Welcome Dayton Committee Meeting Minutes

March 13, 2019

Members Present: Commissioner Matt Joseph, Julius Amin, Melissa Bertolo, Rachel Gut, Dani Heeter, Stephanie Keinath, Karla Knox-Gordon, Mike Lehner, Jessica Ramos, Joe Spitler, Teresa Troyer, Tom Wahlrab

Ex-Officio/Staff: Chief Richard Biehl, Monica Harris, Eugenie Kirenga, Martha-Jeannette Rodriguez

1. Commissioner Joseph welcomed attendees and called the meeting to order at 7:38 am. Since there were a few new people, the Commissioner asked that everyone introduce themselves and their title/affiliation. All attendees introduced themselves.

2. The Commissioner asked for comments on the minutes for the January 2019 meeting and a motion to approve minutes. Stephanie Keinath motioned to approve and Rachel Gut seconded.

3. The first topic of discussion was General Updates.
   a. Chief Biehl gave an update about the incident/damage at the Al-Rahman Mosque (i.e. mosque owned by Islamic Society of Greater Dayton) that DPD is investigating.
      i. The Chief provided copies of the statement that DPD had released regarding the incident and DPD’s investigation.
      ii. Currently, there is no evidence of bias crime specifically, but DPD is treating the incident as a bias crime until proven otherwise.
      iii. Other religious institutions (including two churches) have also been damaged recently.
      iv. DPD has two persons of interest that they are actively searching for; pictures of these individuals have been disseminated to all patrol staff and the community.
      v. DPD has also been in contact with the Islamic Society of Greater Dayton (ISGD) and has been working with My Project USA and the Valley Street mosque to educate and support. For example, DPD provided support for Friday prayers at ISGD.
      vi. Melissa Bertolo asked if the incident at the ISGD mosque happened during morning prayers. The Chief said yes, and that three people were present.
      vii. Melissa asked how DPD would identify an incident as a bias crime (i.e. what are the criteria that define “bias crime”?). The Chief explained that motive would need to be established through means such as a specific hate statement, graffiti left at the scene, or a pattern of conduct targeting a specific group.
      viii. The Chief added that the community responses to the crime have been heartfelt; many community members have raised money to help replace the windows at the mosque and reached out to show support in other ways.
   b. Commissioner Joseph gave an update about the KKK rally happening on May 25th.
      i. He explained that the County initially declined the group’s permit application for the event, since the application used fake names; after the application was re-submitted with correct names, the County had to approve the permit.
ii. The Mayor started a coalition to plan/organize any counter-activities. Any counter-activity is likely to happen on the same day, but at a different location.

iii. Commissioner Joseph stated a desire to have a strong showing from the Committee for any planned counter-activity.

iv. Chief Biehl added that the event is concerning to DPD. DPD is planning resource allocation to ensure safety during the event. The [KKK] group is small in number and will most likely be calm, so DPD’s main concern is about counter-protestors—not all have noble intentions. In particular, DPD’s larger concern is people who may come from around the country [outside of our community] and leave behind damage. DPD officers are trained in crowd control and will also have access to additional resources for this event.

v. Mohamed Al-Hamdani noted that groups such as these thrive on public reaction. He wondered if we might be giving the group too much free publicity and thus over-legitimizing it. He added that he would rather know who these people are in the community.

vi. Commissioner Joseph said that the goal [of any counter-action] is to draw energy away from Courthouse Square.

vii. Monica Harris commented that Erica Fields and the Human Relations Council (HRC) are considering releasing a statement about the event; she will pass on Mohamed’s thoughts to Erica.

viii. Joe Spitler added that, incidentally, the local motorcycle outlaw gang leader died and the funeral will be this weekend. Gang members will be armed and, as part of their ritual, will fire guns at the end of the funeral. These events are relatively calm events; this weekend’s funeral will be held at the Jefferson Township Fairgrounds.

c. Monica gave an update about the Ohio We Build the Wall group.

i. The national group was started in December 2018 after a failed Kickstarter campaign (that raised $20 million, but all funds were refunded because money could not go to the federal government as the fundraiser advertised), and there is an Ohio chapter.

ii. The Ohio chapter held a rally in Cincinnati yesterday (3/12).

iii. Monica has been in touch with welcoming initiative partner in Cincinnati (Cincinnati Compass) and is making the Committee aware of this group in case they come to Dayton.

d. Melissa gave an update about the Welcome Dayton positioning process (for making statements in response to present issues).

i. The sub-group working on the positioning process has agreed to keep the current process as is.

ii. In addition, the group feels that there is a need to establish a separate advocacy group and will look into advocacy training.

iii. Melissa asked anyone who is interested in being part of a separate advocacy group to contact her.
iv. Jessica Ramos asked if there has been any consideration of having a media representative on the Welcome Dayton Committee. Mohamed suggested Marcia Barnhart (?); he will send Monica Marcia’s contact information.

