

JOHNSON RACIAL JUSTICE AND SOCIAL EQUITY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 2022

Present:

Committee Members: Sophia Berard, Jeff Bickford, Offie Wortham

Others: Jackie Stanton, Kyle Nuse (remote)

Absent: Adelle MacDowell, Shayne Spence

Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

1. Call to Order

Sophia called the meeting to order at 6:51.

2. Review Agenda and Any Adjustments, Changes, Additions

Jackie suggested adding to the agenda discussion on partnering with the Historical Society to update their land acknowledgment and the committee agreed to that. It was also agreed to add discussion of openings on the committee.

3. Approve Meeting Minutes from 8/422

Jeff moved to approve the minutes of August 4, 2022 and the motion was passed.

4. September 8th Pride Celebration

Sophia said she will use the name Jackie suggested for the September 8th Pride celebration – “Small Town, Big Pride” on Front Porch Forum and when she notifies the selectboard and trustees. She already sent a notice to the News & Citizen that just included basic information. Jae Basiliere will be there for story time and Katrine Waugh will be there doing face painting.

Jackie asked if permitting for the Village Green is all set. Jeff said he needs to check on that. It may not be. Jackie said she thinks the village would have said yes. Permitting is a courtesy. It is really for when an event is going to take over the space. Jeff said the event won't compete with the food trucks or create a noise ordinance issue. Jackie said it will only last an hour. There is still time to connect with Steve Hatfield. She thinks he will probably say it is fine. Maybe he can check with the rest of the trustees. In the past when there was a village manager she used to go through the manager for permits, and Steve is acting in that capacity now. Jeff said he can email Steve about it.

Jackie asked if Kyle can still make a flyer. Kyle said she can. Sophia said she can send Kyle the blurb she sent to the News & Citizen. Kyle said Lydia Putvain can print out flyers at the office. She can email the file to Lydia and Lydia can print out flyers and have them ready for Sophia to pick up. Sophia said she will contact Brian Story about getting a notice on Facebook. Kyle said before sending the file to Lydia she will send it to at least one or two people to review late tonight or early tomorrow.

Jackie mentioned that Kyle had talked about inviting other community members and organizations like the college and the Studio Center. Sophia said she will send out some invitations. Jackie said she reached out to one of our representatives and she can also reach out to the other one. Sophia said she will let Kristen MacDowell know about the event so that

she can let people who come to story time know there will be another story time at this event. Jeff said he had just emailed Steve Hatfield.

5. Finalize Prop 5 Statement

The committee reviewed the draft Prop 5 / Article 22 statement and came up with some revised wording that everyone agreed with:

In light of recent attacks on reproductive rights in the Courts and in legislatures around the country, it is crucial to protect these rights for Vermonters and be an example to those around us. These attacks affect all pregnant persons' fundamental rights to access reproductive health, and will have a disproportionately adverse impact on BIPOC and populations living in poverty.

This November, Vermonters will have the opportunity to codify these rights into our State's Constitution by voting in favor of Proposition 5 / Article 22. The Johnson Racial Justice and Social Equity Committee would like to express our support for this ballot measure and recommend the same for all those interested in fighting for equity and justice."

Jeff moved to adopt the Prop 5 / Article 22 statement as read by Sophia and the motion was passed.

Sophia said she will email the statement to everyone on the committee and committee members can figure out through email when and how to get the statement out.

6. Mission Statement: Review and Revision

Sophia said Lydia reached out to her and Jeff about updating the website. She asked if the committee had a mission statement. Our current mission statement says "Racial Justice Committee" so the name of the committee at least needs to be updated. She was not sure if the mission statement needed other revisions. She read the current mission statement and a suggested revision Kyle had sent out.

Kyle said to her the work is about changing systems. She feels the committee should focus on that. Jackie suggested for now just changing the name of the committee and discussing other possible updates later. Jeff said the current mission statement doesn't really capture what the committee does. A good mission statement is probably a couple of sentences. Committee members agreed that the committee should spend more time on the mission statement in the future. Sophia said she will send both the current mission statement and Kyle's suggested revision out to everyone in one document.

