

MINUTES  
**Constituency and Community Outreach  
Subcommittee – Interfaith Relations  
Mayor Donna Deegan Transition**

July 17, 2023

**Location:** City Hall, 117 W. Duval St., First Floor Lynwood Roberts Room, Jacksonville, 32202

**Meeting Called to Order:** 6:00 pm

**Welcome:**

Full Committee Chair: Parvez Ahmed  
Subcommittee Co-Chair: Rebekah Huto

**Attendance:**

Madison Hilt, Joey McKinnon, Susan Ticker  
*Via ZOOM:* Danielle Berke, Maddie Hilt

The Interfaith Subcommittee is continuing to:

Add names to the list of individuals to invite to participate, as well as individuals to interview.

Continuing to work on compiling recommendations.

**Resources of Note:**

- One Jax – proposed interfaith calendar
- Total Assembler – Index of Faith
- Diversity Resource Calendar – has good listings

**Tasks:**

Due: Friday, July 21, 2013 – develop a short list of recommendations

1. Holiday Calendar inclusive of faith and non-faith events and observances, so the mayor can draft messages around key dates
2. Develop a Social Media Plan around diversity

**Recommendations:**

- Create a calendar of major secular and non-secular holidays and observances
- Use subcommittee as a resource to draft sample messages the mayor could use/send out via social media. The mayor is interested in more community-oriented postings.
- Make city a “partner” in the event, an “official” participant
  - Example: this past Saturday’s Bosnian Memorial Day of Islamic Genocide Remembrance Day – part of diversity messaging
  - Send messages out to other Faith leaders about events and invite city staff to attend
  - Distinguish between “event” days and “observance” days

**NOTE:** The Deegan Administration wants to be seen in the community as helping to honor the various sacred days

**Opportunities:**

- October – JAX Art Pride: invite city officials to walk in the parade. Senior staff willing to participate, to show support of mayor’s message of inclusion
- November 20<sup>th</sup> – Trans Remembrance Day
- Send information, observances, events, etc. to [PAhmed@coj.net](mailto:PAhmed@coj.net) to ensure information will go onto the events calendar

**Healing of Separate MLK Events:**

- Continue to have conversations
- Does not want a big speaking event
- Honor the Youth
- Round Table Conversations
- Service Opportunities
- Foster Interfaith Cooperation
- Develop a week-long, bookend event
- Start with the original breakfast (NAACP & Urban League), city will support
- End the week with a dinner
- Service Projects, volunteerism – The United Way wants to be a significant partner
- MLK Week of Service – would allow different groups to work together

Note in recommendations, the best-case scenario; keep energy positive.  
What stories can be highlighted?

**Duval County Public School Calendar & Religious Observances:**

- Have mayor work with the School Board and officials to ensure that we are being accommodating of major religious holidays / observances
- Challenge – Graduation schedules that conflict with religious observances, also the same for scheduling the SAT on dates which conflicts with observances

**Missing From the Conversation:**

At the last meeting, several faith groups were not represented – forward the names. They don’t have to actually join the subcommittee; we can consult with them.

Continue to find the unrepresented voices and interview them over the four bullet points. Get their names and affiliations; they can be included in the final report.

- It is important to acknowledge local history through the mayor’s office:  
Example: Axe Handle Saturday – August 27, 1960  
A racially motivated attack which took place in Hemming (James Weldon Johnson Park)  
Consider a historic marker for the future, Mayoral Proclamation for this year with a commitment toward marking the solemn occasion in other ways, commission a statue of James Weldon Johnson for the park. NOTE: Mayor Deegan is setting aside money for the removal of confederate statues  
  
Example: Black history Month – bring together diverse faith leaders

The subcommittee can vote on final recommendations, but Reminder: Preliminary findings will be due next Tuesday, July 25, 2023. Looking for a five (5) bullet point intermediate recommendation.

Faith community is often called to be the solemn occasion subject matter expert on peace, grief, unity. They are the trusted messengers, voices of peace. Is there a way to work with the faith community to be more organized around these issues.

One JAX is working on Civil Discourse, could possibly build off that effort.

Another recommendation: add JHRC – Jacksonville Human Rights Commission, Studies of “Community Conversations” around race relations and equity issues.

Develop a concrete, robust budget, and revival – a new generation of “Study Circles”

The goal is to develop a transitions report – what are the points/action items for MLK Week?

Create “mindfulness” to foster interfaith collaboration – to further the discussion

Interfaith Center – how to get city involved in discussions

Mayor Deegan has \$25 Million in her budget to be used for all seven (7) Transition Committees...

**Task:**

- By your next meeting, develop items to access from the budget
- Develop suggestions with budgetary impacts

**Boards and Commissions:**

- There are still lots of positions to be appointed
- The website/in-take process are being revamped, so that it is easier to navigate
- Working on how to get the vacancy list out to people
- For now, just have people submit their resumes and indicate how they would like to serve

The Final Report is due August 29, 2023

**Recommendations:**

- Develop a social media plan
- How do we want to communicate with others?
- Develop a cultural competency plan around events and holidays
  - A list of things to do and not do
  - Check in with the city’s Chief Diversity Officer before doing events
- Will invite city’s PR to come to next committee meeting – Phil and Melissa
- Strengthen Jacksonville Human Rights Commission – It was initially designed to intervene when the city had “hot moments” Designed to play mediator
- The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Office will have a community relations piece
- Study Circles were fundable, Advisory Commissions are not
- Consider having the city’s Emergency Preparedness Group with the Interfaith Community to ensure efforts are adequate

**Next Subcommittee Meeting:**

- Next Week – consult with others, build recommendations
- Meet the following week – keep same time frame of 6 pm to 7:30 pm
- Location ?

Co-Chair Huto will send recommendations to PAhmed@coj.net  
Send edits to Edwina Henry at [EHenry@coj.net](mailto:EHenry@coj.net)

Meeting Adjourned at 7:30 pm