

MINUTES
ST. ALBANS CITY BELONGING, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION COMMITTEE MEETING
REGULAR MEETING
ST. ALBANS CITY HALL, 100 NORTH MAIN STREET
6:30 PM TUESDAY, MAY 9, 2023

Approved June 13, 2023

Commission Members Present: ZOOM: Reese Kelly, (Co-Chair); Preston Fuller; Clark Sheldon; Eliana Castro (Co-Chair); IN PERSON: Maresa Miles

Commission Members Absent: None.

City Staff present: IN PERSON: Katie Haseltine (Minute-Taker); Chip Sawyer (Director of Planning and Development)

Members of the public present: IN PERSON: Jennifer Williamson, ZOOM: Laura Walker

- 1. Begin recording and Open Meeting. R. Kelly** began the meeting at 6:32.
 - Introductions.
 - Discuss agenda order, additions and deletions. No additions needed.
- 2. Approval of Minutes.**
 - Motion by E. Castro to approve the 4/11/23 BEI Minutes as presented. Seconded by M. Miles. No discussion. Motion passed with all in favor.**
- 3. Grounding (Eliana Castro)**
 - E. Castro began reading of Land Acknowledgement and BEI Committee Values
 - E. Castro then moved to the grounding portion of her presentation
 - She read a quote by Audrey Lorde, an American write and civil rights activist.
 - “Sometimes we are blessed with being able t choose the time, and the arena, and the manner of our revolution, but more usually we must do battle where we are standing.”*
 - She focused on blessings and battles when people are integrating themselves into the community, reflecting on her own personal battles and blessings within St. Albans.
- 4. Public Comment on Agenda/Non-agenda items (limit 2 minutes per person).**
 - L. Walker shared a story about a friend who had a recent concerning experience at a local St. Albans shop. The shop owner had disparaging comments regarding the friends LGBTQIA shirt as well as her hairstyle.
 - P. Fuller unsure what guidance or authority the committee has to approach the situation.
 - C. Sawyer is interested in further discussion with the BEI regarding ways to address this. One area in particular, was to look at shops that have received grant money from the City and holding them responsible to a baseline set of standards.
 - R. Kelly shared a local website that would allow information, ex. regarding what happened with this community member, to be shared.
- 5. Updates on appointment of new members.**
 - C. Sawyer stated that (2) seats are open on the BEI Committee and the city has received applications from (4) candidates
 - Interviews are set for May 25th, and the city will make appointments June 12th
 - Candidates: Carl Watkins, Jennifer Williamson, Moira Jameson Brooks, Melissa Bailey.

- R. Kelly curious if community members are allowed any input in that appointment. C. Sawyer noted that time for public comment at the start of the meeting could be an opportunity for any discussion on candidates.
- R. Kelly poses question regarding the group size, opening discussion to the committee to see if anyone would like to revisit that. C. Sawyer reminded that an additional member causes an even number and increases the quorum.
- Discussion results in motion by R. Kelly to increase the BEI Committee to 9 Members. M. Miles seconds the motion. Motion passes with all in favor.
- R. Kelly requests C. Sawyer to relay that information to the City.

