

MINUTES
REAC Regular Meeting
December 2, 2021

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:01 p.m.

Present: REAC members Deanna Martinez, Eric Stahl, James Friday, Jing Fong, Renni Bispham, Savanna Rovelstad,
Excused: Peggi Erickson, Sue Wilmot.

Moved by Eric to approve the minutes. Minutes were approved.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Deanna shared that she is part of Kitsap ERACE, who is making a presentation tonight on its #NoBIPDexpansion campaign.

Eric said it's probably best to check with the city attorney if this is a conflict of interest but it doesn't seem like it. We all signed a conflict of interest form when we joined. It doesn't sound like there is financial benefit or other indirect benefits from your affiliation with Kitsap ERACE. Renni concurred.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

REAC POSITION VACANCY

Deanna added to her comments at the last REAC meeting (November 18). She would like to see the open up the Position 4 candidacy to all applicants and if people have already gone through the interview process or applied before, they don't have to reapply.

James added that REAC would contact previous applicants to ask if they are interested in the open position.

KITSAP ERACE #N0BIPDexpansion PRESENTATION

Presentation made by Akueya Karen Vargas, Rachael Reese, Wendy Jones, Olivia Hall.

PowerPoint presentation Included:

Kitsap ERACE Coalition is thankful for this chance to talk with REAC because of:

- Our shared passion for bringing meaningful race equity analysis and advice to governmental jurisdictions and criminal justice institutions.
- REAC's scope of work that includes providing technical and planning advice on issues of racism and race-related bias, as well as equity-related recommendations and advice to city council on staffing, contracting, policies, procedures, and decision-making of both city government and the police department.

Kitsap ERACE Coalition hopes Bainbridge Island REAC will join them in asking the city council to:

- Pursue an outside party to review the police/court facility project and existing policing needs;
- Ensure that the reviewer understands systemic racism and is able to meaningfully incorporate a race equity analysis.

Q & A

Q. Renni wanted to know more about the outside party who would review the police building/expansion.

A. Olivia said that they don't have a specific person in mind. There are independent consulting firms that specifically look at public safety needs. Some just look at the numbers.

Akueya: I think it's important that we connect with organizations outside of law enforcement. I don't believe law enforcement, should be analyzing law enforcement, I think that there should be other organizations that have an equity lens to look at these issues critically—barriers, policies that have harmed us in the past and what does that look like as we move equity forward in 2022.

Q. Jing was curious about what ERACE has learned from the city and the public since the campaign began. What are people resonating toward, not sure about? What ignorance are you fighting?

A. Akueya: it's a learning process for all of us to look at our practices, our policies. We've been working with organizations like the People's Institute and GARE—those immersed in race pedagogy, doing this work for 30 and 40 years—and gleaming wisdom from them because we've not yet really engaged in this level of undoing and uncovering institutionalized practices.

We cannot be divisive. We have to come together. We have to communicate. We have to connect. We have to build these relationships. if we're not willing to have these conversations, where are we going to go?

Q. Eric wanted to know if the city has done a needs assessment and is it the kind of assessment that Olivia mentioned (a police needs assessment as opposed to a building assessment). Also, any idea what are the costs associated with the assessment?

A. Olivia: The one that I am most familiar was the McKinsey Report (2014). I'm happy to send it to you. It breaks down square footage per police officer and makes projections to 2036. The study doesn't line up exactly with the Harrison project because it was a while ago. There was a needs assessment done with the building of a new police station and fire station—a package of public safety buildings. It was done mainly with square footage in mind, not so much crime rates or services needed or safety. There wasn't an explicit equity lens. I don't know the cost.

Q. Eric: You made a statement that Bainbridge has other service needs which would be a better fit for the Harrison building. Do you have anything specific in mind?

A. Rachael: Some kind of affordable housing. A safe place for people that are experiencing abuse or homelessness to go to mental health services. Human, social services could be in that building. Mental health therapy.

