

Daryl Murphy called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM.

Members present: Taylor Sutphen, Alexandria Esposito, Daryl Murphy, Gregg Peugeot

Ex-Officio members and staff present: Blake Harris (City Commission liaison), Mario D’Amico (Fire Chief), Jared Oliver (Chief of Police), Marcus Harris (Diversity & Economic Opportunity Manager)

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Minutes from the December meeting were not available for approval. Moved to the next meeting in June.

Resignation of Daniel Williams

Mr. Harris informed the Commission that Mr. Williams had a conflict with his apprentice program and his responsibility to the Community Relations Commission (CRC). His program is scheduled 4:30pm- 7:30pm so he is not able to attend the CRC, he thought it prudent to resign and allow someone else to attend.

Nomination of Kerstyn Pou, Marketing and Communications Specialist Sandusky City Schools

Mr. Harris informed the CRC members that the nomination of Kerstyn Pou, Marketing and Communications Specialist for Sandusky City Schools had accepted the nomination to the CRC, and she will be formally named to the CRC in during the City Commission meeting scheduled for March 28th 2022 to fill Mr. William’s seat.

The Election of Officers

Due to the new member needing to be seated and the absence of both the Chair and Co-Chair the CRC needs to be pushed to the meeting in June 23rd.

The 2022 BGSU Firelands Business Symposium

In conjunction with the Minority Business Empowerment Team (MBET) and RISE, BGSU is bringing back the in-person 2022 BGSU Firelands Business Symposium: What’s Your Impact on April 8th, 2022, at the Cedar Point Center on BGSU Firelands campus. The keynote speaker will be Ariane Kirkpatrick CEO of the AKA Team, a minority female owned construction management company out of Cleveland, OH. The focus of her address is to not only share her journey to become a successful business owner in a field dominated by males, but also to share how businesses can make a social impact in the communities they exist and do business in. There will be other breakout sessions in addition to the keynote consisting of social media impact and how to develop talent in an organization. Tickets for the event are \$15.00 and the event will run from 11:00am to 3:00pm. Commissioner Harris added that he’d like to give a “shout out” to the

Transportation department for arranging free transportation to and from the event for the Business Professionals of America student group so that they could take part in the event. Mr. Harris added that a donation would be coming up at the next City Commission meeting to cover the cost for bus tickets. Mr. Harris told the CRC members that he would forward the flyer and link to the registration for the symposium so they could attend and circulate around their networks.

Discussion on 2022 Goals and Actions

Mr. Harris shared with the CRC that in the spirit of the ordinance regarding the CRC the DEI Action plan The City would like to conduct “Community Conversations” in the summer, fall and winter of 2022. The goal is to get outside of City Hall and go to the locations that residents frequent to give them an opportunity to engage in tough conversations. When the meetings are scheduled Mr. Harris said that he would forward the dates and times to the CRC members if they would like to attend to either facilitate the conversations or take part around diversity, equity, and inclusion in the City. We want to try to have an “ear to the street” regarding issues that may not be on our radar. Mr. Murphy added that when we have the meetings that it would be critical to express the importance of the CRC because a lot of residents don’t even know that this body exists. If they have issues that they would like to bring to the City or safety services (fire and police) good or bad, they have the option. Mr. Murphy stated that he had spoken to Chairperson Harris about this issue in the past and we need to do more to increase the level of awareness about the CRC. They need to know that they have an “ear” to hear resident complaints or praises. The CRC would like to see more people (residents) at the meetings. The meetings are open to the public and we need to do a better job bringing the people in. Mr. Harris added that from his observations of social media that there is a lot that people have to say, but that the proper venue to express those concerns is the CRC. When they don’t come to us or provide information to people on the CRC it is hard to separate fact from rumor and take action to address issues perceived or real. Mr. Harris added that he wants to elevate the profile of the CRC similarly to the videos the Communications Manager has done for other City departments and programs. Mr. Sutphen commends us for doing the meetings again. He attended one of the ice cream socials. There issues brought up that the City didn’t know about, and he saw them get addressed in the **neighborhood**. That probably wouldn’t have gotten address if not for the ice cream social. Mr. Harris also added that when we have community celebrations of are looking to recognize individuals, we would like to amplify those efforts by involving individuals from this body, and other City boards to humanize the institutional perception of City government. While the City is an institution that is here to serve the residents, we are made of human beings. So we want to create media featuring members of the board to raise awareness. Mr. Harris also thanked Chairperson Harris, Mr. Murphy, and Ms. Esposito for participating in the DEI external stakeholder interviews for the DEI strategic plan. The staff appreciates their input.

Old Business

There was no issues of old business to discuss.

