



Racial Equity, Inclusion and Belonging
149 Church Street
Burlington, VT 05401
M: 802-503-2513

REIB City Council Committee

January 17, 2023 5:00pm – 7:00pm

Sharon Bushor Room, 149 Church St, 3rd Floor City Hall, Burlington VT

Attendance:

Ali Dieng, Kim Carson, Mohamed Jafar, Sydney VanTassel, Adam Kersch, Sandrine Kibuey, Belan Antensaye, Phet Keomanyvanh, Katie Greene, Maea Brandt, Perri Freeman, Pat Payne, Ines Castro, Melo Grant, Jayme Bauer, Isaac (VRJA)

Link to Meeting Recording:

<https://zoom.us/rec/share/OzesuW08w4pNbqgiNlyPMN9WNxvKd6H4wDeU57deQNXjXq1LU5BSKK3-tfM84ChK.sIDtHEwGZgalF2H>

Passcode: .QbEW1P4

Start Time: 5:02

Minutes

1. Motion to approve the agenda
Maea Brandt approves agenda, Ali Dieng seconds.
2. Motion to approve the meeting minutes [December 13, 2022](#)
Maea Brandt approves minutes, Ali Dieng seconds.
3. Public Forum
No Comment



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4. VNAAC Update – Understanding Public Safety Issue Affecting New American Communities

Sandrine Kibuey shares a presentation on VNAAC Supporting Youth and Families and walks through VNAAC's history, mission, and vision. This project began December 2022 – November 2023. Describes the process of connecting with New American leaders and the identified 5 communities. VNAAC partners with various organizations like the Somali Bantu Community Association of VT, the Congolese Community of VT, the Sudanese Foundation of VT, the Burundians Community Association of VT, and a leader of the Nepali community. Common themes include discipline issues involving DCF, Parenting Youth in America, the school system, and more. Goals include:

- Creating a safe place to start the healing and rebuilding of trust
- Shaping a fairer and more inclusive public safety and protection system in the City of Burlington

Melo Grant describes challenges with the police chief concerning community engagement and lack of trust. Sandrine describes the process where city officials and leaders need to be involved in these conversations.

Maea Brandt asks about language access in finding and serving the community with a psychotherapist. Interpretation services are provided throughout the entire project. Reporting will also be done with interpretation services.

Kim Carson asked about trust with the municipal departments and asks about the areas of significant distrust in municipal departments? Ali Dieng & Sandrine Kibuey discuss police, DCF, and lack of follow-up when involved in crime. Youth programming with parks and recreation to support New American youth. Discuss equitable programming and each community's cultural specificities on how to address the lack of empowerment and how their children's time gets spent. Organizations can provide this programming and more.

Sandrine describes that 80% of the participants are Burlington residents and for demographics, VNAAC has youth, parents, and grandparents and a wide range of participants. Symphorien describes the process with more than 40 people and the languages involved. Most of the people interviewed are in Burlington and are parents and youth. Unfairness is a problem for all communities. The city government lacks professional training to respect the values of the community. Phet Keomanyvanh asks about child communication with parents and language access and concerns.



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Perri Freeman asks about DCF. Sandrine describes the community's role with DCF and how the organization is seen as taking away their children. There are concerns about DCF as a whole and their placement outside of the children's home. Ali Dieng asks, what's next for this work? Sandrine describes the data compilation and their system to identify common threads in pairing. Then, VNAAC will have to go back to the community again and make sure what was heard is verified.

Perri Freeman asks about therapy and mental health resources in schools or wherever they would be located. Sandrine describes the importance of mental health and trauma services, especially for refugees and asylees. This is a new process and hopefully, we will have accommodations and recommendations to implement in the future.

Jayme Bauer asks if there are resources for those who need therapy beyond this project after funds are spent. Sandrine describes how the services have been connected with health insurance. This is new for many families and culturally, it is a cultural barrier & taboo to talk about mental health services. Kim Carson asks about looking at other models of therapy (international) and asks about research internationally. Look at therapeutic models through a non-Western lens and evidence-based models of addressing mental health. Sandrine describes that they have found a woman of African descent that involves a cultural process in her therapeutic model. Ali Dieng describes how group therapy consists of peer-to-peer support. Continued care sometimes will not be covered if not traditional and is something to think about in the future.

Belan Antensaye asks about individual versus group therapy. Sandrine discusses the process and how they picked group therapy for the community-based families, and youth have one-to-one sessions. Capacity is VNAAC's main issue.

5. Explore the Creation of REIB Commission – Gathering Inputs from BIPOC Organizations and the Community

Phet Keomanyvanh describes Vermont Professionals of Color attending the next REIB Council Committee Meeting in February. We had VRJA and the Congolese Association at our previous meeting.

6. REIB Department Updates



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Kim Carson describes the Annual Report for the Office of the REIB. Discusses Food Insecurity Program, Cannabis Retail Policy, Supplier Diversity Program, and more work from FY 22. Talks about what the future will look like for the office, including expanding the domains to the economy, health, social and human development, physical environment, and community and belonging. Discusses Minding the Gap and the process of engaging the public in the future. How do we move our department past the 60% fund of ARPA and how do we make our department more sustainable? The primary focus for 2023 is continued strategic roadmap development and becoming the hub for REIB updates and for other equity work across the city. We will be leading the task force on increased community violence will mean taking a broader look and communicating community safety data. We will continue the work of the reparations task force, the sculpture project will be unveiled in June of 2023, REIB-focused education, homeownership policy and more.

Melo Grant asks questions about public safety data and shares concerns about active police chief. Maea Brandt discusses her conversation with Chief Murad and that he seemed very positive moving forward about engagement, community, and community safety. As a community, if there are specific things, we can ask the chief about public safety and engagement, we can do that. Melo Grant discusses Tyeastia Greene in relationship with the police department and CNA corporation. Refers councilor Brandt to May 24th Commissioner Meeting.

Dieng discusses Annual Report and the Strategic Plan. Asks about training moving forward and Kim Carson responds that the Racial Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Focused Education is a long-term effort, rather than a one-off training. Each position will have a component of training and REIB wants staff to go and respond to specific domain requests. REIB is aiming to design and deliver trainings specific to needs. Dieng shares concerns that the task force on Increased Community Violence can be a duplication of VNAAC's work. Kim Carson describes that she is looking for trends over time to assess violence issues with a lens of racial equity.

7. Community Forum

Pat Payne from the Board of Health introduces himself and shares about future connections with work. Ines Castro also introduces herself in her role as Board of Health.



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Melo Grant discusses further thoughts on the chief of police and the Mayor. Describes pattern of behavior when reviewing certain instances of interacting with black bodies and unnecessary tactics.

Next meeting is ~~February 14th – 5:00 PM~~ February 21, 2023

8. Motion to Adjourn
Maea Brandt motions to adjourn and Ali Dieng seconds.

End Time: 6:35

Minutes by Sydney VanTassel