plan Presentation – Henderson County Planning Staff

Autumn Radcliff and Janna Bianculli, planning staff with Henderson County recalled participating in the DEI training thanking the city for hosting it. Ms. Radcliff and Ms. Bianculli presented the Henderson County Comprehensive Plan to the Committee and stated the County began their process in July. Committee members discussed the need for housing and transportation in the area as well as a need to require a social studies class in local schools.

D. Diversity and Inclusion Update, *John Connet, City Manager*

City Manager John Connet asked the Committee what proclamations they wish to see throughout the year from a diversity standpoint and asked them to prepare to discuss at their next meeting.

Mayor Volk confirmed she only issues proclamations based on requests from local people and advised the requestor must have a sponsor who is local who can come and accept the proclamation.

John Connet discussed that there was no request for a Hispanic Heritage Month Proclamation. He asked the committee to help identify recognition opportunities and develop special events or dates that the City needs to aware of from a diversity standpoint.

Chair Jayne Jennings received the consensus of the Committee to form a work group to provide proclamation recommendations to the Committee for consideration.

Laura Bannister and Melinda Lowrence will be the members assigned to the work group and will invite others in the community for input.

Manager Connet provided information regarding planned city trainings, events, and projects with diversity themes and said the city is also seeing more diversity in their board and commission applicants but said the workforce remains the same.

The Hendersonville Police Department sponsored National Night Out at Sullivan Park to build positive relationships with the Green Meadows community.

Council Member Jerry Smith discussed the Peoples' Museum opening in February 2022 and recalled a group working on a plan for placement of plaques in prominent locations in the city to honor African American contributions.

5. COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS

There was much discussion on Black History Month and Manager Connet reminded everyone of December deadlines for submissions including photos/bios.

Laura Bannister asked for consideration of recommendations for placement of a mural for the gay and lesbian community.

6. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chairman Jayne Jennings adjourned the meeting at 7:01 p.m.

Jayne Jennings, Chair

ATTEST:

Angela L. Reece, City Clerk

DRAFT