

JOHNSON RACIAL JUSTICE AND SOCIAL EQUITY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2023

Present:

Committee Members: Sophia Berard, Shayne Spence, Jackie Stanton, Offie Wortham

Others: Jasmine Yuris

Absent: Jeff Bickford, Johna Keefe

Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

1. Call to Order

Sophia called the meeting to order at 6:34.

2. Review Agenda and Any Adjustments, Changes, Additions

No changes to the agenda were needed.

3. Approve Meeting Minutes from 1/17/23

Shayne moved to approve the minutes of January 17, 2023 and the motion was passed.

4. February – Black History Month

Sophia said she didn't know if the committee wanted to do anything for Black History Month. Shayne said he wonders if any statements about Black History Month have been put out on social media by the selectboard in the past. If so, we could encourage them to do that again. Jackie said the State of Vermont Human Rights Commission and Office of Racial Equity are doing social media posts every day for Black History Month. If we had a Facebook page we could do something like that. Maybe we should revisit the idea of the RJSE Committee having a Facebook page and push back against the idea of this committee being treated differently from other committees and having to have all posts approved by the selectboard. She feels it wouldn't be that hard to do. It wouldn't take that much time.

Shayne said he likes the idea, but the question of how to do it is difficult. The first question is who will have administrator privileges. Jackie suggested that a couple of committee members could. Shayne asked how we select the people who can post and what we empower them to post. He thinks there are a lot of questions. Depending on how we set it up, it could be a good or bad idea. One or two of us could be empowered to put our own opinions out there on a page that represents the group and the town and that could present problems. Jackie suggested that if there are 2 or 3 administrators maybe they could decide among themselves what should be posted. They could police themselves.

Sophia said she thinks it would be great for the committee to have a Facebook page. She doesn't know if other committees have to share with the selectboard what they want to post. Jackie said the Conservation Commission doesn't. They don't even share it with each other.

Shayne said he knows that he and Jackie, for instance, might have different opinions about what to post or how to say it. He thinks there should be some discussion about things that are posted to ensure that all are comfortable with the language. Jackie agreed. Sophia said she thinks committee members would understand that the committee page was their personal page for their personal opinions.

Shayne said he would love for the committee to figure out at a future meeting what we would want our social media policy to be. It would be good to show the selectboard how we are going to police ourselves.

Sophia said at the next meeting we can have a larger social media policy discussion. In the meantime, she suggested we could forward the posts Jackie was talking about and suggest that they be shared on the town Facebook page. And maybe someone could take one of the posts and put it on Front Porch Forum a couple of times this month, citing where it came from. Shayne suggested sharing the one with a graphic that talks about how people can sign up for the posts and weekly raffles. If people see that and engage with it, it will connect them with other Black History Month content. He can email Brian the URL of the post so he can share it.

Sophia said she heard part of an On Point piece on the radio the other day that was about whether community DEI trainings are effective. Jackie said she listened to most of it. It was mostly about mandatory DEI trainings. It talked about possible reasons they may backfire. The piece is called Rethinking Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Training. (*Jasmine Yuris arrived at 6:49.*)

5. **Screening**

Jackie found out that we can get rights to an online virtual screening of Who We Are for \$200. Sophia suggested it would be nice if we could have people gather in one room to watch it. Jackie said she isn't sure if that is allowed or not.

Jackie said because the film is long, her idea is that we could have the virtual screening one day and a group discussion of the film another day. Maybe we could get someone to facilitate the discussion. Her first thought was Eric Hutchins, because as a teacher he often facilitates discussions like this. Maybe he could tap into the school and students could watch the movie. She can also think of several people from the college who might be able to facilitate.

Shayne suggested finding out for sure if everyone who watches the movie during the virtual screening is supposed to be watching on their own or if there could be multiple people gathered in one room. Maybe we could rent a place like the gym and project it for a group. Sophia asked if Jackie can find that out.

It was agreed to plan to have the screening on February 28 if the organization gets back to Jackie soon enough about the requirements for a virtual screening, with discussion about the movie at the RJSE Committee meeting the first Thursday in March. If we can show the movie to a group in person we can use the gym or Jenna's House.

Shayne moved to approve spending up to \$300 to pay for licensing for Who We Are and to plan on a screening of the movie on February 28, Jackie seconded and the motion was passed.

6. **Juneteenth – Food**

Sophia said Lea Ann Macrery of My Favorite Things said she hopes to have catering up and going for the summer but she is not sure she will be ready by Juneteenth. Sophia told her she would bring it to the committee but that she assumed the committee would want a commitment. She reached out to another place in Burlington that was recommended to her, but she hasn't

heard back and their website says they are temporarily closed. Jackie said Marsala Salsa is opening in Johnson in 2 weeks. She wonders if they could provide food. It would be nice to support a local business run by someone of color.

Shayne said we need to let Harmony's Kitchen know by tomorrow to get the prices she gave us locked in. Sophia said the oven committee is interested in making something sweet for Juneteenth so the oven would be going and could be used to warm up food from Harmony's Kitchen after someone brings it back from Burlington. The committee discussed what food should be ordered if we use Harmony's Kitchen. Sophia suggested removing corn muffins and cornbread from the list Shayne had gotten prices on. The oven committee could make cornbread instead. That would bring the total price under \$2K.

Shayne moved to give Harmony's Kitchen a deposit of no more than \$536.13, Sophia seconded and the motion was passed. (*Offie left at 7:20.*)

7. Grants

Sophia said Johna emailed her and said she started the grant application process and can talk to the committee about it at the next meeting. She can reach out to Offie for any help she needs as she finishes up the applications. Sophia will let her know the expenditure for food from Harmony's Kitchen has been approved and ask her how the grant application work is going.

8. Town Website Updates

Sophia said the RJSE Committee's page on the town website has been updated. It now shows the mission statement and community agreements and the membership list has been updated.

9. Other Business

Jackie said the Highgate selectboard adopted the Declaration of Inclusion that a group is trying to get towns around the state to adopt, then rescinded it because they didn't like something on the group's website. They were worried about opening themselves up to some litigation. They said they didn't rescind the Declaration of Inclusion because of what it says, but because of content on the website.

The committee discussed some recent incidents with fans at school sports competitions. Some have involved racist comments. Jackie said there was a recent article in Seven Days about Black athletes' experiences in sports in Vermont.

10. Adjourn

Shayne moved to adjourn at 7:32 and the motion was passed.