

REIB City Council Committee

May 21, 2024 5:30 – 7:30 pm

Sharon Bushor Room, 149 Church Street, 1st Floor City Hall, Burlington, VT

Attendees:

Luis Calderin (OKAY!! OKAY!! Marketing and Creative)

Taryn Maitland (OKAY!! OKAY!! Marketing and Creative)

Councilor Melo Grant

Councilor Becca Brown McKnight

Councilor Gene Bergman

Phet Keomanyvanh (REIB)

Christian Berry (REIB)

Katie Greene (REIB)

Keren Sita (Community Member)

Christine Hughes (Richard Kemp Center)

Mark Hughes (Vermont Racial Justice Alliance)

Shanda Williams (Community Member, VT Truth and Reconciliation Commission)

Erin Jacobsen (Mayor's Office)

Meeting Convened at 5:33pm

Agenda

1. Motion to Approve the agenda

Council Bergman motioned to approve. Councilor McKnight seconded. Unanimous pass.

2. Motion to approve the meeting minutes from [April 30, 2024](#)

Council Bergman motioned to approve. Councilor McKnight seconded. Unanimous pass.

3. Public Forum

Keren Sita (community member) expressed frustration over the lack of funding for the REIB director and uncertainty about the situation. Hopes for representation of Pan-Africanists, the diaspora, and diverse food options.

4. REIB Updates

- **Juneteenth 2024 update from Okay!! Okay!! Marketing and Creative**

Luis Calderin and Taryn Maitland from OKAY!! OKAY!! Marketing and Creative, vendor managing Juneteenth event 2024, discussed details. The event, happening on Saturday, June 15th from 11am to 11pm at City Hall Park and Church Street Marketplace, will feature various activities. These include a gospel brunch, dance performances, and local artist showcases on the 95XXX stage. City Hall Park will host additional activities and performances, while the BCA Patio will host the Supper Club and offer diverse food options. Inside the BCA Building, the second floor will host wellness yoga and panel discussions. Evening events include a comedy club and spoken word poetry. Promotions will be carried out

through banners, flyers, and postcards, with support from Love Burlington for Chittenden County promotions. Councilor Grant suggested expanding advertising beyond Chittenden County, which Calderin confirmed would be done using a statewide email list, mailers, and social media. Regarding the comedy event, Councilor Grant proposed making it an evening affair without the expectation of it being family-friendly, a sentiment agreed upon by Calderin. Maitland provided clarification on the event layout, emphasizing a community meal setup for vendors and mentioning the Joyride activity on the College Street patio.

- **Embrace & Belonging update**

Phet Keomanyvanh (REIB) provided an update on the foundation poured at the end of April for the Embrace and Belonging project. Outreach efforts with the project team and NPAs are ongoing, including meetings with the site's management team to promote community involvement. Despite some discussion and negativity, most farmer's market vendors are supportive, and conversations with the community will continue. The unveiling ceremony is set for June 14th at Dewey Park, featuring Councilor Grant as a speaker, a short reception, DJ Craig Mitchell, presentations and a poetry slam by BHS Social Justice students, a kids' corner, and various local food options. Keomanyvanh will provide Councilor Grant with information for social media promotion. Councilor Grant raised concerns about the Bird Man Memorial, noting community interest in a permanent memorial without finalized plans. Councilor Grant is exploring options for temporary storage until a permanent location is determined.

- **Empowerment Fund grant update**

Christian Berry (REIB) updated the group on funding. Materials for a call to action are ready, pending clarification on the remaining budget. Acting Director Kerin Durfee, with the CAO, will obtain this information. There's an end-of-June deadline for fund spending. Councilor Grant proposed compiling a list of proposal submissions. Keomanyvanh provided context on the Empowerment Fund for BIPOC organizations, stressing the June 31st grant process completion. Councilor Grant expressed timeline concerns.

- **REIB Director Position discussion**

The committee discussed that both previous REIB Director Kim Carson and Human Resources Director Kerin Durfee resigned. Discussed that Director Durfee to remain as the acting director until the Mayor names a new interim director, which is expected to happen in the next few weeks. Director Durfee has agreed to assist with the transition to ensure continuity and minimize any confusion or frustration for the next interim director, considering the Mayor's office is also new. Erin Jacobsen (Mayor's Office) encouraged reaching out with any questions or concerns and confirmed there will always be an acting director, though there will not be a permanent director for FY25.

5. Community Forum

The purpose and structure of the community forum were discussed. Councilor Bergman highlighted the need for a clear structure, intentional invitations, and

specific topics, with Councilor Grant agreeing and suggesting the forum address issues like businesses, public safety, and BIPOC concerns in the Old North End. Councilor McKnight proposed integrating these discussions into the regular agenda instead of holding a separate forum.

Keren Sita raised a question about REIB's role in addressing bus issues, leading Councilor Grant to discuss GMT's funding challenges and the potential for state and city contributions, emphasizing transit equity. Sita also suggested exploring funding for standardized tests like the GRE and GMAT.

Mark Hughes (VRJA) stressed the importance of stability in the interim director role for FY25 and the need for community engagement in systemic racism work, advocating for the continuation of REIB's efforts. He also underscored the importance of reinitiating the Reparations Task Force, noting an upcoming legislative resolution.

On community health and wellness, Hughes highlighted the need for visibility and collaboration on youth safety and law enforcement re-envisioning. Christine Hughes announced a Juneteenth open house on June 19th, and Councilor Grant confirmed there would be no June meeting, with the next meeting scheduled for July 9th.

Sita expressed concerns about the Mayor's team's priorities, to which Councilor Grant responded by emphasizing the need for patience given budget constraints and public safety issues.

Mark Hughes announced upcoming community events, including the "Equity Matters" series and a homebuyer seminar. The meeting concluded with reminders of weekly budget reviews every Wednesday at 5:30 PM and a commitment to plan and promote upcoming community events.

6. Motion to Adjourn

Council Bergman motioned to approve. Councilor Grant seconded. Unanimous pass.

Meeting Adjourned at 6:53pm

Zoom information:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/92744162495?pwd=YVNhUUUzU3RFYjIwODFIzm8xTFc0Zz09>

Meeting ID: 927 4416 2495

Passcode: 225169