

Town of Boone
Human Resources Commission
Monthly Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, April 18, 2023
5:30 PM

Members Present: Emily Brewer, Zannah Kukral, Tiffany Christian, Laura Buck, Steven Yow, Joan Brook, Dana Bango

Council Liaisons Present: Todd Carter and Virginia Roseman

Staff Present: Laney Pilkington

Call to Order:

Chair Emily Brewer called the meeting to order at 5:37 PM.

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes:

A motion led by Zannah Kukral and seconded by Laura Buck, led to the March 1st meeting minutes being unanimously adopted by the present members.

Tentative Agenda Adoption:

Ms. Brewer asked for a motion to adopt the agenda as presented. Members voted unanimously to adopt the agenda for today's meeting.

Note: Meeting agendas are also available on the Town of Boone website under public notices.

Discussion of Charge:

Joan Brook, the newest member of the Human Relations Commission, was introduced by Todd Carter. Joan has served on the board of sustainability among others and is active in supporting the LGBTQ+ and the Jewish communities. She has also served as an instructor at AppState, teaching diverse learners in diverse backgrounds classes. Her education background is in special education.

Regarding the top five human relations issues affecting our community, the HRC is charged to come up with our local community list as a body. Discussion ensued and a comprehensive list of individual member issues was compiled. This information will be made into a top five list that will be presented to the state HRC. Ms. Brewer will combine points and present the compilation at the Boone HRC retreat.

Tentative list of issues:

- Homeless/low-income appearance discrimination (profiling)
- Housing-fair, student, tenant rights (there is a state tenant handbook), new Boone regulations passed regarding complaints (Dalton George may be a resource),

students living in cars, state involvement in housing, legal rights, inspections, renters' rights flier

- Education on anti-hate and anti-profiling, bullying
- Education on financial literacy
- Comprehensive health education and access to resources throughout school and after
- Affordable and accessible health care
- Cultural diversity and equity
- Economic insecurity-lack of living wage, workers' rights
- Cultural conflicts-religion and politics, church vs state, civil liberties, some individual rights protections being eroded right now in NC

Ms. Brewer gave a report regarding the quarterly NC Human Relations Commission meeting in Winston-Salem. It was a good networking opportunity and a chance to see what other commissions throughout the state are doing. NC's Gene Troy talked about reviving the national human relations organization. There will be a human relations/civil rights conference in fall around October 18-22, possibly in the Wilmington area. Quarterly meetings are rotated to different areas around the state; therefore, Boone could host a meeting in the future if desired.

AppState Sociology Chair Cameron Lippard was invited by Mx. Kukral to attend this meeting and presented a suggested plan for a survey of the community. The departments of sociology, geography/planning, justice studies and social work can all be part of the process. AppState has worked with other communities in and around Watauga County to do surveys, including a recent Wilkes Recovery survey. Issues that have been highlighted in our geographic area during previous surveys include economic insecurity, affordable housing, the non-taxability of local schools and churches, water, and growth/sustainability issues, to name a few. The average age in the Town of Boone is 48, and in Watauga County is 52. The average population in the town has college degrees.

Dr. Lippard laid out suggested next steps for the proposed survey. The HRC should define the question that it wants answered. A meeting with a college survey team, after the team is created, should be set up, and the question posed will be refined and broken into chunks to develop the survey for the HRC. Community forums may help with the development of the survey and the collection of data. Focus groups are another avenue for data collection. The survey will be distributed and data will be collected during the fall and there may be results/final presentation of conclusions by the end of 2023. Per Mx. Kukral, the benefit of having such data is that this information is necessary for lobbying efforts.

Discussion of Next Steps:

Ms. Brewer will compile discussion points and make a comprehensive 5-point list that combines the top 5 priorities from the group discussion.

Mx. Kukral will continue to serve as liaison to AppState regarding next steps with survey and should head that subcommittee.

Wednesday, May 17th looks the best for the first annual HRC retreat. It will take place from 5-8 pm in the Town of Boone meeting room, the same place as our meetings. It will be a potluck arranged by Tiffany Christian. Mx. Kukral is a pescatarian and no other members reported any dietary specifics. This retreat will lay out the HRC's mission, big ideas as well as steps to reach our goals. Subcommittees will be formed to flesh out our goals.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday, May 3**.

Adjournment:

With no further discussion, Ms. Brewer initiated a motion to adjourn at 7:25pm, and members unanimously agreed.