New Business

Mr. Harris stated that he'd like to officially welcome Mr. Peugeot to the CRC. He and Mr. Peugeot are both SHS alumni and Gregg was his Captain on the track team in high school, and he was excited to connect with him again and work with him in that capacity. Mr. Peugeot stated that he was glad to be a part of the CRC and that it was a "good group". Commissioner Harris wanted to highlight and bring to the attention of the group the MBET event that was held on February 25th. The group was the host of the first "Black Business Pioneer Event". We had the pleasure of honoring three local entrepreneurs. Not only for their success in business but for their efforts in helping strengthen our community. The first honoree was Ms. Bridget Sanders, or Bridget Burel, which is her married name. The owner of Lena's Brows. The next honoree was Mr. Johnny Reed of CR Exchange, and Phillip Parker Sr of Phil P's Unisex salon. Commissioner Harris went on the state that there were about 55 attendees at the event held at Venue 634 on Columbus Ave. Commissioner Harris wanted to thank the many sponsors for the event included Once Upon a Child, Civista Bank, and many more. This was an event that MBET looks to have yearly as well recognize the success many contributions of Black businesses in the area. Mr. Murphy responded that he attended the event, and he wanted to also congratulate the organizers of the event and everyone on the MBET team. It was a great event, and he personally knows the honorees and has been supportive of their businesses from the beginning. His big takeaway was in the composition of the people in the room, and that it showed what Sandusky is all about. The diversity in the room and how everyone was mingling and getting along celebrating those entrepreneurs. It shows that Sandusky is on the right path. Mr. Murphy recognized the positive contributions of the Police and Fire Chiefs in the community and that Sandusky can be a beacon of hope for not only the area counties, but the State of Ohio and the nation. We are on the right track.

Chief Oliver said thank you for the kind words. They are going through the hiring process and going through the civil service list. The department made condition job offers to 2 reserve officers, and have a few strong candidates, and one locally as well that they are really excited about. Things are going well. Mr. Murphy asked Chief Oliver if there were any minority candidates in the queue? Chief Oliver responded that there is one female, one Hispanic male, and the local candidate is a minority male. He does need some additional training through the academy, but that is something the department can help along. Mr. Murphy also asked if the department ever reaches out to "NOBLE" which is a Black law enforcement affinity group? Chief Oliver responded that they do and also recruit from the Cleveland area academy and the City of Toledo academy. We have some good candidates on this list as compared to some in the past. We are making progress. Mr. Harris added that it is his goal and priority to amplify the message to residents about the importance of service to the community. The efforts of HR and the police department are to be commended, but it is going to take all of us to accelerate progress.

Chief D'Amico added that the fire department gave a test in May of 2021 that has resulted in 9 hires off that list. There was 3 females and one Hispanic male. They did end up hiring 1 of the females and the Hispanic male. There was 42 people off of that list and there is 2 more they think

they will hire off that list. Will most likely bring the 2 on later this year to align with the retirements that are expected. Mr. Murphy asked if they will be doing more hiring and Chief D’Amico let him know that they are fully staffed as of now, there are retirees lined up for June and September of this year which we will need to fill. As far as recruitment goes, Chief D’Amico doesn’t know what was done for this past test, there wasn’t much promotion, they (HR) just gave the test. The main barrier to hiring minorities is having minorities take the test. Mr. Murphy responded that we need to do a better job in guiding minorities in that direction. Chief Oliver expressed that he would love to hire from the local community. His officers have started a lot of youth outreach efforts, the young explorer program, and looking to stay connected to young adults in the transition period of high school graduation and to 21, when they are allowed to serve. Mr. Murphy added that it was a good look for the community to get young people involved in law enforcement and firefighting. Chief Oliver expressed that all the credit goes out to the officers who stepped up to get the explorer program off the ground. Commissioner Harris added that one of the best ways to help gauge interest in law enforcement or being a firefighter is the familiarity piece. He applauds the Community Impact Officers efforts getting involved in the recreation efforts, those positive touch points can make lasting impressions that inspire that young person to pursue a career in public service. Chief Oliver added that he has seen in interviews potential hires speak on those type of experiences, so it does work. Chief Oliver also shared with the group that the Sandusky police department is the most diverse department in the area.

Mr. Harris the provided an update to the short presentation he gave the CRC regarding the DEI strategic plan process. Mr. Harris shared the mission, vision, and values that the DEI Action Team has come up with to help guide our efforts moving forward. Mr. Harris also let the CRC know where they were in terms of the data gathering phase of the project with a timeline for completion in May. Ms. Esposito asked if that included the external stakeholder interviews? Mr. Harris responded yes and that they had a few more to complete and thanked her and others for participating.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion of Commissioner Harris and second of Mr. Murphy, the members voted to adjourn at 6:42 pm. Mr. Harris declared the meeting adjourned.

Attest: Marcus Harris
Diversity & Economic Opportunity Mgr.
Date:

Anthony Harris
Date: