

Advisory Commission on Human Relations & Disability Issues

Meeting Minutes

October 2, 2017

5:30pm – 7:00pm

- I. Call to order at 5:43
- II. Members Present: Jessie Alvarez, Kim Dominic, Wendy Baker, Don Jolley, Cassandra Long, Thomas Alonzo, Karen Greenwood, Valorie Wells- Fenton, Jim Echols
Absent: Kendall McReynolds-excused, Winfred Manning-excused, John Coolidge has resigned, Monica Shonkwiler is considering resignation
Human Services: Phyllis Wallace
Legal: Ryan Haga
Visitor: Meredith Walrafen – New Roots for Refugees
- III. Approval of minutes from last two meetings – August minutes: Don Jolley moved for approval, 2nd by James Echols. Approved. September minutes: Correction by Thomas Alonzo: Guest Brian Shapley stated that KCK does have a nondiscrimination ordinance but it doesn't include gender identity or sexual orientation. Moved to approve as amended by Thomas Alonzo, 2nd by Cassandra Long. Approved.
- IV. Presentations & Reports

A. Meredith Walrafen – New Roots for Refugees, Catholic Charities of NE Kansas Refugee and Immigration Services

Training program for refugees in farming. Many refugees have farming skills but may not have language skills. They also may not have farming skills. Brings value to community for them to grow food here. New Roots offers a four-year training program. Juniper Gardens has quarter acre plots that are rented out to the refugees. The program requires attendance and participation as payment for the plots. They are not required to grow anything specific. Many participants from Burma, Nepal, and the Congo. The program teaches them how to grow plants in a greenhouse, record keeping, English. The goal is that people graduate off of the training site in four years. 18 have graduated to date. These graduates have purchased land from ¼ - 2.5 acres.

Cultivate Kansas City manages production. Heavier support provided to participants in first year

There is a need for tools, volunteers (support for farmers at farmers market – pick up vehicle at Catholic Charities, pickup farmer and supplies, help with setup and customer interaction), English tutoring with provided curriculum, mentoring graduated farmers.

How do they acquire the land? Often go through the UG Land Bank. Chief Properties offers inexpensive properties and have been helpful in finding alternative credit options.

A lot of the Karin (Burmese) purchase around 57th Street, the Chin (Burmese) are further west.

With current refugee reduction what is the future of the program? The people in the program have usually been here at least a year. Secondary migrants, especially from the Congo, settled somewhere else first but then came here and others followed them.

Catholic Charities has a citizenship program. Refugee status is acquired at a national level. Their legal work is done through Catholic Charities staff attorney.

Land is not tax exempt once the farmers graduate.

Reasons for popularity of KC for refugee resettlement is primarily due to cost of living.

Land bank is made up of properties given to UG or taken through tax sale.

Juniper Gardens is located at 3rd & Richmond.

Are there discrimination complaints from the refugees that are helped? There are barriers when language is a problem that may be interpreted as discrimination but probably aren't.

Cultivate KC has a cooperative CSA to provide adequate volume to support the CSA customers. The CSA through New Roots is 18 weeks for \$350 (7-8 items) or \$225 (4-5 items)

Vegetables are not certified organic, but practices are organic.

Our community is very embracing of new immigrants.

B. Recent events

1. NAACP PreCentennial Freedom Fund Banquet, September 16, 2017

Attended by Jessie, Valorie, Phyllis. Phyllis and Valorie both won silent auction items. Jessie met the editor of The Voice – and African-American newspaper.

V. Old Business

A. Pamphlet – Valorie and Jessie

Phyllis has not printed it. Need to meet outside of the meeting to make clear the actual needs.

B. Reconsider Meeting Time & Date

Originally advertised as being on Thursday and Monday may be inconvenient for some. After some discussion it was determined that Monday actually does work for most people. No changes proposed.

VI. New business

A. Upcoming Events:

October 5, 9 AM-12 PM – Implicit Bias Training – Memorial Hall – Don Jolley, Kim Dominic, Jessie Alvarez, and Thomas Alonzo attending. Karen Greenwood asked if it’s too late to sign up. Phyllis Wallace will check and will add her if she can.

October 6, 6:30 PM – Get to know each other gathering – Conroy’s Irish Pub & Restaurant, 4730 Rainbow Blvd – Valorie made reservations.

October 14 – 1-4 PM – WyOneDotte Celebration –Community America Ballpark – Kendall has a table and two chairs.

November 1, 6-8 PM – Meet & Greet – West Wyandotte Library – Phyllis Wallace will pick up the cake if someone orders it. We need to promote the event. Suggestions: Wyco Newsletter, The Voice, Dos Mundos, Library website, Push on FB (event to share), Flier for WyOneDotte Celebration, Valorie Wells Fenton will work on flier and press release. Invite other organizations like those who have presented at our meetings.

B. Continued discussion of project ideas

1. Person of the month - Valorie Wells Fenton read the criteria used by the NAACP. We need something that reflects our personality as an organization.
2. Small business connections? Thomas Alonzo suggested the Downtown Shareholders. May contact them to come speak. He will work on getting them for the next meeting.
3. Valorie Wells Fenton talked about the neighborhood associations. Many neighborhoods don’t have active associations. If you invite the fire department, they bring everything and it can really build enthusiasm for the neighborhood meeting.

C. Don Jolley discussed that the UG is 35 police officers short. Deputies are short 25. This is a nationwide problem. Jessie suggested that our mission is related to equality in many areas. Perhaps this is not the work of our commission, except that the police and fire do not represent the racial diversity of our community. Where we might have a place is to create a letter of recommendation advocating for more diversity. There are programs of recruitment being developed in middle and high schools, and programs with other communities through MARC – Core-4 Initiative. Ryan will look into whether we can adopt a resolution to address making a recommendation to the Police and Fire.

VII. Meeting adjourned at 6:55 PM

NEXT MEETING: November 6, 2017; 5:30-7:00 PM