

**Race Equity Advisory Meeting
Regular Meeting Minutes
July 8, 2024**

CALL TO ORDER

Members present: Raul Camacho, Jing Fong, Olivia Hall, Caitlin Lombardi, Savanna Rovelstad

Liaisons present: Brenda Fantroy-Johnson, Jon Quitsland

Equity & Inclusion Manager present: Anshu Wahi

Excused: Lynn Beck, Renni Bispham, Eric Stahl

MOTIONS

Motion: I move to approve the revised June 6, 2024 minutes.

Caitlin/Jing: The motion was approved unanimously with one abstention.

Motion: I move to approve the July 8, 2024 agenda.

Caitlin/Jing: The motion was approved unanimously with one abstention.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment submitted.

EQUITY & INCLUSION MANAGER REPORT

Possible COBI HR presentation on City hiring practices.

Anshu offered to invite Kate Brown, head of the city's HR department to explain the city's hiring process, other HR policies and practices, and how a race equity lens applies.

We agreed to have Kate come to the next REAC meeting, which will be Sept. 5. All advisory committees will not meet in August.

New public comment and agenda procedures.

NOTE: This discussion was prompted by an incident when a remote public commenter spewed hate speech during the June 8 REAC meeting.

There was an incident during public comment at a November city council meeting that prompted a revisiting of the public comment procedure. This procedure will now apply to advisory committees, too.

If a person wants to deliver public comment remotely, they must:

1. Notify a city administrator by email (cityadmin@bainbridge.gov) by 4 p.m. the previous day.
Their name will appear on a list before we start the meeting the next day.
2. Show their face
3. Display their true name.

If none of this happens, the commenter can be removed.

Anshu learned in a training that if someone registered for remote public comment beforehand, is showing their face, displaying a name, and delivering hate speech, they legally must be allowed to

speak. If they engage in hate speech, our options include cutting them off at the 3-minute mark and turning our backs. If the quorum is maintained, an individual(s) could leave the room.

City Attorney Jim Haney was consulted. A speaker can be interrupted only if the speaker uses “fighting words” —language where people fear for their physical safety—and they are using that language in person. The thinking is that when someone is using fighting words remotely, that threat can’t happen through a screen. Obviously, hate speech bears emotional trauma, yet it is part of free speech, which means we have to give them their three minutes.

Savanna commented that we, as human beings, can choose whether or not we want to participate. Legally, they're not hurting us through speech. But she doesn't think it's up to anybody else to judge whether we feel safe or not.

Anshu acknowledged that the discrepancy is that there's a very specific legal understanding of what risk to one's physical well-being means, and that can't be proved when somebody is not in the room with you. It's not saying that it's right. Sometimes these laws do not equate to the reality of the people that have to abide by them.

Brenda Fantroy-Johnson is trying to understand why would we allow them to continue for 3 minutes if they're saying hate speech, like how they hate Jews. Why wouldn't we cut them off?

Anshu said that under the advisement of the city attorney, it has to be fighting words to remove somebody.

Savanna questioned if hate speech doesn't qualify as violent or volatile language. Anshu responded that the bar is if the language is a threat to physical safety. With remote public comment, the person isn't in the room with you. They're not inciting a group of people to charge the room. She has the ability to remove them from the meeting only if they don't follow those rules (register before, show face and true name).

Anshu added that a lot of places have put these new rules in place, and there's been a reduction of hate speech during remote public comment. We can go back and ask our city attorney questions. The very same questions that Savanna is asking are what keeps being asked back over and over again because there is a recognition that this language causes emotional harm and causes trauma.

This may warrant a further discussion with the city attorney. What informs the decision that the city attorney gave us. Why are we using the definitions that the city attorney has given us? What are the roots of the law? And are there definitions that better apply to these situations? We, as a group, can decide not to allow any public comment. If we don't want to.

Brenda remembered when we were in lockdown and had all council meetings on Zoom. When those meetings were getting zoom bombed, the FBI got involved. It became a crime to do that. She doesn't know why we're following advice that says it's okay to listen to hate speech and wishes somebody would look into that.

Anshu responded that what happened during the REAC meeting is technically not a zoom bomb. Again, another good question for our city attorney.

Raul wasn't at the REAC meeting when the hate speech occurred and offered to review the recording. He commented that if the outcome is this group having to endure X number of minutes of really destructive public comment that is counter to the mission of this advisory group, he doesn't think that's a good outcome. We should carefully evaluate what the results are of the revised position and the revised rules—and if this continues to be an out a problem.

