



COMMUNITY RELATIONS COMMISSION AGENDA
June 9, 2021 at 6 p.m.
City Hall, 240 Columbus Avenue

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

CALL TO ORDER

ROLL CALL Anthony Harris (Chairperson), Valerie Cruse, Blake Harris, Daryl Murphy, Taylor Sutphen, Alexandria Esposito, Vilicia Cade & Daniel Williams

AGENDA

Talon Flohr

Approval of Minutes—April 29, 2021

Discussion with ECEDC – Abbey Bemis, Executive Director & Blake Harris, MBET board

Sandusky Register – Community Board

Open Position on Community Relations Commission

Election of Vice Chairperson

NEW BUSINESS

OLD BUSINESS

Next meeting – September 8, 2021

ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Cade called the meeting to order at 6:04 PM.

Members present: Vilicia Cade (Chairperson), Anthony Harris, Taylor Sutphen, Daryl Murphy, Alexandria Esposito

Ex-Officio members and staff present: Blake Harris (City Commissioner), Eric Wobser (City Manager), John Orzech (Assistant City Manager), Jared Oliver (Police Chief), Jim Green (Acting Fire Chief), Brendan Heil (Law Director), McKenzie Spriggs (Commission Clerk)

Members absent: Daniel Williams, Valerie Cruse (Vice Chairperson)

CURRENT BUSINESS

Approval of Minutes

Upon motion of Anthony Harris and second of Taylor Sutphen, the members voted to approve the minutes of the December 9, 2020, meeting and suspend the formal reading. The Chairwoman declared the motion passed.

Election of Officers

Upon a motion of Daryl Murphy and second of Vilicia Cade, the members voted to approve Anthony Harris as the next Chairperson of the Community Relations Commission.

Roll call on the motion: Yeas: Vilicia Cade, Anthony Harris, Blake Harris, Taylor Sutphen, Daryl Murphy, Alexandria Esposito (6). Anthony Harris will be the chairperson of the 2021 CRC.

The position of Vice Chairperson was tabled until the next meeting, as Valerie Cruse was nominated but not in attendance to accept that nomination.

Bidding Dr. Cade Adieu

Dr. Cade took a position as the next superintendent for a school in the state of Delaware and will be leaving her position at Sandusky City Schools after the school year concludes. Eric Wobser took a moment to thank her for the mark she made on this commission, the schools, and our community. She mentioned in her interview with the Sandusky Register that Sandusky, Ohio will always be a home away from home. Eric Wobser said he will hold her to that and please do not be a stranger.

Update of City Plans

Downtown Sandusky Master Plan

Eric Wobser gave an update on the Downtown Master Plan. He gave a background on how far downtown has come, including the new BGSU program, City Hall coming downtown, the revitalization efforts on the lakefront, including the new Jackson Street Pier and Shoreline Drive, the current construction of the Feick and the Cooke building, etc.

He said one of the things we have heard is that not everyone feels connected to downtown or invited to come downtown. One of the big goals of the Jackson Street Pier, and waterfront is to make sure everyone knows this is their public space, this is their pier. Programming will start happening downtown and has already started, including the moving of many recreation programs to the Mylander Pavilion and to downtown. We want youth to know this is their downtown. Diverse and year round programming is a top three (3) goal of the downtown plan.

Eric Wobser said we will continue pushing diversity in people that choose to live downtown or start a business here. Minority business ownership is something we hope to accelerate, by adding incentives to our economic development programs.

Another big aspect of the downtown plan is to bring a big anchor hotel and conference center to the Jackson Street Parking Lot. That will be catalytic to the growth of downtown.

Anthony Harris said he once was skeptical of the revamping of the Jackson Street Pier, he is now fully on board, and has seen the difference in people coming to the pier. He would also like to see the CRC be involved in the programming that gets decided on the pier, specifically the concerts as it relates to genres that appeal to everyone.

Eric said absolutely! We will be creative to involve the commission, whether through surveys or in person dialogue. He added that we will push others to have diverse programming including the foundations and the State Theatre that also put on events.

Eric then addressed Anthony Harris's concerns on parking on the pier. The pier was monitored for a year before making changes. Since reopening the pier, we have not seen parking be a problem, as the pier is constant and busy, but not overflowing. What we cannot do is slow down the vibrancy of downtown, to save parking places. We will balance the need for parking as downtown continues to grow and add spaces creatively. Eric Wobser said we are not going to get everything right and the city commission and CRC is here to help hold us accountable, but know we are going to continue taking risks because that is the only way Sandusky will grow and thrive.

