



STERLING HEIGHTS CommUNITY Alliance
Minutes of Wednesday, Feb. 16, 2022 Meeting
Location: City Hall

Members Present: Stacy Bahri, Cindy Bjornson, Tim Doppel, Ricardo Harris, Sarah Itoh, Nakia Powell-Thomas, Richard Rubba

Members Absent:

Representing the City: Melanie Davis, Sterling Heights Police Chief Dale Dwojakowski

Meeting called to order at 6 :05 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES :

Motion to approve the meeting minutes of the Jan. 19, 2022 CommUNITY Alliance made by R. Rubba; Seconded by: R. Harris and voted all in favor.

AGENDA ITEMS:

- A. Communication from Citizens** - there was no communication from citizens at this time.
Introduction of Cindy Bjornson, newly appointed member of the CommUNITY Alliance - C. Bjornson provided a brief introduction and background on herself for the other members of the CommUNITY Alliance. She has experience as an ESL teacher, working with many different cultures and has also participated in Pride Month activities. She is passionate about the Alliance's mission and is looking forward to participation in the group.
- B. Presentation by SHPD Chief D. Dwojakowski** - Chief Dwojakowski walked the group through a breakdown of the diversity in our community and our police force as well as many of the efforts they are undertaking to increase the diversity and community representation on our police force. He also shared the all officers now wear body cams and shared specific implicit bias and de-escalation training all our officers must take. He mentioned that these factors and several others led to our department's achieving state accreditation this year. Plenty of time was allowed for Q&A with Alliance members.

- C. Recap of Strategic Planning Presentation** - S. Bahri and R. Harris recounted their experience presenting the Alliance's strategic plan to City Council at the Jan. 25 Strategic Planning session. They both said it was a positive experience, and they were very interested to see the proceedings. M. Davis noted that City Council was impressed with the group's plan and had a lot of positive feedback regarding the commission video that R. Harris and R. Rubba participated in. She noted this video will be used for commission recruitment in the future and thanked everyone for volunteering their time toward these efforts.
- D. Recap of Recent Activities** - M. Davis reminded the group that the Cultural Exchange is taking place on March 11 at the Community Center and if anyone was interested in staffing a table that night to let her know so a table could be reserved. She noted we have a CommUNITY Alliance banner and other materials we can produce for the group to distribute at the table. M. Davis also noted that we have a blind resident who is interested in becoming involved with the Alliance and perhaps could help volunteer at one of the upcoming planned activities where he can interface with residents to share the challenges of living in our community with a physical limitation. She will be calling him with additional information in the coming days and report back to the group with updates.
- E. Assign Tactics and Create Deadlines** - M. Davis recommended forming smaller groups to tackle each of the three main buckets of our strategic plan (Education, Inclusion and Leadership) in between meetings in order to keep momentum. Several members voiced interest in being assigned to one of the three: R. Rubba and S. Bahri and N. Powell-Thomas expressed interest in Education, R. Harris and N. Powell-Thomas expressed interest in Leadership. Others will review and email M. Davis where they think they would be the best fit. In the interest of time, the group agreed to discuss specific assignments via email before the March meeting. The members will review the existing list of tactics and email M. Davis which ones they would like to be assigned. At the March meeting, the group can then identify any gaps that need to have volunteer support.

OLD BUSINESS:

- A. M. Davis said she would review how to handle elections in light of Lea Mitchell's (former chair) resignation from the group. She will report back at the March meeting.
- B. M. Davis confirmed that the group is still interested in having a guest presenter cover the City's recent DE&I efforts from an internal perspective. She will invite someone to cover this material at the March or April meeting.
- C. M. Davis reminded the group that Sterling Edge Awards will be coming soon, and if the group would like to sponsor a CommUNITY Alliance award, they should think about what criteria they'd want to use.

Consensus was that, depending on when the awards are scheduled, the group may work on criteria now but perhaps wait until next year in order to make sure a quality candidate is nominated and selected. M. Davis will confer with the group once a date for this year's awards is solidified.

NEW BUSINESS :

- A. M. Davis noted that the library will be working on an upcoming public art project. The artist would like to use a Mandala pattern, and we will be requesting feedback on the cultural appropriateness of this from the Ethnic Community, CommUNITY Alliance and the local Buddhist Temple before proceeding.
- B. M. Davis provided information to the group that the Historical Commission will be working to update the text on the Holcombe Beach historical marker in front of Heritage Junior High so that the text better reflects both Indigenous perspectives and the archaeological knowledge gained at this important site. They are working with the Michigan History Center for a grant that will pay for a good portion of the sign to be updated and replaced.
- C. M. Davis noted a recent op-ed published in the Macomb Daily in opposition of the non-discrimination ordinance recently passed by City Council. T. Doppel noted that he will author an op-ed of his own in response. M. Davis said there will be residents seeking signatures to put the non-discrimination ordinance issue to a vote, and these residents will likely be at the upcoming Cultural Exchange consistent with the City's Expressive Activities policy.
- D. M. Davis noted that Global Detroit would like several communities to have their city councils pass resolutions recognizing World Refugee Day and National Immigrant Heritage Month in June. The group was in support of working to do this in Sterling Heights.

ADJOURNMENT :

The meeting was adjourned at 7:46 p.m. on a motion from S. Bahri, seconded by R. Rubba and voted all in favor.