

MINUTES

**Constituency and Community Outreach**

Mayor Donna Deegan Transition Committee

Date: Tuesday, August 22, 2023

Location: Jewish Family & Community Services, 8540 Baycenter Rd., Jacksonville, FL 32256

Chair: Ahmed, Parvez

In Person: Huto, Rebekah; Meyer, Whitney; Patz, Melanie; Ticker, Susan; Dumont, Georgette; Fleet, Janis; Hilt, Madison; Decunto, Mario;

ZOOM: Watson, Cindy; Midyette, Jimmy; Jackson, Cynthia; Mann, Angela; McCoy, Rosemary; Zhou, Wei

**1. Meeting called to order at 6:03 pm by Parvez Ahmed, Chair**

**2. Discussion on Final Report:**

The Chair apologized for not having a “typed up agenda,” but indicated that today’s meeting is to take reports from each of the subcommittee chairs.

The Chair thanked the Co-Chairs for their work and thanked those who participated on each of the subcommittees for their contributions and service. Ahmed further stated that the subcommittees delivered well beyond expectations. “The effort put forth is a testament as to who we are as a city and what we can achieve for the collective good.”

Ahmed indicated that many of the subcommittee members may not have known each other before coming to the table, but the conversations never felt awkward because everyone came from a good place in their hearts and desired to see the city succeed. This was his first time serving on a mayoral committee and he relied on the group to guide the efforts. He further stated that “words fail to capture the moment” and that he wants to share his congratulations and appreciation for the work of the subcommittees. He hopes that the committee will “stick with the mayor and himself,” as this is just the first step in a long journey.

Additionally, Ahmed thanked Edwina Henry for ensuring the timely posting of the public meeting notices and the administrative work required to support the committee. He said a special thank you to the Office of the General Counsel for keeping the Committee on track with the Sunshine Laws, and finally he thanked the Jewish Family & Community Services for graciously hosting the committee meetings and complimented the very convenient location. Ahmed then turned over the meeting to the subcommittee chairs to recap the main highlights of their recommendations.

**3. Subcommittee Reports:**

**Empowering Marginalized Communities** – Whitney Meyer and Melanie Patz

The subcommittee has created a flexible document and has reduced the number of recommendations from 21 down to 19. Recommendations were grouped into six (6) categories: (1) Youth Government Engagement and Workforce Development; (2) Boards and Commissions; (3) Physical Infrastructure; (4) Business Development; (5) Safety; and (6) Community Engagement.

**Recommendation Highlights:**

(1) Youth Government Engagement and Workforce Development: combining two recommendations into one to create a program.

(2) Boards and Commissions: create a mayoral board and/or commission to address the specific needs of marginalized communities such as Re-entry, Refugees and Immigrants, LGBTQ+, Spanish and Haitian-Creole Speaking communities, etc. A full review of all boards and commissions was also recommended, in addition to restoring the Jacksonville Human Rights Commission (JHRC) back to previous levels of funding and staffing.

Establishing an annual board retreat to bring board leadership together to create opportunities for synergy and reduce redundancy was also recommended.

(3) Physical Infrastructure: after discussion it was decided to remove recommendation #10 as inspections of public housing is already a regular occurrence and that “informing residents of their rights,” might be an opportunity to partner with Legal Aid to develop such a program.

It was felt that recommendation #9, “review city expenditures on infrastructure by zip code or census tract to ensure equity in investment” needed more details. Recommendation #11, “ensure all City of Jacksonville facilities provide a family bathroom,” was left intact.

(4) Business Development: Recommendations 12 & 13 pertaining to Jacksonville’s Small and Emerging Businesses (JSEB) are very detailed, but the Chair felt that the section is too long. The Chair was given authority to “better shape” the document into a full report, incorporating recommendations from all the subcommittees.

Recommendations 12 & 13 call for a review of the JSEB Disparity Study, its participants, and the recruitment of participants to ensure diversity; as well as a review and implementation of recommendations from the JSEB Disparity Study.

(5) Safety: Recommendation is to move oversight of “group” violence Intervention to the city, in accordance with best practices. A set of new recommendations were sent to the Chair 8/22 to be reviewed. Mario Decunto and Angela Reyes will refer the new recommendations to the Non-Profit Subcommittee for incorporation, if not then they will be added here.

(6) Community Engagement: Recommendation #15, research City of Jacksonville as a “Welcoming City” is well documented on pages 20 & 21 of the subcommittee’s larger document. Recommendation #16, implementing a week of service volunteer activities during the Dr. King Holiday, is being addressed by the Non-Profit and Higher Education Revitalization Subcommittee. #17 is removed as it is outside of mayoral functions. #18 is a recommendation to create a lien forgiveness program. It is well documented on page 28 of the larger subcommittee document, the same is true for recommendation #19 which advocates for the mayor to officially acknowledge Ax Handle Saturday.

Recommendation #20 – create an Office of Diversity and Inclusion is well documented on pages 28 & 29. This recommendation emerged from various subcommittee conversations. Recommendation #21, strengthen Disability Services with effective communication and additional funding/partnerships with other aligned non-profits.

***The Chair sees a need for increased support for the disabilities community. The subcommittee discussed the possibility/desirability of changing the name from “Disabled Services” to “Citizen Accessibility Services.” Ahmed will explore further.***

***The Chair stated that there will be some overlap between this committee and other committees; but not to be concerned, as it keeps the conversation moving forward. He reminded the committee that all the reports being created are “living documents” and will be “advisory” for the administration to work on.***

#### **Non-Profit and Higher Education Revitalization** - Angela Mann

This subcommittee examined the relationships between Higher Education, Non-Profits and the city. Members met with non-profit leaders to identify the scope of interactions and to develop action items.

