

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

Present:

Committee Members: Sophia Berard, Shayne Spence, Offie Wortham, Jeff Bickford (7:12 to 7:17)

Others: Kyle Nuse, Bug Pericles, Fatima AbuZahrieh, Elijah Alexander

Absent: Johna Keefe, Jackie Stanton

Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

There was no quorum initially but those present began an informal discussion of the agenda items.

Kyle Nuse said she came to talk about a grant she is helping Johnson Elementary school write to hire Juniper Creative Arts, a BIPOC family-run art organization that can help create a new public mural. They have been doing artist-in-residency programs at elementary schools and Kyle approached the JES principal to ask about having one at JES. She has been working with Maria Davies, the diversity, equity and inclusion coordinator for Lamoille North School District. An artist will come to the school for 3-4 weeks. They will seek input from students. They work mainly with 6th graders. Their murals are always centered around Black people and they have an environmental message too. JES will come up with their own theme. They will get input from staff and faculty but the project will be student led. For 3 days in late May or early June community members will be invited to draw, paint or write contributions to be collaged into the mural. There will be education around racial justice and environmental justice issues. The other schools in the area that had Juniper Creative Arts come in said it was an incredible experience. At JES it is hard to find a spot for a mural that is visible to both kids and the public. The location identified is the wall by the entrance near the playground. It will be more visible to students than the public, but many people use that entrance for community events like town meeting or basketball games. The grant is \$15K. The total cost for a 3-week in-person residency and materials is \$25K. Kyle is here to ask for letter of support for the grant application. The \$10K not covered by this grant will be covered by another grant Maria Davies is writing.

Fatima AbuZahrieh asked if the grant is going to Juniper Creative Arts. Are they a 501(c)(3)? Kyle said Juniper Creative Arts is a mother, father and adult daughter. The grant is through the Vermont Arts Council. The funding will pay Juniper Creative Arts. She doesn't think they are a nonprofit. The grant application is due March 15.

Kyle mentioned that the Johnson Beautification Committee has 5 mini-grants they give out every year. The application process is open right now. There is an easy application. The \$200 mini-grants are for anyone who lives in a high visibility area for people walking, biking or driving by who wants to do a beautification project on the property they own or rent. Sophia asked if people have to live in the village to get the grants. Kyle said last year the committee said that specifically. This year they are including people who live outside village boundaries but giving priority to people whose properties are highly visible.

Sophia said Jackie got in touch with the production team about the rights for "Who We Are." We were trying to get a community screening but Jackie found out that for \$250 we can only get a license for a

virtual screening, not an in-person group viewing. Shayne said we could pay more for rights for an in-person screening but he thinks the cost is at least double. He doesn't think doing just a virtual screening is anywhere near the same. Sophia suggested letting this lie for now. Maybe we can discuss it again at the next meeting.

Shayne said he got an updated invoice for the Juneteenth food. The total is around \$1600 and the deposit is around \$455.

Elijah Alexander asked how the committee is planning to promote the Juneteenth event. Sophia said we will probably have posters and advertise it on Front Porch Forum, Facebook and the town webpage. We may have an ad in the News & Citizen. Elijah said he thinks it is important to include aspects of the community that might not be interested to encourage cultural plurality. Kyle suggested the elementary school's weekly newsletter to families might be a good place to advertise it.

Jeff joined the meeting by phone at 7:12, making a quorum.

Sophia summarized Kyle's request regarding the Juniper Creative Arts mural project.

Shayne moved to provide a letter of support for the grant to fund the Juniper Creative Arts project, Offie seconded and the motion was passed.

Shayne moved to approve the minutes of February 2, 2023, Offie seconded and the motion was passed.

Jeff left at 7:17.

With a quorum no longer present, the group continued informal discussion of agenda items.

Sophia said Johna has been working on grants for the food for the Juneteenth event.

Shayne said the item we asked to have posted on the town Facebook page was posted with no pushback at all. If we want to explore creating our own Facebook page, he thinks things like that can easily be posted. If we are going to ask for our own Facebook page, having our own social media policy might reassure the selectboard and generate trust.

Sophia said committees can have tables at town meeting. The committee discussed what to have available at the RJSE table and who could be there.

Bug Pericles said there are a lot of kids' summer camps on the NVU campus throughout summer. They may be interested in the Juneteenth celebration. Shayne said he wonders if we can talk to Jae Basiliere and have a better way of communicating with the people organizing the summer camps. Bug said Jen Stefanski does the planning for the camps. Sophia said she will reach out to Jae and Jen.

The meeting ended at 7:30.

Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths