

**Chairman Harris called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.**

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

**Ex-Officio members and staff present:** Blake Harris (City Commissioner), Jared Oliver (Police Chief), McKenzie Spriggs (Commission Clerk), Stuart Hamilton (IT Manager)

**Members absent:** Daniel Williams

## **CURRENT BUSINESS**

### **Approval of Minutes**

**Upon motion of Daryl Murphy and second of Vilicia Cade, the members voted to approve the minutes of the April 29, 2021, meeting and suspend the formal reading. The Chair declared the motion passed.**

### **Talon Flohr**

Chairman Harris asked for a moment of silence for the loss of Talon Flohr.

### **Erie County Economic Development Corporation (ECEDC)**

Blake Harris introduced Abbey Bemis, noting he has been working with ECEDC and community partners for the last several months on minority business efforts, trying to find them and empower them. They have created a group, the Minority Business Empowerment Team (MBET), to take that effort to the community. MBET is hosting an event June 25, 2021 at 6:30PM at Small City Taphouse. They're looking to compile a list of minority businesses in the city, and connecting them to the business resources that ECEDC provides. This group recognizes the barriers to minorities and young people when opening or growing a business.

Abbey Bemis said they have looked at trends and recognize that there is a gap of minority owned businesses. Even though we have a diverse population, only about 10% of businesses are minority owned. They asked themselves and others how they better support these businesses? RISE exists to help develop businesses with planning, access to resources, mentorship, etc. MBET launched a Facebook page a few months ago that has 800 followers and is building a community of entrepreneurs to support each other. They recently launched a grant program for minority businesses, as many minorities do not have access to startup capital. Black owned businesses have also been the most impacted by COVID-19. A foundation approached them wanting to help with the gap. They delivered 25 - \$2,000 grants for a total of \$50,000 to minority owned businesses, many of them here in Sandusky. They will be launching programs and scholarships for people looking to start up a business.

Anthony Harris said he steered the new owner of Dairy Frost to Abbey Bemis at ECEDC. He also

knows there is an absence of childcare for special education/disabled children. They are looking for facilities and he will connect them to her

Abbey agreed and talked about workforce development and their new program Firelands Forward. Childcare, transportation and the things people need to get to work have been serious parts of those discussions. Abbey asked what else they should be thinking about, and welcomed the conversation.

Dr. Cade asked about women owned businesses, and how they function with cities.

Abbey Bemis clarified they are a private nonprofit that services all of Erie County. Minorities include all underrepresented groups, including women, all races, etc. They do not give out grants themselves, but steer people to grants which are surprisingly hard to come by. She noted Sandusky is the only municipality that offers grants.

#### **Better marketing and sharing the CRC**

Anthony Harris said this group needs to do a better job connecting things like the ECEDC agency with the people that might use it. He would like to incorporate the Register to better disseminate this information, like entrepreneurship, to people that need it.

Blake Harris said he has noticed the Register doing many more write ups on local businesses. Andy Ouriel regularly reaches out to him to get contact information, whether they are business related or personal, just sharing their stories.

Jared Oliver said he would put Anthony Harris in touch with the Sandusky Register folks.

Abbey Bemis said they ran four (4) full page ads regarding their minority grants. If we reach out, they will happily cover the news.

McKenzie Spriggs said Anthony Harris should go on Between the Lines and talk about the CRC. She added the city will share the MBET event, if Blake or Abbey can share the flyer.

Anthony Harris said he will gladly follow up on all of these things, if someone can connect him.

#### **Connecting students**

Anthony Harris talked about the lack of the trades and connecting students to careers in those fields.

Daryl Murphy said apprenticeships are hugely important and the NAACP could help with that.

Dr. Cade said the schools offer these types of programs. They have welding students that work with local businesses. The Sandusky City Schools offers these types of programs through their

Global Internship Program. They could do a better job sharing the information, but they are cultivating those relationships.

Daryl Murphy thinks that is great, and would like to see some numbers on how those programs translate to job placement. He does not currently see those people converting to positions that need filled. Too many minority kids do not have those opportunities.

Abbey Bemis said they went to Bettcher Industries with Sandusky City Schools recently and would like to create some tech positions, introductory level, for these kids. She agrees there is a need.

Alexandria Esposito was part of the committee that gave grants to minorities. She mentioned there was a high desire to find women and minority candidates, and Sarah Bemis and Abbey Ross do a good job over there.

#### **Open Position on the Commission**

Anthony Harris said individuals claim to be interested, but are hesitant to take the action. He posted these on his own social media and would like to see the boards reflect our population.

McKenzie Spriggs said forward any interested people to her and she can supply them an application. It is a city commission appointment, and there were other applicants that were interested in this board. The city commission will be filling this appointment before the next meeting.

#### **Election of Vice Chair**

**Upon motion of Vilicia Cade and second of Daryl Murphy, the commission voted to appoint Dr. Valerie Cruse to be the vice chair for the next year. Valerie Cruse accepted the nomination. The commission voted to appoint Valerie Cruse to the position of vice chair.**

#### **New Business**

##### **Police Recruitment**

Anthony Harris said police officers need to be paid more competitively, so we can recruit good candidates.

Jared Oliver said Reserve Officers start at \$15/hr. Full time officers get paid a bit more than that. The issue in law enforcement is two fold—the world as it is and candidates the department strives to get are very desirable, and take jobs elsewhere where they paid better. We are in the average range, but he would like to see them be paid above average.

Taylor Sutphen said in safety services across the board, minorities are underrepresented. He cited the detention center as an example, and would like to see high school kids learn about safety services as a career option.

Jared Oliver said the tough part is that most high schoolers graduate at 18, but cannot become a police officer until they are 21. During this three year break, many find other career paths. They can keep them in the public safety realm, being a dispatcher for example, but keep them in the field. It is about keeping them interested, finding a mentor, and offering good pay. The city is drawing candidates because it has a good reputation, he will continue trying to share what a good career it is and how great the City of Sandusky is.

Taylor Sutphen said he was a criminal justice major and there were no minority folks while he attended school.

Daryl Murphy said this problem is nationwide, and it is a competition. Even Cedar Point is offering \$20/hr. to bring in good employees.

Valerie Cruse said the bump in pay is bringing people in. She works at Cedar Point and they are seeing local and international workers.

### **Summer Programming**

McKenzie Spriggs said the programming team has selected their partner that will be helping the city put on bands and summer concerts. The group would like to ensure the lineup is diverse and welcoming to the Sandusky community. She invited the commission to attend and give feedback. They solidified meeting Wednesday morning, June 16, for coffee, at Vita.

Daryl Murphy thanked McKenzie and Eric for recognizing their request to be involved in the summer concert discussion.

### **Old Business**

#### **Unity Through Love Follow Up**

Vilicia Cade showed the booklets and posters that have been created. The whole campaign is designed to develop artifacts for kids that proudly show African American people in leadership roles. She would like the CRC to ensure these live on.

The commission thanked Dr. Vilicia Cade for her service and leadership on this commission.

#### **Juneteenth – June 19**

Daryl Murphy shared the upcoming Juneteenth events, at Battery Park, 1PM-5PM. Tondra Frisby and Sandusky Recreation also has an event at Jackson Street Pier at 3:30PM. The events are free to attend.

The next meeting is September 8, 2021 and it will be in person.

**ADJOURNMENT**

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



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**Attest: Commission Clerk**

**Date: 9 / 8 / 21**



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**Anthony Harris, Chairperson**

**Date: 9 / 8 / 21**