6. Updates & Next Steps from Subcommittees:

- Banner Subcommittee
 - P. Fuller shares an idea around themed stickers to celebrate months/days, and involving community artists who may want to collaborate with the design.
 - M. Miles priced out stickers and it would be an inexpensive initiative to help bring awareness to the months/days being celebrated.
 - E. Castro curious if faculty in the art department at BFA might be interested in helping with this initiative.
 - C. Sawyer would like it to be brought to the Downtown Board.
 - M. Miles shares ideas around Murals/Temporary Art (in the parks). lighting up the night (fountain lights and community involvement), Movies that Matter (using the Welden to host films addressing BEI material with panel discussions afterwards)
 - M. Miles presents need to celebrate BIPOC Businesses by looking at ways that the city can funnel resources into the API businesses. 5 BIPOC owned restaurants (Thai House, Oriental Kitchen, Lucky Buffet, Easter Dragon, Kaiju Kitchen).
 - R. Kelly supports seeking further action and discussion. E. Castro appreciative of the creative ideas. This might present an opportunity to collaborate with other boards in synergy to bring to fruition.
 - R. Kelly directs that focus will be on stickers and banners for now, which is manageable, and others ideas can be revisited.
 - Banner Subcommittee will move forward with the themed stickers by meeting with C. Sawyer to further discuss feasibility and roll-out.
 - C. Sawyer shares the new banner system the city is deploying. The design uses velcro vinyl which allows easy swap out as well as the ability to use a different banner on each side. Banners are at Stebbins Street and by City Hall.
 - C. Sawyer looking for approval on Juneteenth and LGBTQ+ banner
 - R. Kelly suggests change from “Celebrate LGBTQ+ Pride!” to “Celebrate Pride!”, reflecting that the acronym is always changing and omitting it makes more sense.
 - R. Kelly suggests that the exclamation point be removed from “Celebrate Juneteenth!” and that the historical date, June 19th, 1865 be added.
 - E Castro curious if the “Black Lives Matter” part of the banner can be made a black block with white lettering.
 - C. Sawyer will coordinate with designer regarding banner edits.
 - R. Kelly motions to approve both flags with changes suggested and to place both banners at City Hall location. Seconded by E. Castro. No discussion. Motion passed with all in favor.
- BEI Committee Benchmarking Subcommittee
 - E. Castro reflected that subcommittee brainstormed what to look for (events,

funding sources, bias response protocols) and pinpointed keywords (diversity, injustice, antiracism, LG BTW+, poverty)

- E. Castro and C. Sheldon divided research by counties and will report back.

Needs Assessment Subcommittee

- M. Miles curious if the City gathers residential data and demographics.
- R. Kelly proposes that Needs Assessment Subcommittee meet with C. Sawyer at another date to allow for more time on remaining agenda items. All agree.

7. Public Comment on Agenda Items (limit 2 minutes per person).

- J. Williamson, in response to events discussion, shares that a Freedom & Unity festival is being held in North Hero and wanted to share since it may fit in with efforts being considered in one of the BEI subcommittees.

8. Other business.

- None.

9. Public Comment on Agenda/Non-Agenda Items (limit 2 minutes per person).

- C. Sawyer introducing new minute taker, Katie Haseltine.

10. Discuss next BEI Cmte. meeting and agenda items.

- R. Kelly revisits the new appointments to be made and how they can be welcomed.
- C. Sawyer states names and contact information for newly appointed members can be shared with co-chairs to allow for a welcome email to be sent.
- E. Castro would like members to share reflections, similar to the Plus/Delta , regarding their work in the subcommittees.
- R. Kelly mentioned that committee values should be read at next meeting for new members to reflect on and potentially re-visit changes to be made.
- M. Miles would like to provide new members the opportunity to join a sub-committee as a way to get acclimated within a smaller group.
- R. Kelly proposes that at the start of the sub-committee agenda item, the group allow the opportunity to join one, or propose a new sub committee.
- C. Sheldon briefly mentions BEI meeting schedule, being mindful of what works for all.
- C. Sawyer welcomes new minute taker, Katie Haseltine.
- R. Kelly proposes M. Miles to do grounding activity next meeting. M. Miles agreed.

11. Plus/Delta closing.

- E. Castro is excited to have a better outlook on committee membership at the next meeting. She reflects wanting to further focus and work out the specifics of agenda items.
- C. Sheldon loves welcoming new minute taker and having community members present.
- P. Fuller happy to see what other towns are doing, shared a recent event he attended where the public was invited to join traditional African dance and how beautiful that was.
- R. Kelly liked how E. Castro opened the meeting and appreciated her openness and reflection. He is eager for committee to continue growing and find its operational rhythm.
- M. Miles enjoys having people from community here. She would love to see more committee members, since motion passed, that will happen.

12. R. Kelly adjourns meeting at 8:07 PM.