

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

**Present:**

Committee Members: Jeff Bickford, Shayne Spence, Jackie Stanton

Others: Jasmine Yuris

**Absent:** Sophia Berard, Offie Wortham

**Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.**

**1. Call to Order**

Jeff called the meeting to order at 6:48.

**2. Approve Meeting Minutes from 11/3/22**

**Shayne moved to approve the minutes of November 3, 2022 and the motion was passed.**

**3. Committee Vacancy – Johna Keefe**

Johna Keefe was not present to meet with the committee.

**4. Review Agenda and Any Adjustments, Changes, Additions**

Jackie added discussion of Xusana Davis's new statewide program, IDEAL Vermont (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Action and Leadership.)

**5. Spring and Summer Calendar**

Jeff said he doesn't have any updates yet on the possibility of screening the documentary and hasn't heard from NVU about anything they have planned. He was thinking of screening the movie for Martin Luther King Jr. Day. Jackie noted that the movie is rather long, 1 hr. 58 minutes. Jasmine said Democracy Now had a good movie on their website that she watched with her kids for MLK Jr. Day.

Shayne asked if we could look at a grant for a speaker for MLK Jr. Day. Jeff said he thinks it could be challenging getting a grant that quickly. If we want to get a speaker or something else that would involve more advance planning for Juneteenth we may want to have action items now related to that.

Jackie asked if the college has done anything for MLK Jr. Day the past few years. Jeff said it used to be the first day of classes, but then the schedule changed so it is not as good a time to plan events. He will talk to the person at the college who will know if anything is planned.

Jasmine said she loved when LN read to kids at the Juneteenth event. The fresh fruit was nice. Shayne said last year we talked about having other food. He had suggested Harmony's Kitchen, which is owned by a black woman. With enough notice she should be able to put together food for our event.

Jackie asked how much money we have for events. Jeff said he needs to get our balance. Jasmine asked if any unspent funds will roll over to the next year. Jeff said he would assume not. Jasmine said the committee could request that. The bread oven committee does. Jackie

said the Conservation Commission does too. Many committees do. Jeff said he will get the breakdown from Rosemary of how much money we have.

Jeff said we were planning to try to get grant funding. We had talked about applying for grant funds for an equity audit. He would like to draft a grant application around program-related expenses for Juneteenth, a film screening, etc. to show that we are keeping up our end of the bargain with fundraising and grant raising. Jackie agreed with that idea. She said we should also remember the rolling Vermont Humanities grants.

Shayne said there are speakers we could get locally, like Kiah Morris, who would be less expensive than national speakers. Jeff said Kiah Morris would cost \$5K or 6K, if she is willing to come. A nationally known speaker would cost at least \$50K. Shayne said he was thinking of the \$10K range. Jeff said no one anyone has heard of and would come out to see would be available at that price point.

Jasmine said she likes the idea of building off last year's foundation for Juneteenth. Jeff said he loves the idea of seeing if Harmony's Kitchen can cater. Shayne agreed to reach out to Harmony's Kitchen. Jeff asked if we want LN back or if we want to reach out to someone else – maybe a poetry reading? Jackie said we could have both. Shayne said he likes the idea of getting kids involved with a poetry writing contest and an opportunity to come read their poems. Jasmine said live music would be fun. The committee discussed possible musicians. Jackie agreed to look into music options. Jasmine suggested calling the event a block party and having a demonstration on Route 15 and a celebration on Legion Field. Jackie suggested we might want to apply for a Vermont Humanities grant. Their Rapid Response grants are up to \$1K and they have project grants of up to \$5K.

Jackie suggested we could have a big birthday cake for MLK Jr. Day, and also provide helpful resources. Jeff suggested the RJSE Committee could have its January meeting on MLK Jr. Day. There could be cake, conversation and information about local resources. It could be an opportunity for people to learn more about the RJSE Committee. Shayne said it could be billed as a community conversation. Jeff said he will plan on this. We may also still want to meet on January 5.

**6. Budget for FY2024**

Jeff said he did not know the budget was due. Sophia and he have not talked about the budget for next year. With multiple vacancies and life happening, we have not had as robust a calendar this year as we had been hoping. He proposes submitting the same budget amount as last year. He doesn't want to request a big increase until the committee has more to show. Jackie asked if Jeff can send out the information on how much we got last year and how much we have spent once he gets it. **Jackie moved to request the same budget as last year and the motion was passed.**

Jackie noted that the committee chairs will probably have to write up something for the town report soon. Jasmine asked if Jeff got an email about Monday's budget meeting with the selectboard. Jeff said he did not. He and Sophia will collaborate on the committee report. He knows Sophia got something about the budget because she mentioned budgets were due, but he doesn't know how much lead time she got.

