



MINUTES
AD HOC COMMITTEE ON DIVERSITY
Friday, December 16, 2016 @ 11:30 a.m.
Council Conference Room, 10th Floor, City Hall

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 11:33 a.m.

Committee Members

Councilmember Carol Wood, Chair
Councilmember Patricia Spitzley-excused
Councilmember Jody Washington- left at 1:27 p.m.

Others Present

Sherrie Boak, Council Staff
Brandon Waddell, Assistant City Attorney
Stacey Locke, Peckham
Jim Bale, Greater Lansing Labor Council
Heather Boyer, LLMSW
Sandy Wolfe, Peckham
Al Salas
Guillermo Lopez
Elaine Womboldt, Rejuvenating South Lansing
Tammy Lemmer, TCOA
Mark Dotson, Assistant City Attorney

Minutes

MOTION BY COUNCIL MEMBER WASHINGTON TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM DECEMBER 9, 2016 AS PRESENTED. MOTION CARRIED 2-0.

Introductions

Presentation

Heather Boyer, LLMSW; Legal Advocate- SAFE Place

Ms. Boyer began her presentation with her personal history and what brought her to her career working as a victim advocate. This included the creation of her non-profit organization working with victims on outreach, presentations and furthering her education. Ms. Boyer went on to work for SAFE Place out of Battle Creek, working in Eaton and Barry County filling a role in advocacy. This role involves referrals from the prosecutor's offices on domestic violence. As an advocate she communicates with the victim and provides any assistance they want.

Ms. Wolfe asked if any one refuses the assistance. Ms. Boyer did note they do not refuse the help, but 90% do not want to prosecute. There is a in the program in the Courts specific to domestic violence and once perpetrator go through the program it help them so they are not going to jail, but offered training programs in the system.

Mr. Bale asked if Ms. Boyer works with male victims also. Ms. Boyer confirmed there are females charged with the abuse as well, however the majority of the victims are female. It should be noted that victims have a hard time reaching out for assistance due to the stigma.

Councilmember Wood asked if Ms. Boyer was doing training with the gay and lesbian community, and same sex marriage. Ms. Boyer confirmed they are, but currently it appears this crime is under reported.

Councilmember Washington spoke in opposition to offering the abuser therapy. Ms. Boyer noted that each case is unique, and they are trying to get them prevention and treatment services. The therapy groups work in groups of peers holding peers accountable. Councilmember Washington noted that victims also need the counseling and assistance. Ms. Boyer noted this organization and others are there to connect victims with assistance whenever they are ready, however some victims go back to their abuser seven or eight times before they ask for assistance.

Councilmember Wood asked Ms. Boyer if her organization is providing resources to help children cope with the situations. Ms. Boyer stated they work with the victim directly, and the children would be considered secondary victims, but in most cases Child Protective Services are automatically notified and they then assess the needs. Ms. Boyer offered to provide additional information to Mr. Lopez to forward to the LSD School Board.

Ms. Lemmer pointed out that there is no State funding but only Federal funding for victims advocacy.

Ms. Boyer ended by distributing brochures and Crime Victims Rights Handbook.

Final Report to Council on Ad Hoc Committee Activities

Councilmember Wood outlined her opinion on the importance of the group discussions and presentations. She noted that some of the honest and in-depth discussion would not have happened before a TV camera, and Councilmember Washington added that with the discussion within the Committee it helps to determine if legislative changes need to be made.

- HIV Treatment and Presentation, presentation by Todd Heywood. Council Members suggested a second presentation on the topic to the Committee of the Whole. It was also noted that even after the presentation there needs to be community education, and continued work to eliminate the stereo-types of those with AIDS. The group learnt that people taking the medication are close to 99% cleared from transmitting. Lastly, the group agreed the presentation should be taped and replayed on the City channel on Comcast in a 30 minutes clip to advocate.
- Islamic Center of East Lansing- they were educated on a "101 Class" open to discussion on the congregation and a community was dealing with the Muslim community. Information on the class will be emailed to the group by Mr. Bale who attended.

- Hispanic Community brought to the forefront that there is still no equality between some organizations when it comes to their events. This presentation addressed making sure as a government the City represents and has diversity throughout. Mr. Salas did update the group that the Cesar Chavez Committee is working on fundraising for their annual event to beautify the parking lot known as Cesar Chavez Plaza in Old Town. During the original presentation Mr. Salas had brought to the fore front that the Latino community feels that the City is not hiring or promoting the Latino community.

Council Member Washington provided Mr. Salas with group sponsorship forms that she was provided by Council Member Wood, and recommended Mr. Salas putting together a package to obtain sponsorships soon.

- Resolution Center provided information on dealing with community problems and their resources.
- Code Compliance presentation focused on rental dwellings, working with the seniors in the community and addressing residents who have English as a second language. Recently with the discussion on land contracts in City Council Ad Hoc committees, there was an overview provided on a policy on land contracts. The group looked for encouraging changes to assist with opportunities for people with disabilities. The group did voice a frustration with the City Works complaint tracking program.
- Housing Grants & LEAD Grant Funding was presented by Barb Kimmel with the City Planning & Neighborhood Development Department. This was on HUD grants, lead testing procedures and equipment. The group was encouraged by making this presentation a 30 minute program on the City cable channel.

Council Member Wood proposed having CITY TV representatives at a future meeting to discuss the options for programming.

- MSU Extension Program – presented on the number of populations they work with. There did appear to be some dis-joint between they organizations they work with.
- LLMSW Legal Advocate- S.A.F.E.Place – The group learned what is offered through the program and by Ms. Heather Boyer, but also that more connections need to be made with the schools. There needs to be services the families can get and a shift in the interpretation of the warning signs. Suggestions were made to Mr. Lopez, who sits on the LSD School Board, that the schools should look into peer support groups, and have counselors that deal with non-academic issues

Councilmember Wood stated that the recent draft will be sent to everyone for review between the holidays so it can be in final form for the last meeting on January 6, 2017. She suggested that if any attendee to the Committee would like to submit a separate letter to Council to be attached to the report to submit something in 500 words or less from their organization.

Councilmember Wood then addressed the request from the last meeting by Mr. Lopez for a resolution declaring Lansing as a Sanctuary City. Council Staff researched cities that were noted as Sanctuary Cities in the resolution, in addition spoke to the City Attorney Smiertka. Council stated informed the group that in reviewing the city list, there were some that were disputing the "designation" stating they did not want it, and others that had removed themselves from the list completely. Mr. Smiertka had informed Council Staff that they were requiring further review on the resolution and topic because their findings so far so there could be legal issues, legal ramifications and financial issues if the City adopted it. Mr. Lopez stated that it was originally written in 2009 by Action for Greater Lansing, not adopted and LEAD was bringing it forward this time for consideration for adoption. Council Member Wood noted that she had received a call from a group called BMM who will be speaking at the Call to the Public at the first meeting in January, 2017 in support of it. Mr. Lopez stated he would forward another version of the resolution to Council staff from Oberland, Ohio.

Adjourn

Adjourn at 1:35 p.m.

Submitted by,

Sherrie Boak, Council Office Manager

Place on file 1/6/2017