4. Sub-Committee Updates:

   a. Community, Culture, and Arts: Rachel Gut said that the Community, Culture, and Arts Sub-Committee needs members. Anyone who is interested should contact her.
      i. The Sub-Committee is also planning an Ambassador Reception for May 23rd, at which a redesigned structure/plan for the Ambassador program will also be launched.

   b. Education: Dani Heeter said that the Sub-Committee has been talking about and planning an international student career fair targeting college students.
      i. The next meeting is March 21st from 12-1 pm at St. John’s Church [where the MVCTC ESOL program is held].
      ii. She initially casted a wide net for members, but there is always room for more.

   c. Government and Justice: Joe summarized topics from the last meeting.
      i. The Sub-Committee has been talking about language resources and community advocacy, particularly related to upcoming events and having Swahili and Russian language access for DPS advocacy.
      ii. Jessica said that ABLE has received a $1.3 million grant over 3 years to execute a Community Lawyering Project. The project will focus on the Twin Towers, Walnut Hills, Edgmont, and other Choice Neighborhoods. The project is grassroots, targeting minority and economically disadvantaged neighborhoods. Katie Kersh will be Director of the project, which will also include a staff attorney, another part-time attorney, and an outreach/community engagement specialist.
      iii. ABLE is also working with Miami Valley Community Action Partnership and the City to conduct driver’s license reinstatement clinics.
      iv. Jessica has proposed to Chief Biehl the idea of DPD hiring an Immigrant Outreach Coordinator/Specialist (likely a civilian position); the Chief is on board with the idea.
      v. Joe said that the Sub-Committee had a discussion of labor trafficking, which is more prevalent than human trafficking. Since there are many conflicting definitions of these types of trafficking, the group will bring in someone to do a training on trafficking; Jessica noted that the trainer has more experience with domestic victims and not as much experience with foreign victims.
      vi. Finally, Joe said that the Montgomery County (?) Criminal Justice Department Council has a communications and resources manual that includes a portion about provision of interpreters. The manual has not been updated since 2002; the Sub-Committee is looking to update the manual and redistribute it.
      vii. Jessica gave kudos to Chief Biehl. She had a conversation with state police in Philadelphia recently who are looking to establish a community policing policy
and had heard about the DPD and ABLE partnership. She was able to talk about
the great work that the Chief and DPD have done in community policing.

d. Natural Helpers: Tom Wahlrab said that the small group working on DPS issues
continues to meet.

i. The DPS group held a celebration at St. John’s Church to celebrate ELL students.
The event included art, workshops by ABLE, song, dance, and spoken word
performances; about 50 students attended. The group continues to support
students and ESL teachers, and to monitor ongoing issues.

ii. The Natural Helpers Sub-Committee is considering a second round of the
Natural Helpers training. They have been meeting with the Dayton Metro
Library about supporting the second cohort; DML would provide space and
manage the program.

iii. Tom also mentioned that he, Melissa, and Sally Lamping published a journal
article about the Natural Helpers program and he will try to find a copy to share;
Monica may have a copy and will send out to the Committee if she finds it.

5. Other Updates:

a. Mike Lehner gave an update about the refugee resettlement program’s Reception and
Placement (R&P) numbers.

i. CSSMV had 245 clients in the last fiscal year; 184 of them came through direct
resettlement. CSS had a high number of secondary migrants (61 households). Of
the new arrivals, 144 were eligible for employment; 138 gained employment
within the allotted timeframe and there was an increase in the average hourly
wage (over the prior year) those employees were earning. Average hourly wage
last year was up to $12.50/hour.

ii. CSSMV has been looking for a new home for its refugee warehouse; the
warehouse is now housed at St. Vincent de Paul’s.

iii. The Ohio State Bar Association featured an article in a recent issue about Buzz
Portune, an attorney who has donated 960 billable hours in the last year to help
refugees complete green card adjustment applications. He meets with refugees
Tuesday mornings from 9 – 1 and, in the last year, got 60 green card
applications approved.

iv. CSSMV is expecting an increase in the number of refugees this fiscal year; in the
first few months of this FY, no other Catholic Charities organizations in Ohio
have been receiving refugees. The large majority of the refugees CSSMV is
resettling are from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, but they did resettle
12 refugees from Afghanistan.

b. Stephanie gave an update about the Immigrant and Refugee Employer Roundtable
Series that Welcome Dayton, the Chamber, CSSMV, and MVCTC are partnering on.

i. First event was last year and three events are planned for this year.

ii. 34 employers and workforce professionals attended the recent February event
[first of 2019]; the event included employer testimonials and training. The next
event is on April 25th and will focus on internal culture and onboarding.
iii. Employers have also expressed interest in learning more about the legal aspects of hiring immigrants and refugees.

iv. The final event in this year’s series will be held in October.

c. Monica gave an update about the Diversity Caucus’s Community Engagement Forum on February 23rd.

i. About 140 people attended the event, which was focused on connecting immigrants/refugees, immigrant/refugee-serving organizations, and community members interested in volunteering with these groups.

ii. Monica also mentioned that the Welcoming America Conference is coming up from May 15 – 17, and that anyone interested in attending can ask her for a discount code.

d. Stephanie mentioned that the U.S. Chamber hosts a fly-in every year in D.C. The Dayton Area Chamber and Dayton Development Coalition attend this event, and this year there is a track about the business case for immigration reform.

e. Tom added the following:

i. The national Chamber gave Welcome Dayton an award in 2012.

ii. The Diversity Caucus, which has existed since 1999 and spearheaded the Welcome Dayton Voices events, sponsored the 2/23 event that Monica described.

iii. A group of community members, including DPD and the County, have been meeting and talking for the last 15 months about a Community ID Card project.

6. Monica asked for a motion to close the meeting. Jessica motioned to close and Joe seconded.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:40 am.

Next Meeting: May 8th, 7:30 – 8:30 am, City Hall 6th Floor Training Room