Subcommittee members interviewed 20 leaders. Themes explored: process non-profits go through when working with the city. Increased coordination across non-profits and collaboration with the liaison between the city Office of Strategic Partnerships was created; many non-profits were not familiar with the office.

The subcommittee also conducted a census of approximately 700 non-profits and dashboard details of how the City of Jacksonville invested in nonprofits after past three (3) years. Many are not aware of how to connect with the city.

#### **Non-Profit issues uncovered:**

- Annual funding cycles – uncertainty of continued funding; political whims;
- City has a difficult process for granting dollars; after starting projects/work, many non-profits have to wait 6-months before receiving any funding;
- Big hold-ups – Office of the General Counsel process of oversight slows down work

The Higher Education Community reported having very little communication with city leaders, which was very disappointing to higher education leadership. Florida State College at Jacksonville (FSCJ) has done a lot of very targeted workforce programs; but there is a disconnect between what University North Florida (UNF) could offer in terms of helping the city evaluate initiatives, ensure accountability, etc.

#### **Higher Ed issues uncovered:**

- Lack of coordination
- Duplication of effort
- Non-Profits need recognition for work done during COVID – has done really good work on behalf of the city

#### **Non-Profit Recommendations:**

- Hold an Annual Event – Non-Profit Recognition Breakfast
- Short term – streamline funding process;
- Common application
- Dedicated General Counsel Staff dedicated to approvals
- Electronic workflow system – doc-u-sign
- Long term – decision-making is too variable: approvals by board and sometimes staff; find an external consultant to screen all applications and send to the board – don’t leave up to staff
- Keep metrics the same, regardless of administration
- Extend grant cycle – one year may not be enough

### Higher Ed Recommendations:

- Short term – it would be helpful to establish a point-of-contact; a liaison – to talk to the higher ed community about meeting certain city needs. Snyder Church, next to the museum of Contemporary Art (MoCA) could be developed into a community resource to explore the role each institution can play without duplication.

***The Chair said that all recommendations were on point and that he was impressed by the number of leaders the subcommittee interviewed.***

***Ahmed requested the names of all subcommittee members who participated and the names of experts consulted. This information will go into the larger transition report. The thanked the subcommittee for a great job.***

### Interfaith Relations – Rebekah Huto

The Interfaith Subcommittee will be meeting tomorrow (8/23/2023), to finalize recommendations:

- Cultural Competency Check will fall under the Office of Diversity and Inclusion and will need to add a Faith Outreach and Disaster Coordinator; may need several positions.
- Working with a massive excel spreadsheet, utilizing four or five different calendars as a “working document,” the final produce should be part of the Mayor’s Office to foster awareness, utilizing popular social media.
- Creating a Master Calendar, to be held in the Office of Diversity and Inclusion.
  - Mayor Proclamation on 3/31 – Cesar Chavez Day; it will be good for the Mayor to support
  - Mayoral Participation in 2/22/24 Fighting Hate In The City 5K Race – sponsored by JCA, YMCA of NEFL; perhaps Mayor Deegan could issue a proclamation or even run in the race
  - Building out MLK Week of Service; in conjunction with the Non-Profit and Higher Ed Subcommittee
  - Recommending the “Longest Table” be expanded into other zip codes; actual community conversations
  - Mayoral Support of 11/20/2024 Transgender Day Remembrance – Riverside Event
  - Commemoration of the Creation of the State of Israel 5/14 – ***this will require a larger conversation with the Jewish and Palestinian Communities and other stakeholders***

***There are formal channels to request mayoral appearances and proclamations. Goto [coj.net](http://coj.net), under the Mayor’s Office [COJ.net - Proclamations](http://coj.net)***

The Chair, Parvez Ahmed, will put together the final report and will use the “editorial prerogative” to shorten the length. He stated that he will honor every subcommittee that has made recommendations. He wants to ensure consistency in formatting, etc.

### What Happens Next?

The Chair stated that some of the recommendations will be part of the mayor’s agenda, some recommendations are a bit more complex and will require City Council consideration and may have some budgetary impacts.

The Chair will share the final draft of recommendations with the entire committee. Corrections are to be made via one-way communications from members to the Chair. At some point, the Chair would like to

reconvene the full committee to report out what could be done, what needs to be deferred, etc. He would like to have an “on-going” conversation, in his role as Diversity and Inclusion Chief. He will maintain an “open door” policy and would love to hear from the committee.

### **Public Comments**

- Cynthia Jackson – would like to see “Juneteenth” added to the mayor’s calendar. She did not see too many “local” events this year. She would like to see plays and other events involving the community.
  - Rebekah Huto, Interfaith Relations, responded by stating there is a “Juneteenth” event at the Florida Center and that any additional events should be sent to the Chair, Parvez Ahmed. Additionally, it was pointed out that “Juneteenth” is already on the calendar. Furthermore, the Rhoda Martin Cultural Heritage Center at the Jacksonville Beach, has an annual event.

The Chair reiterated that the calendar is a starting point and that more events will be added as the community continues to build specific events and he encouraged the committee to continue to bring community celebrations to his attention.

**Adjournment** – 7:15 pm.

***In closing, the Chair thanked everyone for their wonderful support and efforts. In turn, the committee thanked Parvez Ahmed for being such a great chair and noted that their work was “history making.”***

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