

**Race Equity Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
November 2, 2023**

CALL TO ORDER

Members present: Lynn Beck, Renni Bispham, Raul Camacho, Jing Fong, Savanna Rovelstad, Eric Stahl.

Liaison: Brenda Fantroy-Johnson

Equity and Inclusion Manager: Anshu Wahi

Excused: Clarence Moriwaki, Olivia Hall, Caitlin Lombardi.

MOTIONS

Eric indicated two small modifications will be made on the October 5, 2023 minutes (page 3; City Council report).

Motion: I move to approve the revised October 5, 2023 minutes.

Lynn/Savannah: The motion was approved unanimously 6-0.

In order for some REAC members to attend the Winslow Sub-area Plan online meeting, the agenda was shortened. Caitlin sent an email detailing her City Council notes, so REAC members could review on their own. Anshu added two items to her report: email list and art piece.

Motion: I move to accept the November 2, 2023 modified agenda.

Jing/Eric: The motion was approved unanimously 6-0.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Brian Anderson expressed his disapproval of comments made in the September and October REAC meetings regarding a community petition submitted to the Bainbridge Island School District. Brian shared that the intent of the petition was: 1) for parents to be informed by the School Board members of controversial subjects being taught to their children; and 2) for parents to provide more input into policy changes. He shared that petition supporters are not a Moms for Liberty group and that their ideas do not qualify as hateful.

Joe McMillan referenced an email he recently sent to REAC members. He shared that he was prompted to send the email in response to comments made by a member of the public at the last REAC meeting. He shared that the comments touched on rumors that there is a hate group active on the island behind the petition forwarded to the Bainbridge Island School District. Joe stated that those comments are not true. He shared that the petition signers are parents who are appealing to the School Board for modest policy changes. Joe noted that although the petition doesn't state his views, he was not okay with his neighbors being characterized as a hate group. He shared that he would be happy to meet with any REAC members to discuss further.

Rachel Reese offered support for REAC's comments and efforts. Rachel shared that this is the third year she has been involved with supporting the organizational efforts of the Bainbridge Island School District. Rachel shared that she disagrees with the views of the two public commentators before her, and offered to provide both individuals with additional knowledge and learning.

UPDATE FROM ANSHU

- Joint meeting with REAC and city staff – The City's Racial Equity Team recently accepted 5 new members. A joint meeting with REAC members is in the works, but is tabled until the new members meet with the Team.
- Race equity lens draft – Anshu and Autumn Salamack (Climate Mitigation and Adaption Manager) recently presented their "lenses" at the Comp Plan Steering Committee meeting. The focus was on outreach and community engagement. The race equity lens draft includes a lot of language from GARE (Government Alliance on Race and Equity). Anshu and Autumn are moving forward with this process. Anshu is working on diversifying who attends these community meetings. Anshu shared that the meeting went well and that REAC members could watch the video for more information.

- GARE conference – Anshu registered REAC members who expressed interest in participating. Videos are available to those who are registered. The videos will be available to all GARE members after 90 days.
- Email list (agenda item added) – Anshu will create a pathway for this. Something will be created on the website for equity and inclusion, including a link where those interested can sign up and opt in. Jing will research existing lists and coordinate with Anshu.
- Update art piece (agenda item added) – Anshu shared that the artist of cultural timeline art piece currently displayed in City Hall is happy to make amendments. The request is to include more stories and dates that honor the Indigenous and Indipino communities. More discussion needs to occur with community members. There is limited space(s) on the art piece. One consideration is to create something else. Anshu plans to gather a small group of people that represent different community groups and a direction will be determined.
- Next REAC meeting (agenda item added) – City staff members, Blair King and Laura Shear, would like 30 minutes at the next REAC meeting to review a proposal for an affordable housing project at the corner of Winslow Way and SR 305 (i.e., police station). This will be added to the next agenda.

