



REIB City Council Committee

December 19, 2023 5:30 pm - 7:30pm

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

Minutes

1. Motion to approve the agenda
 - a. Motion approved
2. Motion to approve the meeting minutes [October 17, 2023](#)
 - a. Motion approved
3. Public Forum
 - a. A member of the public thanked the efforts of the REIB City Council Committee, stressed the importance of equity while sharing from personal experience.
4. Gun Violence Affecting New Americans - VNAAC Report
 - a. VNAAC Mission and Vision
 - i. Mission: The Vermont New American Advisory Council (VNAAC) mission is to increase civic engagement, dismantle barriers to a sense of belonging, and expand opportunities for New American communities to thrive socially, culturally, and economically in Vermont.
 - ii. Vision: All New Americans have the right to belong and thrive in a place they call home
 - b. Proposal to the City of Burlington Around Public Safety/Gun Violence
 - i. VNAAC proposed to help address gun violence among New American youth and mitigate its impacts on New American



families through several processes with New American communities at the center of all activities

ii. Goals:

1. Come to a common understanding of the root causes
 - a. VNAAC Strategy: 5 community meetings with 110+ people
 - i. Somali Bantu Community Association (32)
 - ii. Congolese Association of Vermont (22)
 - iii. Nepal/Bhutanese Community (29)
 - iv. South Sudanese Community (22)
 - v. Other New Americans not members of an Association (9)
2. Create a safe place to start the healing and rebuilding of trust
 - a. VNAAC Strategy: Group Counseling for those impacted
 - i. Identification of a BIPOC Registered Psychotherapist
 - ii. 12 Somali-Bantu women most affected by gun violence identified to participate
 - iii. 10 group therapy sessions offered/3 were peer-to-peer support without a therapist
 - iv. Restorative Justice Circle for the youth involved in collaboration with families and the Community Justice Center of Burlington (this aspect of the proposal did not take place)
3. Shape a fairer and more inclusive system of care in the City of Burlington and the State of Vermont
 - a. VNAAC Strategy: Rebuilding trust by following up on sensitive issues raised during community meetings



- and ensuring an open line of communication between communities and city/state entities
- b. VNAAC to develop a comprehensive Project Report with specific recommendations for City and State entities to implement
- c. Goal: Come to a common understanding of the root causes of the problem
 - i. Common themes identified from the community meetings (questionnaire):
 1. Discipline issues involving DCF
 2. Cultural/Religion - Parenting Youth in America
 3. School System/Achievement gap/Career Counseling/Expulsion
 4. Empowering youth via community/After school programs/Lack of role models
 5. Substance use and accessibility
 6. Gun Education & Access
 7. Access to Basic Needs (housing with limited rooms, youth moving out without jobs getting involved in illicit activities)
 8. Community Isolation
 9. Discrimination
 10. Policing/Court System
 11. Cultural Humility in Healthcare
- d. Follow up on Findings
 - i. Rebuilding trust between Minority Groups and City and State Entities
 1. VNAAC convened the leaders of the Somali Bantu Association and the State Attorney Sarah George alongside Chief of Police Murad on 2 occasions
 2. VNAAC convened the Chief Medical Officer Dr. Bundock alongside the Health Equity Team of VDH and New



American Leaders to talk about Cultural Humility in Healthcare (autopsy issue)

3. VNAAC convened the DCF Director of Policy and Planning, Beth Sausville and her team to tackle the issue of minority children in state custody

- e. Summary of Finding Involving the City and Burlington School District
 - i. Cultural/Religion - Parenting Youth in America
 - ii. School System/Achievement Gap/Career Opportunities and Connections
 - iii. Supporting youth/After school programs/Lack of role models
 - iv. Substance use and accessibility
 - v. Gun Education & Access
 - vi. Access to Basic Needs (housing with limited rooms, youth moving out without jobs getting involved in illicit activities)
 - vii. Community Isolation/Sense of Belonging
 - viii. Discrimination
 - ix. Policing/Court System
- f. Recommendations for City of Burlington & BSD
 - i. City to create a position within the REIB Department to focus on New American Affairs
 - ii. City to allocate at least \$50,000/year equally distributed between established minority organizations. Equip their community rooms with technology, board games for cross generational gathering
 - iii. BSD/city to develop after school program opportunities by and for New Americans that will encompass their cultural/religious beliefs
 - iv. City of Burlington to work with the BSD to make Eid Al-Adha a citywide celebration when both schools and city departments are closed for the day
 - v. City/BSD to increase and strengthen parent education opportunities such as the BSD Parent University Program. Parent



Education activities should encompass substance use disorder, types of substances that exist as well as state gun legislations that exist and ADVOCACY

- vi. City to facilitate access to the YMCA for New American Women as part of their health and rejuvenating needs. Due to cultural and religious constraints, these women are excluded from swimming practices

- g. Councilors discussed the presentation; issues raised, recommendations suggested, personal observations, and suggested a presentation before the City Council.

5. Reparations Task Force Update

- a. Task Force to complete report which summarizes overseen research as well as recommendations which are to be looked over by experts in the field
 - i. Working on next steps and working with Richard Kemp center to figure out how they could work with the community
 - ii. Plan to present to City Council for its April meeting
 - iii. Next meeting January 23 2024
- b. Committee members discussed possible steps for the Task Force and addressed methodology as well as suggestions.

6. REIB Director Update

- a. The REIB Office has closed out 2 positions for its Communications and Community Engagement Manager and it's Community and Belonging Program manager
 - i. Currently hiring 2 other positions and planning to close out another two in the near year.
- b. Moving forward with Sole Source contract with OKAY!! OKAY!! For Juneteenth



- i. Will be going in front of the Board of Finance on January 8th. Looking at a full production contract for \$65,000 this year which is a little less than last year.
 - ii. Will not need a RFP because of the institutional history and the wealth of knowledge provided.
- c. Councilors Grant and Traverse expressed support for Juneteenth efforts. Councilor Dieng inquired on fundraising efforts
 - i. Fundraising efforts underway to expand celebrations to other communities of color as well as LGBTQIA+ Communities.
- d. Councilor Dieng inquired on NPA grievance issue
 - i. REIB is in charge of the grievance process. Working with and supporting CEDO's work.
- e. Councilor Dieng inquired on the status of REIB Reports
 - i. Progress temporarily on pause until rehiring/reorg is complete. Office working on Racial Equity Roadmap and Burlington Equity Report. Working on strategic plan to finalize progress.

7. Community Forum

- a. A Community Member gave input and suggestions regarding the relationship between women, independence, and marriage. Also provided suggestions regarding the naturalization of the New Americans. Gave commentary on City Councilors and municipal elected officials.
- b. Another community member inquired the possibility of establishing January 16th as a National Day of Healing.
 - i. City is interested in supporting it and progress is underway.

8. Propose Agenda Items for January

- a. Next meeting postponed to Wednesday 1/17/24 due to MLK day complications to city schedule.
- b. VNAAC Feedback and updates, potential for REIB support, etc.



9. Motion to Adjourn

- a. Motion to adjourn passed 7:03 PM

Zoom information:

Please click the link below to join the webinar:

<https://zoom.us/j/91656646174>