Olivia made a presentation about nonprofits and mental health and social services on Bainbridge and how they're underfunded. That money could be rerouted to nonprofits instead of expanding the police station. Historically, police departments all over the nation get more money every year. Their budgets expand, their buildings expand every year while human services, mental health therapies are underfunded I think it's time we evolved and do something different. We can start here on Bainbridge and think about community first instead of making this ginormous police station when I think the most crime that we have is mailbox theft.

Akuyea: I've been here for 30 years. We've not had good services for our young people (suicide, mental health, social and emotional services). We need to create different programs that would support them, and for people experiencing homelessness and difficult challenges— some of the things that that our wonderful Helpline has been doing for so many years. That facility and services could be expanded. That building can be a catalyst for health and well-being in our Community and on our island, especially for our children and for our young people. We can do it in such a wonderful way if we collectively come together and have these conversations.

We are at a time in our history where we have to look at what we're doing and how we do things. How we apply our resources so they are used in a way that is sustainable and help support the needs of our communities.

Wendy Jones: Services do not need to be punitive; they need to be helpful to people. Policing in America and in Washington state is punitive.

Q. Deanna: Recently, there was an ATM theft on Bainbridge Island. The police made the decision to not chase. There was an opinion or letter to the editor in the newspaper that this incident is why we need police. What would you say to those who are fearful and afraid of any amount of crime happening on Bainbridge Island?

A. Akuyea: One of the things I always say is that I hope that we do not move from a lens of fear because that's an unhealthy way to address the needs within our community. We're dealing with a lot of divisiveness and a lot of racism because of fear-based propaganda. We understand, we have to meet those challenges, but when begin to put out fear-based messages it's just unhealthy. So, as we begin to do this work, I hope that we're doing it consciously to alleviate some of the stress and some of the fears.

Olivia: I just want to say that theft is generally a crime of poverty and on Bainbridge Island it's also a crime of boredom— it's teenagers. We shouldn't be punitive after the fact. I don't know why this person tried to steal from the ATM. I see people in desperation—not criminals—people who need help, not people who need to be thrown in jail.

James: The majority of people displaying these racist acts are uneducated youth looking for things to do. They are unsupervised, they're latchkey kids who have no supervision and no guidance. Let's have a community center for kids to go to, where they have mentors to teach them and give them an opportunity to have something positive to do. Here on Bainbridge I see kids who feel like they're outcasts and they just want something to belong to.

I really do appreciate the conversation tonight and hope that, as a community we'll continue to stay together and work together on solutions that work for all. We're all one integral team trying to achieve the same results— equity for all.

SUBCOMMITTEE PROGRESS REPORTS

Finance

James: I have been getting buttons and stickers and need to make sure that I am following the processes that you put in place.

Eric and James will follow-up offline to determine if it's a reimbursement or budgetary issue.

Law and Policy

Eric: Our subcommittee drafted a form for outside, non-city of Bainbridge Island groups or individuals who want to contact us or to appear before REAC. This includes somebody who approaches one of us individually. We want to send them to the website fill out the form.

Part One: the outward facing form for people to fill out and send us if they want to present something to us, or they want something else from the committee. Part Two: internal procedures like what happens once the form is completed. The whole procedure isn't done yet.

The form would be on the website. It should be pretty simple; we don't want it to be a barrier for accessing the committee or asking us for help or to present. We want to set it up so there's enough information so that people know who we are and they can tell us what it is they want.

Part One states:

- Who we are
- See our website for our mission and responsibilities
- REAC meet regularly and has a public comment period where anyone can come and talk to us for a limited amount of time about pretty much anything
- if you've got something that you want to talk to us about outside of that process, here's the form.

Form contents:

- Contact information
- Response to four straightforward questions: who you are, what's the issue you want to bring to our attention, how does it fit within our mission and responsibilities, and what action you seek from us, whether it's appearing at one of our meetings, something you want us to study, something you want us to do, an event or collaborate with some other group. It also asks if you've got any affiliation with the issue or are representing some other party and if there's anything else that you want the committee to do
- Statement that REAC will review and get back to you. that includes you know, even if it's somebody may be particularly if it's somebody who approaches one of us individually, we want to send them to the website fill out the form which then.

We'll send it around and have one more whack at it at our next subcommittee meeting.

