

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

July 31, 2023

Location: Jewish Family & Community Services, 8540 Baycenter Rd., Jacksonville 32256

Meeting Called to Order: 5:30 pm

Welcome:

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

Attendance:

Susan Ticker, Sukhbir Singh, Regina Jackson, Suzie Becker
ZOOM: Joey McKinnon, Danielle Berke, Troy Capers, Mike Heard

Introduction of new members:

Mike Heard, Troy Capers

Task:

Review recommendations and assign subcommittee members to provide the narrative for each recommendation. Narratives should include details/data to address the **why** we are making each recommendation, **how** the recommendation will be brought to fruition and to identify any **budgetary costs** associated with each recommendation.

Recommendations:

Refer to the 7/31/2023 interim report of Draft Recommendations prepared for Dr. Parvez Ahmed, Committee Chair. (NOTE: the draft recommendations are not numbered but are bulleted. The numbers are assigned in the minutes to correspond with the order in which they are listed on the document distributed)

1. The Office of Diversity and Inclusion should begin work on an interfaith and significant holidays calendar to be shared on COJ social media to educate the City of Jacksonville of its religious diversity.
 - a. This recommendation should be structured as a specific ask to the Mayor’s Office: develop specific messages to be placed on social media.
 - b. The focus should be on faith-based observances. Include overlooked religious communities/observances.
 - c. Focus on the holidays/observances that are important in Jacksonville communities. What are the holidays/observances that make sense to have mayoral messages.
 - d. Focus on the “faith” component, not just cultural. The recommendation could be to have the mayor appropriately acknowledge faith celebrations.
 - i. The intent is for the calendar to be a tool in service of a communications plan, a framework in which the city engages in outreach.
 - ii. Developed appropriately, it should be a living document that grows over time.

- iii. Other characteristics – the calendar should be culturally appropriate, but universal enough to resonate with many
 - e. This recommendation points to the need for a designated coordinator to work with the faith community so that events don't get missed, special accommodations don't get missed. The EEOC Officer may not always be aware of issues of a religious nature, so a Faith Outreach Coordinator would be in order.
 - i. Develop a job description for a Faith Outreach Coordinator.
 - ii. Research job descriptions with similar titles from elsewhere
 - iii. Similarly, Special Outreach Coordinators would be helpful in the following areas/communities: African American, Spanish-Speaking, LGBTQ+, etc.
 - iv. A crucial role for the coordinator – create awareness, opportunity for celebration, but educate others outside of the observance and foster discussion, empathy, understanding, etc.
 - v. Coordinators can assist with other initiatives – i.e., Affordable Care Act (ACA) Enrollments – outreach to specialized communities
 - vi. Healthcare enrollments could be assisted by the faith community by talking to their congregations and the city can support with visits to the congregations.
 - vii. Emergency Preparedness is another example where the Special Outreach Coordinators could help make a difference:
 - 1. Pre-Emergency States – disseminate information
 - 2. During Emergencies coordinate with faith-based community to offer shelter and other services to those in affected communities
 - 3. Post-Emergency States – follow-up care and assistance, information, etc.
- 2. The Office of Diversity and Inclusion should develop and implement an evaluation/assessment tool to ensure each COJ cultural event has been reviewed and checked for cultural sensitivities and quality control.
- 3. The Office of Diversity and Inclusion should work to expand the Martin Luther King, Jr. (MLK) Day of Observance:
 - i. "MLK Week of Service"
 - ii. Community led breakfast (uniting previously conflicting events)
 - iii. A Week of Service events/opportunities developed and supported by:
 - 1. Faith Congregations
 - 2. United Way
 - 3. COJ
 - iv. A Culminating Awards Dinner
- 4. Robust Funding and commitment to the Human Rights Commission (JHRC) –
 - i. Jimmy Midyette is working on the narrative and budget recommendations for augmenting JHRC
- 5. Mayor's Office and the COJ recognize our history, particularly moments of pain and conflict that have defined us.
 - i. Recommendation needs to be reevaluated:
 - 1. August 27 – Ax Handle Saturday needs to be recognized

2. Chair Parvez Ahmed will send the link to Kiara Nixon to reserve the City Hall Atrium to set up a display commemorating Ax Handle Saturday
 3. Chair Ahmed will make an effort to place on the mayor's agenda, but would be best to plan for 2024
 4. Email Chair Ahmed and Edwina Henry with history of how COJ has previously commemorated this day
 - ii. Erect a statue of James Weldon Johnson to be placed in James Weldon Johnson Park
6. COJ Safety and Disaster Preparedness Team communicate with faith leaders in order to ensure healing in the midst of tragedy and assist with dissemination of information in harder to reach communities.
 - a. Create one recommendation for a Coordinator and use the others as reasons why a Coordinator is needed.
 - b. Expand the narrative to include preparation – be proactive; pre-emergency focus is needed
 - c. Coordinate with Jacksonville's Emergency Preparedness Team to determine needs/gaps
 - i. Shore up security in faith communities
 - ii. Hospital chaplains, congregate care, assisted living communities
 7. Mayor's Office to work with the Duval School Board to make sure that the District Calendar is aware of and schedules its calendar aware of all religious holidays.
 - a. Alternate/Any Day Testing, not on a Saturday; i.e., FSCJ (Florida State College of Jacksonville) is a testing site
 - b. **NOTE:** The School Board is independent. Would like for someone to research what has been done in other areas. More information is needed before a recommendation could be made
 - c. What would be the "mechanism" by which the mayor's influence could reach the school board?
 - d. Table this recommendation for now
 8. Increase Mayor's Office and Chief Diversity Officer's attendance/participation for the following observances (based on community conversations feedback):
 - a. October 2023 – Jacksonville's Pride Month
 - b. November 2023 – OneJax Thanksgiving Interfaith Service (acknowledge and celebrate religious diversity in Jacksonville)
 - c. Acknowledgement that there are certain events in the city that are important for the Mayor and city to support
 9. Access to meetings and information about vacancies on COJ boards and commissions should be more transparent to encourage a diversity of applicants and that the work is clear to residents.
 - a. Continue to work on it.