Southside Master Plan

Eric Wobser said they are looking for the schools and the youth within the schools to play a leadership role in the development of this plan. It should be a community lead process. The community development team has been slowly meeting with stakeholders such as churches and Center for Cultural Awareness on the revitalization of the Southside, to build trust and get to know people before the process starts. The process will start this fall – so the schools can be involved while the students are in the classroom, vaccine numbers should be up so in person meetings are more likely and viable. Priorities will include MacArthur Park/Churchwell Park, better connections to the schools and other locations, a rec center on the American Crayon site, regular programming to build community, and finding a builder to create and build quality and affordable houses. He gave an overview of the history of the homes built there and why Sandusky

has been amassing property. We want the feedback of the homeowners association there, churches, residents, businesses, schools and students, the hospital, everyone.

Plan for Increasing Diversity

Vilicia Cade brought up her suggestion to use local radio station, WNZN Lorain's 89.1FM to expand the opportunity for diverse hires.

Eric Wobser acknowledged her suggestion. He said we have lost many staff, including in our HR department. This is not meant to be an excuse, but as we scale back up, we are looking at diversity and inclusion efforts to be part of those jobs. He hopes diversity in our HR position would help reach a new audience. He agrees, we can make our best effort, but if we are not changing how we reach people, then ultimately we will keep getting what we've always got. Her suggestion is good.

Anthony Harris asked if we could use the NAACP to share these hires in the future.

Daryl Murphy said our relationship could deepen and he would be happy to help. He commends the decision to sway away from country music for the first large entertainment on the new Jackson Street Pier. He said some minority folk might not think highly of that. He would like to see more diversity within City Hall and the leadership of the Sandusky team.

Eric Wobser said we have made some successes with hires such as Talon Flohr, Tondra Frisby, Fire Chief Wilcox, Law Director Justin Harris, etc. but it needs to be systematic instead of singling out a talented diverse person we have come across. There is healthy pressure to get better and continue the plight for a diverse and representative staff. Healthy because there is no resistance, we want the same thing.

Taylor Sutphen said we could email the NAACP every time a new job is posted. Eric Wobser added this is something we will do and let us look at measurables, so we can look back in five years and see how far we have come.

Jared Oliver reported on the police hiring. They have traveled to every big city and police academy within 100 miles – Lorain, Cleveland, Toledo. It is a difficult situation these days.

Vilicia Cade brought up diversity is not limited to race, for us to consider gender, sexual orientation, religion, etc. and to be truly reflective of our community. Let us also not forget competency. People have to be competent in the roles we put them in. She thanked the City staff for being open to the different perspectives on the CRC, and the editorials encouraging diversifying boards across the city, written by Eric Wobser and Richard Brady.

Jim Green said the Fire Department entrance exam is open until May 27. Whatever help they can offer would be appreciated.

Fire Chief Vacancy

Eric Wobser said that position will be a part of the 2022 budget. Interim Chief Green has done an incredible job.

Daryl Murphy asked if Jim Green will be applying for that position. Jim Green said yes, he has been excited to serve in this capacity, and will be applying for that position when it opens.

Open Position on board

McKenzie Spriggs said the position is a city commission appointment and once Dr. Cade is no longer able to serve, it will be filled quickly.

Unity Through Love

Vilicia Cade said the booklets have been printed and will be brought to the next meeting. These are a good baseline to start with for next year.

NEW BUSINESS

Anthony Harris brought up the desire to see sand volleyball courts on the waterfront either downtown or Lions Park.

Eric said it was part of the conceptual plan on the Battery Park site, and it is something we can look into before planning.

Blake Harris said it is important the narratives we say about Sandusky and how we discuss ourselves. Talking about Sandusky as an inclusive place, that is making an effort towards diversity, will make it a more inclusive place.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion of Daryl Murphy and a second of Valerie Cruse, the members voted to adjourn at 7:10PM. The Chairperson declared the motion passed.

Attest: McKenzie Spriggs, Clerk
Date: 6 / 9 / 21

Anthony Harris, Chairperson
Date: 6 / 9 / 21