

PROPOSED MINUTES
BY GREENVILLE HUMAN RELATIONS COUNCIL
April 28, 2016

The Greenville Human Relations Council (GHRC) met Wednesday, April 26, 2016 at 6:00 PM in the third floor Conference Room #337 in City Hall. Members present denoted by *, members absent denoted by x.

Samar Badwan-* Isaac Chemmanam-* Isaac Blount-* Jim Cox-* Lloyd Horton -*
Byung Lee -* Prudencio Martinez-Mengel-* Joyce Mitchell-* Bill Neely-*
Franchine Peña-* Heena Shah-x Bonnie Snyder-x Jake Srednicki-* Rajesh Verma-*
Ritvik Verma-* Kathy Moore-*

Rose Glover, Council Member-x Cassandra Daniels, Staff Liaison-*

Other(s): Nancy Colville

ANNOUNCEMENTS: Several announcements were provided about upcoming community events.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A motion was made by Franchine Pena, seconded by Samar Badwan, to approve the January 6, minutes with the necessary corrections, if there be any. Motion carried unanimously.

A motion was made by Samar Badwan, seconded by Isaac Chemmanam, to approve the February 3, minutes with necessary corrections, if there be any. Motion carried unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

Motivational Speaker, James “Bonecrusher” Smith

Byung Lee, Chairperson, wanted the Council to considered sponsoring motivational speaker, James Smith, to visit and bring a message of hope for the youth. The event was cancelled due to James Smith having to have surgery.

Youth Fest

Cassandra Daniels gave an update regarding the Youth Fest. This event is sponsored by the Youth Council and the Human Relations Council is cosponsoring. The flyer and vendor/informational booth information is available. The fest is scheduled for Saturday, June 4 from 12:00 pm – 4:00 pm.

Community Dialogue – Refugee Education Forum

Samar Badwan briefly spoke about the refugee community dialogue that was held on Thursday, April 21st at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church. Susan Husson and Uriah Ward served as panelist for the event. Congregations and individuals from the community attended and were interested in

our efforts. The plans are to create “team efforts” that will allow the congregations to focus on a specific role; such as helping refugees find employment, clothing, food, etc. On Saturday, May 14th, at 6:00 pm, a documentary will be shown on refugee crisis. This event will take place at the Unitarian Universalist Church.

Joyce Mitchell asked if there are any countries on the national level with the precedent in organizations that are not sanctioned with the United States wherein we will be accepting any refugees. Due to terrorist times, and things of that nature, be considered because we will be in direct conflict. Samar Badwan stated the Refugee Ministry in New Bern, North Carolina is in constant contact with the federal government, the different agencies, and homeland security. It takes a minimum of two years for a background check. There are numerous background checks and other sanctions before a refugee is given the green light. Typically, they prefer that they have relatives living in the United States. In addition, they have to have someone living in the resettlement area that speaks their language. Refugees have to coincide with what exists in Greenville.

Isaac Chemmanam asked if other language should be added to the resolution that state a refugee has legally been admitted according to the United States. Samar Badwan stated the resolution is not a request for City Council to allow refugees to come to Greenville. The federal government will allow them to come. Because of the federal law, the federal government can place them anywhere in our country. The resolution is asking City Council to support the city’s diversity and to reaffirm Greenville as a welcoming city.

Cassandra Daniels stated that a draft refugee resolution was included in your package for discussion, for editing and the HRC’s consideration. After the revisions, a motion was made by Prudencio Martinez-Mengel, seconded by Franchine Philpot Peña, to approve the resolution as revised and that information is forwarded to City Council for their consideration at one of the May City Council’s meeting. Motion passed with a vote of 9:2. Human Relations Council members Joyce Mitchell and Loyd Horton voted in opposition.

Ms. Nancy Colville attended the meeting to voice her concerns regarding the Council’s refugee resettlement efforts. She stated she attended a meeting a year ago, because she wanted to help. There was a church who accepted a refugee family, identified by the interfaith agency that had gone through everything. The refugee family needed a place to live and she volunteered one of her family houses. It didn’t turn out good because the church and the interfaith agency were only involved for six months. The church assisted with finding him a job at Grady-Whites. The refugee decided later he did not want the job and wanted to go into business for himself. The refugee purchased a food truck, but didn’t have proper permits and that didn’t work out. Then the refugee decided to deliver packages to the Mexico border, which did not work out. At this time he owed rent and eventually he was evicted. She further stated that it is said these people are great people, and 98% of them are. But you have to tell the truth and you have to make allowances when things go wrong. Burdens are eventually put on the taxpayers. There is already a huge Medicaid population; so we have to look at the big picture. Think the City should be more realistic about this effort.