Additional Recommendations

- #1. Include the United Nations' (UN) Calendar of International Days
 - a. Rationale is that international days may generate more interest/participation from the people
- #2. Incorporate the UN's September 21st International Day of Peace with Rev. Gundy's suggestion of a day of "Communal Observation"
 - a. Good recommendation
- #3. Have the mayor pre-record a message for each of the Heritage months – with current data and statistics relating to that segment of the population' presence in Jacksonville.
 - a. Fold recommendation into the calendar
- #4. The city of Jacksonville observes, and the mayor issues a proclamation for International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust – January 27th.
 - a. Good recommendation
- #5. The Mayor and the Office of Diversity and Inclusion are to attend the Jacksonville Jewish Israel Day Celebration.
 - a. Add to the list of calendar events
 - b. Careful not to over emphasize/highlight and compare tragedies – but what can we learn from each other.
- #6. The Longest Table – goal is to build relationships and enhance community.
 - a. Focus should be local and cultural
 - b. There needs to be some mechanism to bring people together
 - i. Consider the model of the neighborhood Department's Citizens Planning Advisory Committees (CPACS), organized by COJ Planning Districts
 - ii. Neighbors in each of the six (6) CPAC areas, meet on a monthly basis to discuss/share issues of concern with city departments, who in turn provide information on services, processes and programs to benefit the community COJ.net - Neighborhood Services Office
 - iii. The CPAC Model would bring together a diverse group of people, not necessarily faith based, with things in common – "Localized Conversations"

Other Comments:

- The Office of Diversity and Inclusion needs staffing and a budget to do the work. No one person can do it alone.
- Currently there is no Outreach Coordinators for:
Faith-based Communities
Hispanic Speaking Community
LGBTQ+ Community
- It may not be possible to get all that you ask for in your recommendations, but make the recommendations anyway – be detailed, provide support/data to make your case for why.

- Some holidays have urgency – list those out to the Chair, and he will work to get them on the mayor’s calendar.
- The Jewish Community Alliance (JCA) has a list of lifeguards for city pools.
 - a. Please share the list with the Subcommittee on Empowering Marginalized Communities
- Abandoned and underutilized properties owned by faith based and non-profit entities that could be used for events and activities
 - a. Please forward to the Subcommittee on Empowering Marginalized Communities

Assignments:

Rec. 1 Religious Calendar and Observations – Communications Plan:

Cultural Best Practices – will be part of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion

Rec 2. Cultural Competency Check List/Assessment Tool – will be part of the **Office of Diversity and Inclusion**

Rec 3. MLK Week of Service: **John Newman and Joey McKinnon**

Rec 4. Peace and Unity: **Joey McKinnon and Jimmy Midyette**

NOTE: because it is a separate subcommittee, Joey can send information directly to Jimmy

Rec 5. Recognizing Our History: **Kiara Nixon**

Investigate the status of the James Weldon Johnson Statue

Rec 6. Partnering with Emergency Preparedness: **Bishop Regina Jackson and Suzie Becker**

Must work separately, submit work to Co-Chair Rebekah Huto when complete; Work on the language of the “why.” What assistance would be needed from the city? Rework “in the midst” to show “proactive” Does the Faith-based Community have adequate resources if they are sheltering the community during or after emergencies? Touch base with what is already being done/coordinated between the city and the faith-based communities.

Rec 7. Remove from recommendations. Mayor does not have jurisdiction over the Schoolboard.

Rec 8. Increased participation from Mayor’s Office and Chief Diversity Officer: **Rebekah Huto and Susan Ticker** - Susan will handle the Holocaust related information and Rebekah will develop the list of Events.

Rec 9. COJ Boards and Commissions: **Jimmy Midyette**

The key recommendation to advance is the need for a full time, dedicated Faith-Based Coordinator.

The Chair would like to bring the committee back together in some form in the future, once the report has been submitted.

Joey McKinnon will also work on a Values Statement for the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, which will guide the work that is to be done.

Public Comments:

Mike Heard – expressed thanks for the opportunity to listen in and thinks the subcommittee is on a good path. He is hoping to become more involved. His wife will attend the Constituency and Community Outreach Committee Tuesday, August 1.

Meeting Adjourned at 7:05 pm

Resources:

[COJ.net - Neighborhood Services Office](#)