One question we had is if it's possible to have an automated acknowledgement once we've received a form. It would be a thank you and let that person know that someone will get back to you soon. It would simultaneously be copied to everyone on the committee.

Roz: I can talk about it with IT and ask that they create a REAC general mailbox so that anything like this can go into that mailbox and then perhaps have it then forwarded it to the group.

Eric: Let's talk offline about that. The idea would be they send the form, a response email goes to the sender that the form was received, and then the completed form automatically goes to the full REAC committee.

The co-chairs would then be responsible for sending an acknowledgement within five business days. The message could be we're looking at your request and we'll get back to you soon, or it could also be that their request is granted and you're on our agenda.

If the chairs don't grant the request or are unable to respond within two weeks or 10 business days, than anybody on the committee can bring it up at our next meeting and move to put it on the agenda. If everyone agrees, it'll go on the agenda.

The hard part, which we haven't gotten to yet is, we want to have some criteria that would guide whether we grant or deny these kinds of requests.

It would be helpful to have your input on the criteria be or we'll come back to you with a list of criteria. It won't be long or detailed or complicated. It has to be related to race equity, relate to something within our responsibilities. It can't contradict anything that the city council has told us not to get involved with.

The idea is to have an open, transparent system for people to reach us and to be prepared to receive the request.

Deanna: I'm curious if any of the language strikes anybody as a barrier to any groups.

Jing: What if we want a group or individual wants to speak before REAC? How would we approach that? Would that have to go through a similar process?

James: We should be able to go out and do outreach to other organizations that we feel have insights that we don't have.

Jing: Would I bring this person or organization to you or Savanna?

James I would say shoot off an email to Savanna and me. We'd have a discussion to see how important it is to the scope of what we're trying to do.

Jing: It would be helpful to ask the same questions (in the form). Maybe a group that doesn't feel comfortable completing a form or speaking in front of REAC.

James: The biggest thing is we want to give people an opportunity to express what they want to talk about. We want to be open and willing to have these conversations outside of the room. You might be in a grocery store and someone approaches you. We don't want to shut down conversation and say, "Well you know that's all great and good can you just submit a form?" without giving them a chance to explain what they're trying to achieve.

Events and Outreach

James: We've had a challenging time getting our committee to meet. The stickers we decided to give to the community has been received very well. The majority of the businesses in downtown Winslow have opted to put these stickers on their windows to signify solidarity and let people know that it's a safe haven. It's not just a sticker that we give away, it comes with responsibility. A lot of people in the Downtown Association didn't even know we existed so this has been an opportunity to explain what we do and why we do it.

Training and GARE

Peggi was not present to report.

Strategic Planning

Jing: At the last meeting, the strategic plan with the auto referral was approved. Brenda mentioned that she was going to speak with the city manager about the best way to convey this to City Council. Has anyone heard from Brenda or heard any follow-through on what that process would be. I believe Eric had made a comment that we want to make sure that the resolution doesn't just sit there but moves forward. This is an integral part of our work and essential that city council and city manager understand what we're trying to do in partnership.

Deanna: I don't mind reaching out to Brenda tomorrow to ask about it.

Renni: Is there some sort of a standing process for the city council to receive recommendations from this committees or other committees? Is there some typical way that it's done or is it ad hoc?

Roz: I'll need to check with the city clerk. I know that the committees and commissions do annual reports and work plans. Is that what you're talking about, or is it something different?

Renni: It's part of our work plan, but it's a recommendation to them. There's got to be some sort of mechanism. It's not just there you go and then we'll wait to see what happens

Roz: I can bring this up with Brenda and I'll talk to Christine. I know if you bring something forward and it goes on the agenda of course you'd be contacted.

James: As far as I know, that was the role of the liaison to carry messages to the city council.

Eric: We want to make sure this gets conveyed in a way that isn't lost. The city manager was here a couple of meetings ago and suggested that we work with him on something like this. I'd rather let that process play itself out, particularly since you know that the Council is in the middle of transitioning with new members.