The Human Relations Council would like for City Council to consider adopting the resolution as approved by the Council. The resolution is not a request for City Council to allow refugees to come to Greenville. Because of federal laws, the federal government can place them anywhere in our country. However, the resolution is asking City Council to support the city's diversity and to reaffirm Greenville as a welcoming city.

Refugee Resolution Update

A RESOLUTION TO DECLARE SUPPORT FOR REFUGEES AND REAFFIRM GREENVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA AS A WELCOMING CITY

WHEREAS, actively fostering a welcoming and inclusive environment for all people regardless of race, ethnicity, place of origin or religion, is a core value and priority of the City of Greenville; and

WHEREAS, the City of Greenville was officially declared an inclusive community on March 8, 2007, by joining other jurisdictions across the country in leading the national welcoming movement; and

WHEREAS, refugees now face increasing challenges to find safety and protection in neighboring countries, which is detrimental to all people who cherish freedom and liberty; and

WHEREAS, Greenville strives to be a place where individuals and families from all backgrounds feel safe, are treated with respect and dignity, and are recognized for their contributions to building a strong, vibrant and inclusive community;

WHEREAS, Greenville is fortunate to have a diverse population from many nations and cultures because of its university and medical community;

WHEREAS, the City of Greenville is privileged with more than 130 places of worship representing many faiths;

WHEREAS, the city's Human Relations Council, which has been tasked with advising City Council on inclusion strategies that strengthen connections between diverse communities and city government;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Greenville, North Carolina reaffirms our commitment for inclusion and be declared a city of hospitality to any persons of whatever nationality, race, or creed, who seek residence and refuge in peace.

A motion was made by Prudencio Mengel-Martinez, seconded by Samar Badwan, to accept the resolution with the necessary changes. Motion carried unanimously.

Human Relations Council Strategic Plan

Cassandra Daniels provided a copy of the Strategic Vision and other information to the Council. The Council briefly discussed the ordinance, job description and pay grade, and staffing. They were also provided information of surveys conducted by Assistant City Manager and the Human Relations Council.

NEW BUSINESS

Sister City Program

Byung Lee informed the Council that he had spoken with City Manager Lipscomb regarding the Sister City Program. Byung Lee stated he was directed to present the program to the Council for them to explore the possibility. Byung Lee further stated it would be beneficial if the City would consider developing a Sister City Program with Yeonsu, Korea. Yeonsu has a population of 450,000 which is much larger than Greenville. However, the City could benefit through a student exchange program and well as economically.

Isaac Chemmanam asked are there other Korean cities that is/or has partnered with another city? **Byung Lee** stated Burlington, NC has a student exchange program. Isaac Chemmanam stated it would be interesting to know how it has worked out for them, was it successful, and what it will take for us to create a successful program. **Franchine Pena** asked is the Sister City Program different from the Chamber of Commerce program. Maybe we can check with the Chamber, in order not to reinvent the wheel before moving forward. **Joyce Mitchell** stated that Don Edwards, of Uptown Greenville, has often brought governmental officials from other countries to visit her office. That may have something to do with the growth and economic development of the City. Also, Pitt Community College has developed international relationships with other countries as well. **Bill Neely** asked if the City has a sister city program. **Byung Lee** stated the City does not have a program. **Bill Neely** stated maybe a group of people from Greenville can visit Korea (everyone pays their own way). He further asked how the relationship can benefit both Korea and Greenville economically. His experience was with a small town in Northern Ireland that involved youth. It was a great cultural experience for all everyone.

A motion was made by Jim Cox, seconded by Samar Badwan, that the Council explore the possibilities of developing a sister city relationship with Korea. Motion carried unanimously. The subcommittee members are Jim Cox, Byung Lee, and Samar Badwan.

Adjournment

There being no further business, a motion was made by Samar Badwan, seconded by Jake Srednicki, to adjourn. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Cassandra Daniels

Cassandra Daniels
Human Relations Officer