7. Update: Public Display Policy

Jeff said he and Margo Warden were able to be at each of the last two selectboard meetings. There is a feeling on the selectboard that if they allow any sort of public display there needs to be a policy on public displays. That is coming from the recent Supreme Court decision. He and Margo have been advocating for a policy that creates a space for appointed town committees to be able to do displays. The selectboard has already made value judgments by creating committees and appointing people to them. The town and village have adopted statements. The inclusivity statement is a value statement we have already made as a town. The selectboard is concerned about getting sued. The majority of the selectboard would

rather see no displays. They are going to develop a policy. He thinks the majority of the board members have declared that they feel the policy should be very limited.

Jackie thanked Jeff and Margo for showing up and advocating so well. She thinks he is right. It looks like there is a 3-2 split on the selectboard. She wishes we had a really robust RJSE committee that could show up en masse and advocate. At the village trustee board meeting the only person there presenting the committee's request was the person who dissented in the vote to make the request. Can we organize who will go and speak at other meetings? Sophia said unfortunately this semester she has a class every Monday and will not be able to go to any selectboard or trustee board meetings. Jeff said he will be at as many as he can attend.

Jeff said he understands where the selectboard is coming from in terms of wanting to make sure the policy is clear. There are examples that allow space for appointed committees. One thing he suggested is that the board could use something like the FBI's list to determine if a request is coming from a hate group, so it is not the town deciding.

Jeff said he was surprised at how quickly the board started so much discussion on a public display policy. Jackie said it is disappointing that they wouldn't have reached out to members of the RJSE committee to let them know they were going to be discussing this. Maybe someone from the committee can ask them to give the committee a heads up if they are going to be talking about this again.

Jackie said the reality is that neither board has been inundated by requests for public displays. The situation is already simple because there have been barely any requests.

Jeff said the selectboard is working on a policy. The general feeling was to have a policy that only US and Vermont state flags can be flown. Sophia asked, at the municipal building? Jackie said some wording she saw talked about all town properties. She read that the selectboard is going to circulate a draft among themselves by email and then bring it to the next meeting. She suggested asking the selectboard to let the committee know if they are going to discuss this.

Kyle said she wishes the selectboard had thought to call in diversity experts. They need some guidance. It is one thing to go to a lawyer, but what about consulting people who wrestle with this for a living? Jackie said she wishes they had checked with other institutions that fly flags other than the US and state flags to ask whether their lawyers say those displays still pass muster.

8. *Check In: ARPA/Equitable and Inclusive Communities Grant Ideas*

Sophia said she thinks we should look into an equity assessment. The cost of that is high compared to the grant. We said we would ask the selectboard to use ARPA funds for an equity assessment but that has not been done yet. Jackie suggested sending an email saying that the committee voted to recommend that use of ARPA funds. Sophia asked if Jackie is suggesting sending it to Brian Story, the selectboard and the trustees. Jackie said yes. Sophia said she will do that.

9. Beautification Mural – Support

Sophia asked if the Beautification Committee needs any support regarding the mural. Kyle said the only support needed is just to show up at the event for the mural on September 18th from 2:00 to 4:00. Everything else is organized.

10. Partnering with Historical Society on Land Acknowledgement

Jackie said she has seen something like a land acknowledgment used by the Historical Society. She thinks it could be improved. Maybe this committee could help. She suggests reaching out to the Historical Society about it. Sophia suggested that Jackie send examples of land acknowledgments she knows of. Others who have examples could send them as well. We can familiarize ourselves with the language that is out there and talk about this more next time.

11. Committee Openings

Jeff moved to accept Raven Pfaff's resignation. She emailed Brian Story in July officially resigning and she forwarded that email to Jeff tonight. **The motion was passed.**

Jeff said he would like to email Brian to ask if posting the vacancy can be on the selectboard agenda. We have to wait until receiving Adelle's resignation to accept it and fill that vacancy.

12. Other Business

Jackie said she, Offie and Margo attended the *Black is the Body* Emily Bernard reading at the Studio Center and it was great. We were lucky to have that in our town. Cornel West is coming to the Flynn on October 1st and she is going. The tickets are affordable .

13. Adjourn

Jeff moved to adjourn at 8:18 and the motion was passed.

Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths