



FAIRBANKS DIVERSITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
MAY 14, 2024, 5:30 – 7:00 P.M.
HELD VIA [ZOOM WEBINAR](#) AND AT
FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
800 CUSHMAN STREET, FAIRBANKS, ALASKA



Chair Juanita Webb called the regular meeting of the **Fairbanks Diversity Council (FDC)** to order at 5:31 p.m. on the above date. Attendance was as follows:

Members Present (in person):

Juanita Webb, Chair, Seat D
Jonathan Bagwill, Seat G
Wendy Tisland, Seat H
Roscoe Britton, Seat J
June Rogers, City Council Member
Jake Merritt, HR Director

Others Present:

D. Danyielle Snider, City Clerk

Members Present (Zoom):

Timothy Ledna, Seat A
Richard Basarab, Seat B
Marsha Oss, Seat E

Members Absent:

Vacant, Seat C
Dorothy Shockley, Seat F
Karen Blackburn, Seat I (excused)
Rachael Kvapil, Seat K
David Pruhs, Mayor

CALL TO ORDER (Reading of Mission Statement and Land Acknowledgement)

At the request of Chair Webb, **W. Tisland** read the Mission Statement and Land Acknowledgment.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Webb led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

M. Oss, seconded by **J. Bagwill**, moved to APPROVE the agenda.

There being no objection, the agenda was approved.

APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

a) Regular Meeting Minutes of April 9, 2024

M. Oss, seconded by **W. Tisland**, moved to APPROVE the minutes.

Chair Webb called for a voice vote on the motion to APPROVE the minutes, and all members voted in favor.

CITIZENS' COMMENTS – None

REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

Chair Webb did not give a formal report but included her updates and report with the discussion under Unfinished Business.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a) Race Against Racism – Saturday, June 1

Chair Webb stated that after Andy Harrington spoke at the last meeting, she did not hear from him again until the day prior to the meeting. She reported that she made quite a few phone calls earlier in the day, and she has found a donor to cover the \$200 City permit for the Race Against Racism. She provided some details about the FDC's role in its partnership with the race coordinators and stated that volunteers should be at the JP Jones Center by 9:30 a.m. on race day. She added that the race would begin at 11 a.m. and opened the floor to questions.

J. Bagwill asked how many volunteers were needed and what types of things volunteers will help with. **Chair Webb** replied that she was unsure but stated that the FDC should host a table. She explained that volunteers will be needed the day before the race to help put out 60-lb. signs. She stated that she talked with Tyler Wilbur at the City, and the event permit should be issued by Monday, May 20. She distributed a printout of the race map and pointed out the two routes: a 3K and a 5K.

Chair Webb continued by proposing that the FDC have signature projects: the annual Race Against Racism and the Human Library. She suggested that a vote for a new Chair and possibly a new Vice-Chair should be held at the next regular FDC meeting and stated that she would like to serve as a community outreach coordinator for the FDC. She added that there are a lot of outreach opportunities in the community.

M. Oss stated she believes that J. Webb is doing an incredible job serving as the FDC Chair and that she supports getting involved in signature projects. She stated she would be available to help on June 1. She spoke in support of Chair Webb continuing as the FDC Chair. **J. Bagwill** asked if there was a reason why Chair Webb would not be able to continue as Chair and serve as a community outreach coordinator. **Chair Webb** replied that she could continue to serve as Chair if the group can handle her personality. She expressed concern over her communication style. **J. Rogers** echoed M. Oss's comments. She stated that Chair Webb spoke quite eloquently about her vision for the FDC and indicated that she is the right person for the position. She stated that Chair Webb is wonderfully diverse and accepting and that everyone should be who they are.

W. Tisland asked whether the NAACP is the race sponsor. **Chair Webb** replied that it is not, but a lot of the same people who organize the Juneteenth event also coordinate the Race Against Racism event. **W. Tisland** asked whether it was the intent for the FDC to take over the coordination of the event. **Chair Webb** stated that coordination of the event will be a partnership this year. She explained that they have been looking for someone to take over the race, and her intent is to do so in future years. She spoke about the opportunity to make it a larger event.

R. Britton stated that he has been invited to be a part of the NAACP, and he may do so. He committed to helping on June 1 if he is available and added that he is excited to help in future years. He suggested that there be someone available at checkpoints to distribute water.

Chair Webb shared that Robyne Harrington was attending the meeting via Zoom. R. Harrington confirmed that they have been looking for someone to take over the coordination of the Race Against Racism event but clarified that she would have to go back to the board to see if they would

like for the FDC to do so. She commented that it would be delightful to see the FDC get involved, and it would be a good idea to partner for a year or two to ensure a smooth transition. **Chair Webb** asked when the next meeting for volunteers would be. R. Harrington stated that she would have to follow up later with a date.

It was the consensus of the FDC to support a partnership with the Race for Racism organizers for 2024.

J. Rogers questioned why Mayor Pruhs was not approached to see if the City would cover the event permit cost. Clerk Snider stated that the type of event permit required is essentially a parade permit. She explained that groups organizing such events have approached the Mayor's Office in the past requesting a waiver of fees but given the political nature of some of the groups, it has been a practice for the City to not waive the permit fees. **Chair Webb** confirmed that the permit fees would be covered by a donor and should be issued the following week.

M. Oss stated she is committed to attending the race and offered the use of her pop-up tent. **Chair Webb** stated that they will be set up in a parking lot and she could bring some concrete blocks to tie the tent down.

Chair Webb stated that the FDC was invited to be a part of Juneteenth on June 15 from noon – 4 p.m. She shared that the City has covered the registration cost, and she will get more information for the Clerk to send out to everyone. She commented that she did not know much about the event, such as whether they should set up games for kids. **J. Rogers** spoke about her experience attending the event in prior years and provided the group with some information about what to expect. **W. Tisland** stated she likes the idea of having a kids' game or something to draw people in.

M. Oss stated that she would help in advance but would be out of town June 15. **W. Tisland** stated that she would also be out of town but that she would come up with an activity.

NEW BUSINESS

a) Human Library

Chair Webb stated that she had asked the Clerk to send the FDC a link to the Human Library article. She asked HR Director Jake Merritt to speak about what a Human Library is.

J. Merritt stated that the idea of different types of "libraries" is that a person can "check out" other things besides books – like a human. He indicated that the weblink sent to FDC members is about the actual project based out of Denmark. He explained that when you participate in a Human Library, you agree to come into it with no judgement and you get to ask questions about the other person. He shared that he has attended similar events, but they were in more of a seminar-style. He shared that the website referenced has videos of how the Human Library began and what it is all about.

T. Ledna stated that he worked in higher education for a number of years and that these are common on campuses. He shared that he has participated in some over the years and suggested using City Hall as a space for the FDC to host a Human Library during one of the large downtown events. He added that he would volunteer to be a "book."

M. Oss stated that Sarah Gare, who has been a part of Human Library events internationally, will be in Fairbanks in June for the Healing Native Hearts Coalition Summit. She commented that there is enough diversity in the community to make a very interesting event and believes it is a brilliant idea.

Members briefly discussed downtown events, specifically the Golden Days Parade and Street Fair. **T. Ledna** suggested holding the Human Library at City Hall during the Golden Days downtown festivities, adding that he would be willing to advertise the event from his downtown business. **J. Rogers** commented that T. Ledna's idea to hold the event at City Hall is spot on, because it will brand the event with the City of Fairbanks and the FDC.

T. Ledna, seconded by **R. Britton**, moved to host a Human Library event at City Hall during the Golden Days downtown festivities.

Chair Webb called for a voice vote on the motion, and all members voted in favor.

T. Ledna volunteered to gather "books" for the event and to be a "book" himself. He stated that he would organize the event but added that he would not be able to present the whole day because he will need to tend to his small business downtown.

FDC MEMBERS' COMMENTS

M. Oss stated that sometimes humans just need to be validated for who they are and what they do. She stated she felt as though Chair Webb needed to be heard and validated as the FDC's leader. She reported that things have been going well in her position at the City, and she just received news that her program would be granted \$71,000 to house people coming out of incarceration. She added that she feels blessed that her job requires a diversity component.

T. Ledna stated he had no comments.

R. Basarab suggested floating a schedule around to ensure staffing at upcoming events. **Chair Webb** stated that signup sheets will be sent out.

R. Britton spoke in support of FDC signature events, stating that such activities would bring the FDC to the community and the community to the FDC. He commented that he has worked with many people and coalitions in the community but still has more to learn.

R. Basarab suggested partnering with City HR from a recruitment standpoint at upcoming events, since one aspect of the FDC is to help recruit and employ a diverse workforce. He added that he is sure Mayor Pruhs would support that.

W. Tisland shared that she just returned to work as the HR director for the Fairbanks Resource Agency (FRA), which provides services to adults and seniors with developmental disabilities. She indicated that the work is close to her heart as her mother passed away from Alzheimer's Disease. She stated that Emily Ennis, Executive Director of FRA, is an amazing person who would make an amazing "book" for the Human Library.

J. Rogers also sang E. Ennis’s praises. She stated that there are so many opportunities to learn, especially when you have a diverse group of people in the room.

R. Britton suggested that every FDC member serve as a “book.” He explained that it would give people a sense of community to see FDC members putting themselves out there. He stated that some people might have a stigma about anyone who serves on a committee or council, but he thinks FDC members are all just regular folks.

W Tisland asked whether the FDC should or could get matching t-shirts to wear at events. **Chair Webb** stated that she mentioned t-shirts when she spoke with the donor earlier in the day. She indicated that she could get t-shirts if she collected everyone’s sizes.

J. Rogers spoke strongly against the purchase of FDC t-shirts, stating that they are ineffective and people do not wear them. She spoke to how she is one of the very few who has shown up to FDC events and stated they need to be real about who the FDC is and show up to events.

Members discussed various possibilities of items to wear to represent the FDC.

T. Ledna agreed that t-shirts are not the best option unless there is a lot of money available. He stated that he purchased about ten hats for the FDC to use for this very purpose.

J. Bagwill shared that he went to the Midnight Sun Golf Course earlier in the day, and one of the managers asked if he was wearing green. He said that she explained it was Mental Illness Awareness Month and that anyone wearing green would receive a discount. He encouraged people to get out of their house, be with others, and look around for and reach out to friends.

J. Webb asked if anyone would like to give her a t-shirt to get printed and added that hats would be available as well. **J. Rogers** said that she would like everyone to understand her cynicism and frustration about t-shirts. She stated that there is a problem with commitment – people actually showing up to wear them. She stated that she has made a commitment and has been a part of the FDC for 10 years; she added that it is frustrating when others do not show up. She added that there should be as much discussion about commitment as there is about hats or t-shirts.

R. Britton suggested having nametags or lanyards. He spoke about his past involvement in a softball-based fundraiser in Anchorage called “Hits for the Homeless” and suggested it as a potential signature event for the FDC. He explained that the more teams that participate in the softball event, the more money is raised to help homeless people.

Chair Webb expressed excitement and commented that the meeting had recharged her.

R. Britton asked whether the FDC had pursued other diversity programs in Fairbanks, such as the university, Army, Air Force, or school district. **Chair Webb** replied that she had not reached out because she felt like the FDC wanted to hold back until it was more organized. She indicated that she could reach out. **R. Britton** commented that it would be good to pick others’ brains, which could help strengthen the FDC.


MEETING DATES

- a) Next Regular Meeting Date, June 11, 2024

ADJOURNMENT


M. Oss moved to ADJOURN the meeting.

There being no objection, **Chair Webb** adjourned the meeting at 6:49 p.m.



Juanita Webb, Chair

Transcribed by: DS



D. Danyielle Snider, MMC, City Clerk