## **7. *Social Media Presence***

Jeff said the committee wanted to put out a statement related to Article 22 on town social media platforms and Brian Story was hesitant – he thinks correctly so – because town social media platforms can't align with a specific position on a political topic. But a lot of the things this committee works on are, or are seen as, inherently political. He asked the selectboard, what if we had our own social media presence? What would be the guardrails? Other committees and town entities have their own social media presence. He asked if we could use a platform like that and put out a statement not telling anyone how to vote but telling them how an issue, based on research, could impact people who live locally. He got tentative approval but the board suggested doing some research, for instance with VLCT, to make sure it would be okay.

Jeff does not have the capacity to manage social media. He doesn't want us to take that on unless a voting member does have capacity and willingness to run it. Jackie said it sounds like there are a lot of hoops to jump through. They want us to run what we post past VLCT and the selectboard before posting. Shayne said he doesn't think it should be just one person deciding what to post, but a couple or a few people. We would have to be consistent and regular about posting if we had a social media account. It may not be worth it if we don't have regular content. Jasmine said the only reason she would find it beneficial for the RJSE Committee to have a social media account would be for us to share articles, resources and info on events. But there are potentially other ways to do that. She thinks we should just focus on eating cake in the same room as people rather than creating a 2-dimensional relationship with our neighbors. The committee agreed to table this discussion for now.

## **8. *Update – Who We Are Screening***

Jeff had not yet looked into pricing for screening the Who We Are movie, so Jackie offered to do it.

## **9. *Other Business***

Jackie said she went to the meeting about health equity grants. Grant applications are due on December 9. The state is giving people \$75 gift cards in exchange for telling their stories about barriers to healthcare. They had up to \$7K to spend on these gift cards and have only spent around \$2K.

Jackie asked if there has been any word on a town display policy. Jeff said he hasn't heard anything else on it. He was not able to go to the second selectboard meeting last month.

Jackie said she wants to keep the land and labor acknowledgment on the front burner. She asked if Sophia had mentioned hearing anything back from the Historical Society. Jeff said she has not mentioned it.

Jackie brought up the mission statement. Jeff said the mission statement we presented had a section with example activities and the selectboard wanted to eliminate that section in order to be consistent with feedback they had just given to the Beautification Committee. Jeff felt the remainder would still be consistent with our intent. Jackie said someone commented that the part about disrupting and actively changing oppressive systems seemed like a challenge and asked if there was a kinder way to put it because it seemed negative. Margo Warden was

there and she said she sees that as a positive statement. Shayne said challenge can be a good thing.

Jasmine said the Abenaki flag is still flying at the village green. Shayne said he has not followed up on that, but he will tomorrow. Jasmine asked if the Black Lives Matter flag will go back up after the Abenaki flag comes down. Shayne said that is what we talked about before.

#### **10. Vermont IDEAL Program**

Jackie said she looked into the IDEAL state initiative. It looks exciting. It offers money, resources and inter-community cooperation. It would allow us to work with other communities in our area. Maybe we could pool resources to bring in a speaker. Jackie said it is for selectboard or other board members. Maybe a member of the selectboard and a member of the village trustees would be interested in participating. Jasmine said the information they put out says they want participants to be people who have authority. Shayne said they have a readiness quiz for communities. The first question is: “Is the community’s rulemaking body interested/willing to take an active role in advancing social equity?” Can we answer yes? Jackie said the selectboard and trustees created this committee. Shayne read the rest of the questions. **Shayne moved to request that the selectboard explore becoming a member of the Vermont IDEAL initiative and the motion was passed.**

#### **11. Other Business**

Jasmine asked if there was anyone besides Johna interested in serving on the committee. Jeff said not that he is aware of. Shayne said Johna did not come tonight due to a health issue. She is still interested. The committee agreed to table any action on filling the vacancy until Johna can meet with the committee. Jeff asked Shayne to encourage her to reach out to him or Sophia directly.

Jackie mentioned that Brenda Churchill and Tabitha Moore are people we could possibly get as speakers.

#### **12. Public Comment**

Shayne said he would like to reflect and hold space for the victims of the Club Q shooting and express a sense of helplessness in thinking about things that are happening in the world right now, a feeling that there is only so much we can do about it, and appreciation that we are all here and thinking about it. Jackie said a simple thing we can do is put a flag on the municipal building that tells people, “We are with you.” Some people have the feeling that these things happen in other places, but queer people here also feel afraid. An event like this affects people. It makes her sad that we can’t even get a flag here. It is simple and would be a support and affirmation. Shayne said we have people who disagree about why this type of violence is happening. It seems obvious to him that when there is a constant stream of demonization and hate, someone will be convinced by it. We can’t get a flag up here because people don’t see why we need to make that statement. Jasmine said they may not see the connection. They think it can’t happen here. Jackie said some people ask why we would bring that here, because they think everything is fine here.

#### **13. Adjourn**

**Shayne moved to adjourn at 8:02 and the motion was passed.**

*Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths*