

**REGULAR RACE EQUITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING  
MARCH 17, 2022**

**MEETING MINUTES**

**CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL**

Co-chair Savanna Rovelstad called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Present: REAC members Deanna Martinez, Eric Stahl, Jing Fong, Peggi Erickson, Renni Bispham, Savanna Rovelstad. Liaisons Brenda Fantroy-Johnson and Clarence Moriwaki.

COBI Staff: Ellen Schroer

Excused: Rennie Bispham, Sue Wilmot

**MEETING MINUTES/MEETING AGENDA**

Amendment to March 3 minutes: Change dates for Bremerton Race Equity Summit from March 31 to March 25 and 26.

**MOTION** I move to approve the meeting minutes from March 3 as amended.

**Peggi/Eric:** The motion carried unanimously. 6-0.

**MOTION** I move to approve the meeting minutes from March 3 as written.

**Peggi/Deanna:** The motion carried unanimously. 6-0.

No conflict of interest was submitted.

**PUBLIC COMMENT.** No public comment.

**RECOGNITION OF SERVICE: JAMES FRIDAY**

Savanna: You were my mentor first and foremost. It was really an honor to be able to learn from you. I'm going to be very sad to see you go.

Brenda: Thank you for walking the walk with me, with all of us, really, and for being the loudest voice sometimes in the room and on the street. Nobody can lead a march like you James and I really appreciate everything you've done to help us all try to move this needle forward.

Deanna: I find myself consistently going back to the foundation that you all put down and using that to inform me of how to move forward. I just want to give my deepest appreciation to you and hopefully, you're cool with me, calling you from time to time to get that history firsthand. To make sure that the narrative stays clear for everyone. That we have a history that we can reflect on, and that can help inform us how to move forward.

Peggi: I just wanted to thank you so much for your leadership over all those years. I know it wasn't easy and I know there were really rough patches. Thank you for all the times that you

spoke truth to power. It's because of you that I'm here. It's because of you that all of us are here.

Jing: Your audacity and no apologies approach is something that I hold dear to my heart. There's this quote from Toni Morrison. It says, "Want to fly? You gotta give up the s\*\*\* that weighs you down. It's time for you to fly, James, and I can't wait to see you flying on your bike down Winslow.

James: It has been quite the journey we've taken together. REAC is in itself its own little community and I'm hoping that you guys will hold dear to your hearts the principles that we've set forth and to hold the city council accountable to allow REAC to do the work that they've asked us to do. It has been one of the greatest achievements in my life.

Eric: It has been a pleasure of working with you. I have never not learn something in speaking to you. I appreciate your passion and commitment to this board.

#### **PRESENTATION: AKUYEA KAREN VARGAS ON JUNETEENTH**

Akueya represents Juneteenth Freedom Festive for Kitsap County. We have been doing this for 19 years. Juneteenth is now an official holiday in the state of Washington and nation. We want to do a unified collective celebration, especially with Bainbridge Island because Bainbridge Island has been characterized as not wanting to be a part of our county. We want to model that we can stand together in unity, at least for this monumental celebration. We want to celebrate it in unity and celebrate it in love.

Our committee will be sending letters to cities, city councils, REACs, and commissioners to participate. We want the Bainbridge Island REAC to take the lead in unifying the community to come and celebrate.

There may be many different celebrations going on in the Kitsap communities, but Akueya would like to get support for this countywide celebration, similar to how King County has a big MLK celebration starting at Garfield High School.

Event will be Sat. June 18 at Evergreen Park in Bremerton. Plan is to convene at the park and have a Mardi Gras march.

We're sending letters out to all the school districts for their bands, cheerleaders, or stepping teams to lead the march.

We want REAC representatives to join our meeting this coming Monday with Bremerton city officials. Akueya will send the link. Savanna plans to attend. Email Savanna if you'd like to join her and be her backup.

There are plans for Bainbridge to have a Juneteenth celebration on Sunday, June 19. Count on Akuyea to support this event. We want to support one another.

### **SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION PLAN RECOMMENDATION**

Last REAC meeting, Public Works Director Chris Wierzbicki presented the sustainable transportation plan. City council has asked for REAC's consideration and recommendation on one of the three options.

Eric: I don't feel particularly qualified to make a recommendation or express a preference among these three options. I appreciate that the city reached out. It looks to like the City took equity-related considerations out of the GIS and overlaid different statistics and demographics to look at where the need and most resources were needed.

We've got to say something as a committee. For me, it would be something along the lines of saying that we don't have a preference among the three choices and we encourage you to keep developing tools for evaluating city decisions through an equity lens, particularly in the area of communications, making sure that you are not just having public forums where the motivated show up but that you're actively reaching out to any and all people who could be affected.

Jing: Rather than endorse a specific scenario, I would recommend that we make a recommendation for outreach. When Renni asked Chris if he or others with the city had spoken directly with communities that are impacted, particularly BIPOC communities or those with disabilities, or lower-income people on the equity community mapping, the answer was no.

I would recommend that the city identify and reach out to marginalized communities for their direct input on the proposed plans, for example, the bike subsidy plan and for the all-ages and abilities programming, and for engaging with the same communities once programs are approved. The notion that if you build it, they will come doesn't always work, even with the best of intentions.

Peggi: A lot of these communities that we're speaking of are located in Winslow. I endorse what Jing and Eric are suggesting, that we recommend that they reach out to these communities.

Savanna: The only scenario I saw that was really worth really looking at as Scenario Two because of the access folks have to transportation on the island. This is all about connecting centers, bike lanes, making it safer for people to walk home if you're getting off at your bus stop on the highway. It focuses more on folks who are not driving and that's why this one seemed to me a little more of an equitable plan. I also agree that the city should definitely go out into the community.

**MOTION** I move that we let Jing capture in writing what we have discussed here for our recommendation.

**Peggi/Eric:** The motion carried unanimously 6-0.

Procedure is for Jing to send the recommendation to Ellen. REAC members can look at the packet when it's published on Friday afternoon.

## **SUBCOMMITTEE PROGRESS**

### **A. Law and Policy**

Eric We have started a discussion about the City Council referral to us for looking at the police facilities through a race equity lens. We got hamstrung by a combination of Renni's unavailability and our reduced quorum. We're not ready to discuss yet.

Jing: Only thing I wanted to add was that I had further questions for Chris, Blair and Ellen— and the liaisons were included in that—as we try to come up with suggestions for how we might make recommendations with regards to the police court facility with a race equity lens. Some of the ideas we've heard go beyond the building. They have to do with how BIPD engages with the community, whether it be a citizens academy or a community oversight committee.

It's just kind of fuzzy to us in terms of what this means. Does it apply just to the building? Does it apply to the police department? What is it? My Inquiry had to do with the plans. A bid went out a couple weeks ago. Does that mean the plans are final? Were those plans based on community input, speaking to both police and court operations, the people who are going to be using the building or administering in the building? The architect's prior experience with designing such a facility or comparing it to other cities?

I didn't get a firm yes or no if the plans were final but there were inferences that they are final because an ad went out for bid. I was told that the plans were developed based on the architects experience and with input from police and court folks who would be using the building.

Peggi: This topic came up that BI ERACE team meeting last week. People talked about wanting substantive equity actions around the police station. Apparently Bainbridge Island used to have a public safety committee, which was disbanded. It's my understanding that they're going to expand the footprint of building to make a lunch room. I haven't gone down to City Hall, yet to actually look at the plans to see if that's true, but it seems to me that one of the ways we might save money is by not expanding the 18,000 square feet space. I wouldn't want to give you the wrong information so I'll get back to you on that.

Deanna and Peggi worked on language for recruitment. Peggi read the following draft: Whereas the City of Bainbridge Island has found that in order to dismantle systemic and structural racism within our government, community local leaders must commit to long-term action plan that recognizes the differences between individual, institutional and structural racism, as well as the history and current reality of inequities for all marginalized groups. Failure to make and follow through with the commitment will jeopardize the development and success of race, racial equity on Bainbridge Island.

And, whereas the City of Bainbridge Island established the Race Equity Advisory Committee to provide informed recommendations to the city council on programmatic, community, and legislative options to address and rectify systemic and structural racism and bias within government and law enforcement.

Therefore, REAC recommends the City take the following steps immediately to ensure that people from traditionally marginalized communities feel welcome to apply for positions, both within the city staff and on city committees.

The current situation: The City of Bainbridge Island has language mandated by law. Equal opportunity employment law in its recruitment outreach, in applications. The city also encourages marginalized communities to apply in documents, like the city managers report.