Anshu wondered if we should form a study group on this. Let's start with the code, then review the articles she will send to REAC. This affects all the advisory committees and city council. Maybe in September, we can come back and have a more substantive conversation.

Uniform city meeting agendas

City agendas are being streamlined to undergo a similar process and have a similar look. Anshu henceforth will create the agendas and share with REAC officers for feedback.

Human Services Funding Task Force

The City is looking for applicants to serve on the Human Services Funding Task Force. REAC members may apply. Please reach out to your networks. See the task force's website and application link.

The City uses a 2-year funding cycle to solicit proposals from local nonprofits seeking city funding for human services and activities that serve the residents. Members of the Human Services Funding Advisory Task Force annually review funding proposals and submits its recommendation to the City Council for its consideration and approval.

Anshu worked with Adam on language that focuses on equity for application criteria and questions. *How they are creating equity in community? Are they serving marginalized populations?* Deadline to apply to be a task force member is 4 p.m., July 31.

ZERO EMISSIONS TASK FORCE UPDATE

The REAC-CCAC joint task force on Zero Emissions examined CCAC's survey to residents and independent commercial landscapers and want to gain greater insights on response rate and demographics. Lynn, Raul, and Jing represent REAC. The joint task force meets again tomorrow. The goal is to make sure that the draft forwarded to council is equitable and it's not exploitive or harmful to the people who'll be affected, both landscapers, and residents.

REAC's advice is being sought on how to approach landscaping partner contractors and other groups of interest for direct input. Their opinions and experiences may not have been reflected in survey results. These insights will help inform COBI and the Council for drafting and approval of an ordinance and assist with outreach and education. There haven't been direct conversations with commercial landscapers who may be possibly impacted by this draft ordinance. One hurdle is that there's no formal landscapers association. Some independent commercial landscapers may not feel comfortable being approached by the City for a variety of reasons, like a negative experience with a government official, they don't a business license, or they are undocumented.

How do you approach this person respectfully and let them tell their own story? A conversation with a few high-level questions seems right. *What do you think about this proposal?* We also don't want to interrupt somebody's work, It should only take a 10 minutes.

Olivia offered that we pass on business cards and contact information for landscapers we know to the task force. Caitlin suggested an order sheet-sized flyer in English and Spanish that gives people an introduction to the effort and who they can contact to opt into conversation because we don't want to interrupt their work.

The goal is to give Blair recommendations in August or September. This date is flexible. The joint task force will work with Anshu, Ellen, and Adam.

TECHNOLOGY TASK FORCE UPDATE

Raul is looking at ways to trim down our SharePoint. He and Olivia recommend paring it down to three folders: minutes, projects, and archive. They want to clean it up so that it is easy to use and so that people can get to documents easily. Because of OPMA, everything we have has to be easily accessed.

Olivia will rewrite the REAC web page. Anshu will update REAC's website with Shannon's help. The work plan will inform most of the website. There will be a link for people to sign up if they want more information. This will activate the ListServe.

Raul volunteered to take a website course on content management for the City.

WORK PLAN UPDATE

Olivia presented REAC's work plan before the City Council. The Council had questions about how it was expected to implement the race equity lens tool kit. There is also some confusion around what it actually is, how it can be used, and where we are in the process. The work plan is on tomorrow's consent agenda.

Anshu explained that the lens is a series of questions that folks are supposed to ask themselves before making decisions, to make sure that what they are doing is racially equitable. She worked with the draft given to her from Renni and Olivia, largely based on GARE's recommendation for racial equity toolkits and lenses, and did further work on it with Scott Winn. The plan was for her and Autumn to pilot the lens, get feedback from city staff, and create a final version to present to Council. Autumn left and we're still looking for a new climate officer. Anshu just recently got the go ahead to just pilot her draft.

The lens is one way of doing the work now so that in 5, 10 years, you don't need such a formalized toolkit because we've shifted the way we think. You don't have to be a DEI person to do it. It's just the way we do things. The metaphor for this is how did we learn how to recycle. When we didn't have recycling, we had to be really intentional about it. We had to read things. We had to make mistakes and figure it out and go back to the drawing board and talk to other people.

Jon counseled that equity has to be addressed explicitly, consciously, throughout the Comprehensive Plan. We haven't really started to do this, but we have to do this, and the better we do it, the more credibility we have with Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC). We need to build credibility because we're way behind in terms of getting the work done from an equity perspective. A draft is supposed to be done by the end of this calendar year. Blair wants to see it done at the 6 months point in 2025. "The more we can apply specific equity considerations to that preferred alternative design, the happier I will be."

Olivia reminded us that a year ago REAC fought to be on the committee that was working on the comprehensive plan to help give it an equity. We were voted down and acknowledge that Jon and Brenda did not vote against REAC being part of the Steering Committee.

In the absence of an August meeting, do you want to review a copy of the draft environmental impact statement.(200 pages) and at least take a look at the executive summary to see what's being laid out in terms of how to use this data?

Olivia shared that she would love for us to start thinking about a way to help the City implement this toolkit in a way that they start to start to be ingrained in equity. What she doesn't want is to say, "Here's the toolkit. Good luck." This is the start to operationalizing how we help Council use this toolkit in a way that is seamless.

Anshu added that Scott Winn has a lot of experience teaching governmental and nongovernmental organizations how to use the tool kit. It is part of Scott's follow-up work with REAC and the Council.. Eventually, we may have REAC working with Council on projects.

JUNETEENTH RECAP

Savanna shared that Juneteenth was a smashing success. Everyone had a good time! According to folks and vendors, there were a mass amount of people and vendors sold out of food, which suggests that we might need some more vendors next year. There were activities for all ages. A beautiful student dancer performance and some others printmaking. Akuyea Vargas did the keynote. Savanna led the panel discussion with Daryl Riley, Renni, and Olivia.

Thank you to BPA, the Moonlight Market, the Senior Center and all performers, volunteers and participants.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES DISCUSSION

Olivia shared that the Guiding Principles Task Force continue to work on a draft. The idea is that the these are more guiding ideas, rather than principles and are much broader than the existing set.

For example, Caitlin came up with an idea about “ ... fostering diversity and inclusion, with the holistic approach that recognizes indigenous and other people of color, have throughout history experienced exclusion from life on Bainbridge Island, and that discrimination is an ongoing challenge to a racially and diverse population.” Two other ideas are about all islanders having equitable access and mobility to community resources and that decisions are made with the smallest voices in mind.

Jon Quitsland shared his wisdom and knowledge of the Guiding Principles origins. It was suggested that this draft be presented first to the Planning Commission because it is by charter the custodian of the Comprehensive Plan. Jon also suggested to the Planning Commission that it undertake a careful study of the major elements of the existing comprehensive plan— where we are now, and identify things that need a fresh look, including how the Guiding Principles are stated. Only Sarah Blossom (former City Councilmember, now serving on Planning Commission) was around when we did the previous examination of the Comprehensive Plan.

Jing wondered why the Guiding Principles are stated below the City Council agenda. She's assuming that these are principles to guide Council's discussions while noting there are items on the agenda that are not specifically related to the Comp Plan. So why use Comp Plan guiding principles for the City Council?.

Jon explained that it hasn't always been that way. He thinks that former City Councilmember Ron Peltier led the charge that the Guiding Principles be out there in the open. The Comprehensive Plan is the guiding document for governance on the City Council. What gets lost is the fact that each of the guiding principles has policies attached to it within the Comprehensive Plan introduction. Some of those guiding policies have conspicuously not been acted upon. The introduction talks about what a comprehensive plan is supposed to be and you gain an understanding of how different it is from the municipal code. It is not enforceable but a foundation for enforceable regulations.

Jing shared that we've been looking at other city council's guiding principles for discussion. They don't have guiding principles like ours but they state a mission or a set of values that can be applied to anything. That's why she's confused about the Comp Plan's principles acting as the guiding principles for all Council business.

CITY COUNCIL MEETING REPORT

Olivia reported that there was shout-out to Juneteenth, a lively discussion about the City giving free pump-out service to boats, and a long discussion on the crematorium. Also, the City will now co-sponsor events by waiving building/grounds use and permit fees. The events include MLK Day, Juneteenth, July 3 & 4, Pride, Day of Preparedness, Halloween, Tree Lighting, and Indigenous People's Day. Also mentioned was that Mayor Joe Deets is on a campaign to save the beavers.

GOOD OF THE ORDER

There were no items discussed.

REPORT OUT ITEMS FOR COUNCIL

Liaisons Jon Quitsland and Brenda Fantroy-Johnson will report out that the REAC and CCAC joint task force has been meeting and collaborating on the proposed Zero Emissions ordinance and is exploring how to do outreach to landscapers and residents.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

/s/ Approved September 5, 2024