BISD INVESTIGATION OF ALLEGED RACIST LANGUAGE AT BAINBRIDGE VS. BREMERTON FOOTBALL GAME

Renni shared that an investigation is going on addressing allegations that the Bremerton football players heard things that were not complimentary. Renni stated that we should not make pronouncements until we know the facts. The allegations appear to be one of many. This could give us some impetus to help our community avoid situations like this. Both school districts are conducting their own investigations. Bremerton has concluded their investigation, but has not release their report. Privacy laws may limit what information can be shared with the public.

Anshu also shared 2 recent issues of vandalism, including hateful, antisemitic language. Discussion took place about something we can do to lessen issues like this. What happens when we become aware of these issues and don't take any action? Over time, students are reluctant to say anything because they don't think anything will happen.

One possible action could be the addition of a youth advisory council. We need to consider something that has a lasting impact. REAC might consider engaging a younger demographic on the committee; someone high school age. Mayor Fantroy-Johnson shared that she has been in communication with a young man who is a junior at the high school. He inquired about what the City is doing to represent Hispanic and Latino Americans. The Mayor shared that she will get back in touch with him. She also shared that the Island doesn't have a place for kids to gather outside of school. A "Meet the Mayor" initiative is in the works and would be beneficial for school-age kids.

The operations subcommittee will work with Anshu to determine next steps on opening up the application process for the vacant REAC position #7; potentially filling with a high school-age representative. Renni encouraged REAC members to think more about things we might be able to do or support to address what's going on.

BYSTANDER TRAINING

Eric shared that he's contacted an organization called "The Right to Be," based in New York. They have a facilitator in Eastern Washington. There would be costs involved, but could potentially be covered by our events budget. Eric will do more research to see if there is anyone locally that does this training. The training could be useful for schools, City Council, the BIPOC community and others. Discussion concluded that there would be a lot of interest for this type of training. A point was made that we need to really find a way to reach folks who don't think racial issues are happening on the Island.

CITY SUPPORT AND PARTICPATION OF COMMUNITY CELEBRATIONS/COMMEMORATIONS

Mayor Fantroy-Johnson shared that a proposed biennium budget was presented at the last City Council meeting, including \$15,000 for cultural events like the Juneteenth celebration. The proposed biennium budget is being

moved to the business meeting for approval by City Council. She is also meeting with the people she has collaborated with before to develop a framework/foundation of which holidays to celebrate and what we will do.

CITY COUNCIL MEETING REPORT

Eric shared from Caitlin's report that the City is hiring a lobbyist and the question was presented: "Does REAC want to have a role/input in legislative agenda?" The Mayor will talk with the City Manager to determine if REAC can recommend some legislative actions – or if we can review the agenda. The Law & Policy sub-committee will add this to their work review.

SUBCOMMITTEES: Progress reports

- No critical updates that required action from the Committee.
- A. Public Outreach
- B. Finance
- C. Law & Policy
- D. Operations
- E. Climate
- F. Drone
- G. Comp Plan

REAC ITEM

- No items.

GOOD OF THE ORDER

The Mayor read the statement on making a public comment at meetings.

Jing shared that the Grand Opening of the Ted Spearman Justice Center is November 15. The event is open to the public and will include a welcome ceremony and tour. Jing shared how REAC participated in the development of the Center, including the art selection and naming processes. REAC also had input as the building was being remodeled and refurbished. A race equity lens was applied throughout. The facility feels open and accessible.

Anshu shared information about Story SLAM! presented by B.I. READS and "weave" on November 13 at Rolling Bay Hall. She also reminded members that the Winslow Sub-area Plan feedback session is taking place online this evening. Next week, an in-person meeting will take place at City Hall.

Eric encouraged everyone to watch the public comment section of the last public school board meeting. He shared that the bulk of the meeting was public comment about the Superintendent's letter sent on October 10, the first business day after the massacres in Israel on October 7. Eric stated that the meeting was an example of how NOT to do public comment. One of Eric's neighbors thanked the Superintendent for his comments because he had a family member who was murdered in the Hamas terrorist attacks. Eric shared that someone in the audience stood up and shouted his neighbor down, saying that it was not okay to call someone a terrorist. Eric shared that it was one of the more uncivil things he's seen in a public meeting and expressed the importance of listening to each other and continuing to have these difficult conversations.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:07 pm.

Approved: January 4, 2024