To our knowledge, neither the human resources department nor the city council have specific equity goals in regards to filling positions on city staff or city committees.

REAC recommends that, as a first step in diversifying staff and residents of BI involvement, the Council mandates that the city include voluntary language in its recruitment, outreach, and its applications for both city staff and city committees that stresses the city's desire to recruit people from traditionally marginalized and historically oppressed communities.

REAC recommends that the City include language in its recruitment, outreach, and on its applications for both city staff and city committees that states, the City is actively seeking individuals with a personal commitment to transformational justice and equity.

The City strongly encourages people from traditionally marginalized communities and historically oppressed groups, i.e. people of color, immigrants, people with disabilities, trans and gender non-conforming people to apply.

By adding additional and specific language to its recruiting outreach and applications for both city staff and city committees that specifically encourages people in marginalized groups to apply for these positions, the City of Bainbridge Island will help ensure that members of these groups feel welcome to apply and will take a first step in redressing biases in recruitment.

Peggi: It hasn't been reviewed by Joe Levan the city attorney yet. There might be restrictions or legal impacts.

Eric: I like this. I just have some questions. One: Has Renni had a hand in this because this is in his wheelhouse HR-wise? Make sure he gets a chance to weigh in. I don't have any particular suggestions for changing it, but I wouldn't be opposed to letting it slide to our next meeting.

Jing: At the top, you said something about residents of BI involvement. Do you mean diversifying citizen advisory committees?

Peggi: Right

Jing: I would suggest adding a recommendation for the City to engage with professional and community associations or organizations that seek and post recruiting ads for staff positions in publications or spaces, where diverse candidates engage. In my experience with recruiting and hiring diverse candidates, you have to go where they are. It could be like the Asian American Journalists Association or Black Journalists Association. If you're recruiting from a university, they'll have clubs or associations where more diverse candidates will be involved and engaged in.

The other recommendation would be that the City review their current job ads for inclusive language or language that may pose barriers. Also, look for city policies that will appeal to diverse candidates. Candidates will look for that commitment and consider joining an environment where they feel safe and respected.

Peggi: I would like to consult with Renni and Jing to bring their ideas into this, then bring this recommendation back to the group at our next meeting.

The recommendation is about going above and beyond recommended legal equal opportunity language. After we incorporate Renni and Jing's ideas, should we have the city attorney review it before we vote on it or would you rather send it to the Council as is?

Ellen: It doesn't need to be reviewed ahead of it going to the Council. I would typically share it with the human resources manager so that she's aware of what it says and can be prepared to provide any context or additional information. If it's in the Council packet, the city attorney will take a look at it. When you're ready, I'd be happy to share it with him.

Deanna: This language provides some accountability for the city. Just saying the words *traditionally marginalized* and *historically oppressed* says that we realize and understand that this is the situation.

Brenda: Ellen, is there any reporting that the city has to do around their equity employment? I remember reading that there was a report that had to go to the Federal Government when REAC first started. It seemed that the years of the reporting were all the same.

I can see the need for some change there if we're not attracting enough people to report out. Maybe changing the language is the best way to try to get diverse people.

Ellen: There is required federal reporting.

## B. Events and Outreach

Peggi: Events and Outreach has updated its plan. Should we have a discussion about whether we want to do Juneteenth or not? The only concern I have is that if we are going to participate

in the Kitsap Countywide Juneteenth, which is the 18<sup>th</sup>, it might be difficult for us to have a big event on the 19<sup>th</sup>. Maybe we want something that's a little less ambitious.

Savanna: I think that might be a discussion for the subcommittee. How much commitment can we give to both? We also are missing Renni and Sue so let's discuss at our meeting the first week in April.

Peggi: Outreach events and listening sessions are pushed to the fall.

#### C. GARE and Training

Has everyone signed up for the GARE conference—in-person or Zoom?

City Council would like recommendations on their training. Sue, Renni, and Peggi will work on recommendations together. We can report out

#### D. Strategic Plan

Jing: Our work plan is due, and I need each subcommittee's work plans no later than next Friday, March 25 so that I can piece everything together. If there is a challenge to that deadline to please let me know. Also, please send any budgetary needs.