I don't think it's an optimal time to stick it on the agenda and hope for the best. I'd like to be more strategic about it. It was my understanding Brenda was working on this with Blair.

Jing: Can I just confirm them that Deanna is going to have a conversation with Brenda with regards to Brenda meeting with Blair about the strategic plan and the auto referral?

Deanna: I want to clarify how would you like that information to come back at you.

James: I would like to see you put it in a FYI (do not respond).

Climate Change Equity Lens

Deanna: Savanna and James, I had an email to y'all that we're trying to figure out a time for us to meet. We got an email this week from Michael Cox of CCAC saying that they thought we should meet. We have not responded because I felt that it was important that we meet first.

CITY COUNCIL REPORT

Deanna: Some folks may have only watched two meetings because some meetings were canceled. I can get the dates of the cancelled Council meetings and I'll send them to you.

Renni: I am happy to reassign meeting times to monitor if I know which ones were canceled. You know if you're on vacation, you don't actually have to watch them on the dates that they occur, You can watch it at your leisure and not necessarily on that day.

KYLE RITTENHOUSE VERDICT

James: I would like to meet with Renni and Eric to help me to craft a resolution that reflects our disappointment within that verdict.

Jing: James, this is not a disagreement with the resolution but how does REAC determine when it wants to do a resolution?

James: I think in the future, it would be better to bring it to the group to find out whether or not everyone agrees that it needs to be addressed.

Jing: Maybe a good place to start is your expressing why the verdict of Kyle Rittenhouse means so much to you. Can you just express how you feel about this so we can work on it together.

Deanna: I think I would definitely like to have more clarity around what is our goal and use that scenario or situation to express and tie it to REAC— the macro of the system to the micro level of Bainbridge Island. I could see us having a conversation with each other or in front of the public to lay out where those things meet up and, and how one supports the other. I'm always happy to draw the similarities and parallels of the micro things here that REAC, ERACE, MAC and other equity groups on the island are talking about.

Renni: I was struck by what you just said. These things are going to happen so frequently that we can't do a resolution on every single thing that happens. And yet yesterday, I was struck by the fact that a school shooting was the fourth headline in New York Times. It said to me that we have become so accustomed to it, it's not something that shocks the conscience.

I think we'll probably have to make a decision on how to proceed with these things because there will be more of these moments. I was not shocked by the outcome, not sure why anybody would be.

In this moment it feels like we just can't be quiet. Ahmaud Arbery and the host of others who have died at the hands of racist activity or oppressive activity, there are so many. If we choose not to say something every time this happens, I'm not sure what that says about us. I'm not ready to not say anything.

Maybe the purpose of the resolution is simply to bring attention to a particular issue. Our public statement may not change everything or anything but I would like to see us always speak up for injustices wherever and whenever they happen, especially when they happen on a national stage.

Eric: I share Renni's sentiment about the verdict being shocking, but not surprising. It's the system protecting exactly what it was designed to protect, and not in a good way. I think Deana hit the nail on the head. For us to be impactful, it would be useful for us to articulate how it ties into and what matters to Bainbridge Island and REAC's mission.

Deanna: I just want to be thoughtful on how we do that. A part of me is so tired after two years of stating the obvious to folks that this is wrong and horrible but it doesn't necessarily lead folks to action. Let's figure out some way to shine a light on all of these events. A moment of silence or a moment of thought, but bring attention to them because it's important.

GOOD OF THE ORDER

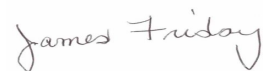
Savanna: We got something from Roz about COBI Connects. The deadline for the committee to fill out our responses is Monday December 13. It'll be in the Winter 2021 issue (January). They want pictures of us. Look for a link to fill out what days and times you are available to take a photo.

There are questions to answer and we need to do it as one unit because they're featuring us as REAC, not as individuals.

Peggi, who has experience responding to these questions, was nominated in absentia to craft REAC's response. I can give Peggi a call and explain what was asked.

Renni: I think it's best if one person doesn't initial draft, and then you get other input after the draft is done. It's hard to write something by committee.

Meeting adjourned at 8:01 p.m.



James Friday, Chair 12/16/21