



CITY OF BLOOMINGTON

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION COMMISSION

Wednesday January 23, 2019

The meeting began at 4:45 p.m.

Commission Members: Gloria Howell, Reggie Johnson, Lily Kleinlein, James Sanders, Dianne Shewmaker

Associates: David Hummons,

Guests: Phil Stafford

Staff: Michael Shermis

Approval of Minutes: Reggie motioned to approve the December minutes. Gloria seconded. All approved.

Staff Liaison Report: Michael brought thank you cards for event sponsors and contributors which Commissioners signed. He also handed out an updated commission roster. Michael asked for volunteers for 40 Days of Peace presentations at Montessori School and Gloria volunteered for the 6-9 age group. A volunteer is still needed for the older kids.

New Business:

- A. MLK 2019 Birthday Celebration Debrief:** We discussed the event, and all agreed that it was great. Michael said he's received lots of positive feedback, in particular about Janai Nelson's keynote and the Fairview Show Choir. Lily expressed disappointment that the *Herald Times* didn't cover the event; others agreed and Michael said they did receive a press release and normally have someone there. David said he appreciated that Janai Nelson shared the history of the NAACP-LDF with the audience. Michael said that the BCT counted 592 attendees, which would be the highest number since Rev. Jesse Jackson. In recent years we have not gone above 400, and even without counting the Rogers kid singers and their families (who may have left the theater after the reception), we did have around 500 for the main event. Michael and others noted that the food line was too long at the reception. They reconfigured mid-event, and will reconsider next year how to be most efficient with the food. Several members of the commission attended dinner with Janai Nelson after the event, she noted many times that our community is welcoming and the experience was a good one.
- B. Elections:** We did not hold elections due to low attendance. Will try again in February.
- C. Remembrance Day:** The commission talked about the potential April 4 activities. Gloria suggested we partner with another group or commission this year. James suggested we consider who our target audience will be. Michael noted that typically people who attend our events are civic-minded adults who are already involved with issues surrounding race and social justice. Many ideas were discussed, including:
- Partner with another group or commission
 - A (shorter) march on the B-Line, possibly with stopping points along the way to read quotes or history
 - Covering the aspects of MLK, Jr.'s work that were more controversial
 - Engage a diverse audience
 - Do something to offer appreciation to the groups MLK, Jr. advocated for, such as sanitation workers
 - Reggie noted that his daughter is involved with K-Club at school and they do acts of service for organizations in need; we may be able to partner with them to serve local agencies
 - Pair 12 local children with leaders and citizens who lived and worked during the civil rights era; ask them to partner to create a short presentation on one of 12 topics (such as voting rights, sanitation workers, etc.)

City of Bloomington Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday Celebration Commission

City Hall · 401 N. Morton St., Suite 260, Bloomington, IN 47404 · www.bloomington.in.gov/mlk

Hrs: 8am-5pm MON-FRI · ph. 812-349-3471 · fax 812-349-3483 · mlk@bloomington.in.gov



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- Bring commission supporters (those who always attend our events and initiatives) into the schools to help with the above project or another type of presentation.
- Address the Federal Government Shutdown and the ways in which it is an issue of civil rights
- Hold some type of event in city hall
- Host a fun event for families to come together, such as a skate night with soul and civil rights era music
- Reggie noted that once a month the skate rink holds “school night” where many families attend to raise money for their PTO’s
- Host a movie night for kids or families with a movie of the commission’s choosing

We discussed pros and cons of holding a “fun” event vs. an educational event. James made a motion to table the discussion until the next meeting. Gloria seconded and all approved.

D. 2020 MLK B-Day Celebration: Did not discuss.

Public Comments (non-MLK Commissioners):

Phil Stafford, from the Commission on Aging and the Monroe County History Center visited to discuss an initiative that the History Center is working on. They have identified a need to become more racially inclusive in their programming and exhibits. To start, they are looking to take a deeper dive into the African American experience and history in our county. They want to make sure the history center is representing more than a white narrative. On Saturday, March 2 from 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. they are hosting a walk-through with hopes that individuals and groups will attend who can critique the exhibits and help identify gaps, look closely at how the operations may be more inclusive, and receive feedback about changes that can be made to improve. This event is open to all ages and snacks will be provided. Interested people can reach out to Phil (or to Michael for contact information). If anyone has a suggestion of a community member who would have valuable insight into this project Phil would like to reach out to them.

NAACP Update: Michael asked Dianne to remind the NAACP that a new representative must be appointed to the commission since Reggie is stepping down. Thank you Reggie for your service!

Commission on the Status of Black Males Update: David announced that the Commission is hosting a Black Male Youth Summit on Friday, January 25 from 8:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m. at City Hall, for middle and high school aged males.

Announcements: None

Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

Upcoming Meetings:

February 27, 2019 4:30-5:30 p.m. (McCloskey)

March 27, 2019 4:30-5:30 p.m. (McCloskey)

April 24, 2019 4:30-5:30 p.m. (McCloskey)

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