

MINUTES
ST. ALBANS CITY BELONGING, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION COMMITTEE MEETING
REGULAR MEETING
ST. ALBANS CITY HALL, 100 NORTH MAIN STREET
6:30 PM TUESDAY, MARCH 21, 2023

Approved April 11, 2023

Commission Members Present: Reese Kelly, Co-Chair; Preston Fuller (both in person); Mareesa Miles; Eliana Castro (Co-Chair); Clark Sheldon (all three remote via Zoom).

Commission Members Absent: None

City Staff present: Paul Clapps (Minute-taker); Chip Sawyer (Director of Planning and Development)

Members of the public present: Carl Watkins

1. R. Kelly began the meeting at 6:32

- Introductions.
- C. Watkins read the Land Acknowledgment.
- There was discussion over the agenda order, additions, and deletions.
- Approval of Minutes was moved to next month.
- R. Kelly asked if there were any additions or changes the committee wanted to make.
- C. Sawyer mentioned that he had a few things to add to the “Other Business” section
- **P. Fuller arrived in person at 6:37**

2. Continue discussion on goal-setting, benchmarks, and measurements of success.

- R. Kelly began the discussion on goal-setting, benchmarks, and measurements of success. He started by reading the **values**. After reading them, R. Kelly asked for input.
- R. Kelly reminded the group that these goals are supposed to be “guideposts” for the committee and any projects in the future.
- **Motion by R. Kelly to adopt these values as the committee’s group values. Seconded by M. Miles. There was no discussion. The motion passed with all in favor.**
- Next, R. Kelly began reading the **goals**.
- After reading them, R. Kelly asked the committee for feedback on the goals.
- E. Castro asked if there’s a way for the committee to be a resource for members of the community when hate-motivated incidents or incidents of bias come up. M. Miles and C. Sheldon supported this question.
- R. Kelly brought up that there should be a discussion on figuring out what a bias response process should look like in the city. This could be a lot of work, and if there’s no recourse or action to be done with feedback, then that might negatively affect the community. P. Fuller agreed, and mentioned that the committee only meets once a month so they shouldn’t be the “filter” for all of the incidents in the city. The focus should be on making the BEI a resource.
- **R. Kelly added a sixth goal to reflect this discussion.**

- C. Sawyer provided feedback from the city’s perspective. This committee could be a source for letting the city know when it needs to speak up or release a statement on something. (Whether this is national or local) This could be linked with the Restorative Justice Center, which would help achieve the goal of being more welcoming and inclusive.
 - R. Kelly continued the discussion that there are many different avenues of escalation in terms of incidents of bias and hate crimes.
 - C. Sawyer asked if there should be an addition in goal 2 of “new members.” R. Kelly thought this was already addressed by the goal’s wording. E. Castro and P. Fuller both thought that new community members should be welcomed too. M. Miles thought that people already felt welcome, as long as they belonged to the normalized/conforming groups.
 - R. Kelly mentioned that the goals are designed to be vague to communicate to the community that they’re constantly being improved and worked on. There’s nothing to stop them from changing them in the future.
 - R. Kelly asked the committee if they’re ready to vote on the goals. The goals are changed from being numbered to lettered in order to avoid them looking ranked in order of importance or time.
 - **Motion by R. Kelly to adopt these as the current goals of the BEI committee. Seconded by P. Fuller. There is no discussion. The motion passes with all in favor.**
3. Update on appointment of new members.
- C. Sawyer began talking about updates from the mayor and city council. The requests for the BEI to be more involved in the application process were denied.
 - R. Kelly believed that the committee’s goals and values could be helpful with the application process.
 - There was a discussion about whether or not the committee should change their meeting dates due to the fact that it’s not very helpful to be the day after the City Council Meeting. R. Kelly also didn’t want artificial barriers to people joining the committee if they have a conflicting schedule.
 - R. Kelly and C. Sawyer will work on finding several days a month that work for both city staff and the committee members.
4. Approval of Minutes.
- This was skipped.
5. Other business.
- C. Sawyer began with some other business. He started by going over open-meeting rules, and specifies that they do not need to use **Robert's Rules**. He has ordered different sets of rules to explore other options ensuring that they’re **fair and pragmatic** to make decisions.
 - C. Sawyer then shared a link to the St. Albans City Plan and discussed its purpose. There are a lot of topics that need to be covered in that plan which is why the Planning Commission would like to have the BEI’s input. The Planning Commission is currently going through the old plan, but eventually there should be collaboration.
 - i. R. Kelly asked about a timeline for scheduling purposes. C. Sawyer mentioned that later this year the discussion will begin (the second half of the year).

- ii. R. Kelly asked if there was a history of using public forums to inform the public on the city plan, and C. Sawyer confirmed that this has happened in the past.
 - C. Sheldon asked if there was targeted outreach last time the city plan was created. C. Sawyer said that while it wasn't targeted, there was public outreach.
 - i. If any questions come up, they should be sent to C. Sawyer.
 - ii. There was a brief discussion about a small grant that will be going to the Restorative Justice Center, focusing on staff, resources, and DEI. Any training materials or resources can be sent to C. Sawyer. R. Kelly mentioned the Creative Discourse Group and Outreach Vermont as two viable resources. R. Kelly also discussed how it could be an opportunity to get in touch with and network with these groups.
 - R. Kelly liked the idea of letting other members of the committee cover certain parts of the agenda. These include listing the values, the Land Acknowledgement, and other points. C. Sheldon liked this idea, and also believes it should be optional so members don't feel obligated to share.
 - **R. Kelly stated that next month this Alternated Sharing Rotation plan (via alphabetical order) will go into effect. All were in agreement.**
 - There was no other business.
6. Public Comment on Agenda/Non-Agenda Items (limit 2 minutes per person).
 - R. Kelly moved onto public comments.
 - C. Watkins mentioned that he's a member of the Planning Commission and is absolutely interested in discussing the city plan with the BEI.
 - C. Watkins asked if they could make public comments earlier in the meeting, and C. Sawyer clarified that the public can technically raise their hand and speak at any point. C. Sawyer also stated that it's possible to encourage that in the beginning of the meeting so the public can get their point across early.
 - **C. Watkins left the meeting at 7:54.**
7. Discuss the next BEI meeting and agenda items.
 - R. Kelly moved on to discuss how the committee can start working on the goals, values, and other projects.
 - C. Sawyer and P. Fuller both asked if a discussion on banners could be next month. C. Sheldon clarified that this was previously paused to work on goals and values.
 - This will be added onto the next meeting agenda to discuss a proposal.
8. Committee Member Input
 - E. Castro thought it was good to finalize the work done weeks ago.
 - M. Miles liked that the goals were now solidified. She wanted the committee to have more public comment in the future.
 - R. Kelly was very proud of the committee creating these goals. They've been in the works for an entire year. But he wants to improve the current process of the meeting.
 - P. Fuller thought the goals were great but was disappointed in the committee not being involved in the application decision.
 - C. Sheldon liked that the group could adapt to these new circumstances.
 - C. Sawyer appreciated the progress of the committee and wanted to continue moving forward with other projects like banners. The BEI will have a powerful perspective for

getting the community reconnected after COVID.

9. Meeting is adjourned at 8:13.