#### E. Climate Change Equity Lens

Deanna: Question for Ellen. The city manager spoke to us about having a REAC representative attend a meeting with a few different groups about the plastics ordinances. We could lend perspective to marginalized communities. I wasn't necessarily volunteering for this. Should these situations always be a climate change subcommittee responsibility?

Peggi: Do you think that we should develop another recommendation to the city to do a race equity lens in a formal way on these upcoming regulation ordinances, specifically about plastics and gas-powered yard equipment? It's important for the people putting these ordinances in place to look at who's being impacted and to bring them to the table for discussions prior to passing them.

Deanna: My biggest question is how do we get in front of something and do it in the right way. Everybody has been in that situation in school where you have a group project and some people on your team are not putting in the work. You tell yourself, *okay it's a group project and I'll just do it.*

I don't want REAC to be in a position where it's not being taken seriously because that's kind of the implication that I'm getting. We have an opportunity to get out in front of this.

Clarence: The gas-powered devices was for city employees, not for the city as a whole. There was no ordinance about this city-wide. What was being discussed was about our city replacing those gas power units with electric and some other alternatives.

Peggi: There is a recommendation in the climate plan that gas-powered equipment get banned island-wide. Before we have an ordinance hopefully we'll have a racial equity analysis.

Ellen: One, on the zero emission hand tools. That is something that we are actively working on bringing forward to you. Chris will talk to you in May, in advance about that pilot project for the city's zero emission or non-gas powered tools.,

To Deanna's question about the waste production ordinances, the group that we're talking about doesn't meet regularly, but it has met a couple of times. If there is someone on REAC who would like to be part of that working group going forward (it is an informal group that meets not on a regular schedule and during the workday), let me know. I'd be happy to reach out as those meeting gets scheduled.

Jing: At the last REAC meeting, there was an approved recommendation for a race equity plan put together by Peggy, Renni and Deanna. Do we know where that is?

Peggi: I sent it to Clarence and Brenda and asked them to present it to the Council. Do you have any update?

Brenda: I'll have to find that Peggy so we can move that up and put it on an agenda.

Jing: it's an integral piece to all these conversations we're having about the city approving, developing and approving a race equity plan and having all the departments use a race equity lens in their planning and decisions.

#### F. Finance

Eric: In 2020, the Council approved about \$14,400 in budgetary funds for REAC. It was a combination of a one-time budget based on our event plan and work plan from 2020 and the sign budget. We've spent down a good chunk of it in 2021 for the GARE training, plus a couple of community events and various supplies. Part of that money is going to the GARE conference this year, which involves travel and other costs, about \$6,000. When that's all said and done, we'll have about \$1700 left.

Next step for us likely is to request additional funding when we submit our work plan. We'll need budgetary approval to implement it, which is why it's important you send your budget in with your work plan to Jing.

It's also good to ask the city well in advance for approval of an invoice.

Jing Is this a biennial budget or an annual budget? What is subject to Council approval?

Eric: It was a one-time allocation in 2020. Staff is authorized to approve anything that is kind of within the all-encompassing work plan that we submitted. There has not been an ongoing allocation. We're going to need one by the end of the year, if not sooner.



Ellen: If we do have a biennial budget, the appropriations are made for a year. We did carry those annual appropriations forward, which is a little bit unusual, but we believe was the intent of the Council and of the committee. That's what staff did with Council's authorization.

Peggi: Eric, can we get specific expenditures on that report because I'd like to see like where the money went.

### **REAC ITEMS**

Savanna: We will be starting to interview soon for positions three and four.

Clarence: I want to remind folks that the 80th anniversary of the first forcible removal is March 30. You are all invited to be at the site at 11 o'clock. Bainbridge Island Museum of Art has a tremendous display.

Jing: Just a heads up for April! We usually meet on the first and the third Thursdays (April 7 and 21). On the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>, we have the GARE conference. We also agreed with the Bremerton REAC to have a joint meeting with them on the 28<sup>th</sup> so we won't have a meeting on the 21<sup>st</sup>. I'd like to give the Bremerton folks a heads up for that date once we get clearance from Ellen. Maybe we have 30 minutes where we take care of our REAC business and then we have an hour with Bremerton?

Ellen; I'll be out of the office on that day, but I can work to find a different person to staff that meeting.

### **CITY COUNCIL REPORT**

**ADJOURNED 7:34 p.m.**

*Savanna Rovelstad*

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Savanna Rovelstad, Chair