

**APPROVED MINUTES OF THE
COMMUNITY RELATIONS COMMISSION
November 17th, 2021 – 7:00 PM
VIRTUAL MEETING**

PRESENT: Comms. Brewer, Flowers, Quinn, Sakiyama, Rodriguez, Puentes, Bencola, Terretta

ABSENT: Comm. Hughes

STAFF: Cedric Melton

CALL TO ORDER: 7:05PM

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: Comm. Terretta motioned for agenda approval with Comm. Sakiyama providing a second. All were in favor.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

In order to facilitate a presenter on sustainability efforts by the Village of Oak Park, new business was presented first, followed by old business.

NEW BUSINESS: Marcella Bondie Keenan, Sustainability Coordinator for the Village of Oak Park, presented on the Climate Plan. Her purpose was to inform the CRC about the plan and the strategies with businesses and residents to engage the entire Oak Park community. Engagement will be via special events around the Village of Oak Park; interactive web sites, surveys, a community input kit; affinity groups; and commissions. Marcella reached out CRC to be part of the conversation to create an equity-focused plan and invited those CRC members who would like to directly engage with the planning to contact her. The Village of Oak Park board plans to vote on the climate plan in June. Marcella answered questions about the GRAEF's qualifications as the third party overseeing the equity part of the plan. Per Marcella, the web site for public interaction is still being developed with a completion 11/30/2021.

Comms. Terretta, Puentes, and Rodriguez shared their positive opinions as it pertains to looking at the community engagement plan as a model to be repeated as the broad and deep equity mindset is cultivated; gaining a better understanding of who climate change effects; and corralling people who are interested in climate change or who want to be involved.

OLD BUSINESS:

a. REVIEW OF VOP BOARD GOALS

Chair Brewer opened discussion on board goals for 2022 and highlighted the strong equity focus in the board goals. Discussion took place regarding the board goals and CRC involvement with activities outlined in the goal document. Chair Brewer focused on what is in the work plan, what can still go forward as a worthwhile endeavor, and then new ideas to add to the work plan. The commission members worked through each line item.

b. DISCUSSION ON CRC WORKPLAN

Line item one: Dinner and Dialogue projects: Chair Brewer asked the commission to consider if the Dinner and Dialogue activity should continue. The difference between Dinner and Dialogue and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion was distinguished. Comm. Puentes suggested that some form of the Dinner and Dialogue activity is needed but the budget should be reduced and still get the desired outcome. Comms. Puentes and Terretta will work together to reconstruct the Dinner and Dialogue project and have something by the December meeting. Comm. Puentes will send the Dinner and Dialogue questions to everyone as a reference. Question was raised about how the information for Dinner and Dialogue was used. The information is confidential and stays within the group.

In determining how the Community Relations Commission (CRC) can work through the items on the work plan, Comm. Bencola offered that the work of the CRC can be viewed within three buckets: interpersonal, institutional, and systemic/structural. Chair Brewer and Comm. Terretta will put together a narrative for the CRC which explains how all of the line items tie in together to meet the CRC's mission and goals, using the three buckets approach.

Line item two: CRC's role in participating in public events gives exposure and allows the community to see the CRC and learn what the CRC represents. The CRC may also support other community events like outreach for small grants which can be used to help other organizations get pushed out to the community as well. Comms. Scott and Flowers will work together with line item two, determining if all of what is on the line item necessary, if it should be more general, and what the budget should be spent on if there is to be a budget.

Line item three: Per Chair Brewer, line item three is to be determined as Trustee Enyia was to follow-up with VOP Human Resources Director, Kira Tchang and invite her to the meeting. Chair Brewer will have a conversation with Kira and review the VOP's goals. This line item is considered as structural/systemic. Comm. Bencola offered a supportive statement for the CRC's role for promoting and supporting the VOP's Board's goals. The CRC can perform other supportive activities such as workshops, information sessions, etc., in an effort to support the VOP's adoption of the VOP's racial equity plan. Details of these activities are to be determined.

Line item four: Comm. Rodriguez suggested that line item four can be combined with line item two.

Line item five: Suggested that line item five be a separate outgrowth of line item two. Comm. Terretta asked about the CRC looking at a multiple-year plan by laying a foundation which will add on the ability of the CRC to make recommendations to the Village of Oak Park.

The Commission combined line items five, seven, and eight. Comms. Hughes and Quinn were asked to work on these items.

Line item six: There are other organizations that are actually doing the work and the CRC wants to be able to support them. Chair Brewer suggested that line item six be a standalone item, just as it is, with an increase in the budget to support its activities.

Chair Brewer tasked each group with determining a budget amount. Comm. Terretta volunteered to look at the amount of the grants awarded by other commissions.

Comm. Flowers asked about the liaisons for GARE and the library as these were ideas from a previous meeting. Per Chair Brewer the ideas are still on the table but it takes time. Chair Brewer suggested that he will reach out to Kira Tchang so that Kira can give ideas and then the CRC can adopt/reverse the work plan. Comm. Terretta suggested that if Trustee Enyia is the liaison for the library, perhaps his expertise can be shared with the CRC, although he is also the liaison for the CRC and VOP Trustee Board. Comm. Rodriguez agreed to reach out to the library, park district, school board, and township.

RECAP: New ideas to add to the work plan include the narrative for the CRC and the role that CRC plays in supporting the VOP and the DEI plan.

Comm. Flowers asked about high school students being on the CRC. It was acknowledged that in times past there have been high school students. However, Chair Brewer suggested that the CRC gets up and running before adding high school students.

Commission Bencola asked if the CRC or any commission have anything to do with the search for a village manager. Response: any individual Comm. can make comments but not the full commission itself. Comm. Flowers thinks that Comm. Hughes can add a lot of value to the search for a village manager. Comm. Flowers will reach out to Trustee Enyia.

ADJOURN: Motioned by Comm. Sakiyama, second by Comm. Bencola at 8:57pm.