

ASHLAND SOCIAL EQUITY AND RACIAL JUSTICE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES
June 6, 2024

I. CALL TO ORDER

Meeting called to order at 5:00pm.

Present: Yamaguchi, Simon, Houston, Mendel, Geraghty, Tyler, Dahle (Council Liason), Seltzer (Staff Liason), Gooden (Staff Liason)

Absent: Singh, DuQuenne (Council Liason)

Guests: Anyania Muse and Deb Marley

1. Land Acknowledgment

We acknowledge and honor the aboriginal people on whose ancestral homelands we work — the Ikirakutsum Band of the Shasta Nation, as well as the diverse and vibrant Native communities who make their home here today. We denounce the egregious acts of the colonizers and government and recognize the horrific impacts that still exist today. We honor the first stewards in the Rogue Valley and the lands we love and depend on: Tribes with ancestral lands in and surrounding the geography of the Ashland Watershed include the original past, present and future indigenous inhabitants of the Shasta, Takelma and Athabaskan people. We also recognize and acknowledge the Shasta village of K'wakhakha — "Where the Crow Lights" — that is now the Ashland City Plaza.

Tyler read the acknowledgment

2. Labor Acknowledgement

We also pause to recognize and acknowledge the labor upon which our country, state, and institutions are built. We remember that our country is built on the labor of enslaved people who were kidnapped and brought to the U.S. from the African continent and recognize the continued contribution of their survivors. We also acknowledge all immigrant labor, including voluntary, involuntary, trafficked, forced, and undocumented peoples who contributed to the building of the country and continue to serve within our labor force. We acknowledge all unpaid care-giving labor. To the people who contributed this immeasurable work and their descendants, we acknowledge their indelible mark on the space in which we gather today. It is our collective responsibility to critically examine these histories, to repair harm, and to honor, protect, and sustain their contribution to our society.

Allison Mendel read the labor acknowledgment.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Minutes of May 9, 2024 - Regular Meeting

Houston/ Tyler motioned/seconded to approve the minutes of May 9, 2024.

No Discussion.

Motion passed unanimously.

III. PUBLIC FORUM

no public input

IV. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Anyanaia Muse (60 minutes)

Simon spoke that on June 18 at 6pm SERJAC will provide its recommendations to the City Council at its regular business meeting. Houston will be available to read her cover letter and speak to the committee's historical review of racism in Ashland. Simon will be available to speak about the committee's recommendation related to the City's Diversity Equity and Inclusion assessment.

Yamaguchi introduced Anyania Muse. Muse was asked to help SERJAC as a trainer

on Diversity Equity Inclusion and Accessibility. Muse provided a presentation and facilitated a discussion on the committee's work so far. Muse asked for information about where the committee was at regarding listening circles sub-committee. Mendel spoke of forward movement in talking with people, but was uncertain about goals moving forward. Houston reflected on the sub-committee's work and shared concerns about what would happen with information that was gathered.

Muse spoke that after what she reviewed and heard so far, her recommendation was for the committee to take a significant pause in order to consider the gap between its thinking/planning and actions. Muse suggested a planning structure and timeline for attaining short and long-term goals, and to include 'Do No Harm' as an essential component. Muse encouraged the committee to move from a transactional to a relational mode of engagement, which is why a pause is necessary. Muse shared that the Committee is attempting system-change work, which requires a process over time.

Muse encouraged committee participation over time in existing and ongoing BIPOC community events and initiatives before asking the BIPOC community to show up for any SERJAC initiatives. Muse summarized her recommendation for the committee to pause for reflection and to create a strategic plan with a skilled facilitator based on these discoveries, in order to create goals with positive impacts that avoid causing harm.

Yamaguchi emphasized the importance of supporting existing groups and their events while cautioning the committee to be sensitive to the difference between events open to visitors through invitation and those events that are for the group to be together among themselves. Open events can provide the opportunity for the committee to connect with and learn from the group, whereas groups also need time to be together, which is not a time to bring an agenda.

Simon asked for clarification from Muse on what SERJAC needs to be ready for next steps. Geraghty spoke of the sub-committees goal to contact 12 BIPOC partners divided up between subcommittee members. She shared her assessment that the BIPOC community is tired of furnishing information without seeing change. Mendel spoke that the sub-committee has mostly done listening and has not committed to any action. Muse shared this work takes time to cultivate relationships and needs agreement, clarity, and a process for how to move forward.

Simon reflected that SERJAC's plan had originated from the committee itself rather than from the BIPOC community. To turn this around, it will take time to go to existing BIPOC events and build relationships that can inform how SERJAC can help the BIPOC community achieve their own goals, rather than listening for how the BIPOC community can help SERJAC achieve its goals. Mendel shared the intent was to see how to attend existing BIPOC events rather than to create new events for others to attend.

Muse reiterated that a pause for the committee is necessary at this point. Reflecting on how to cultivate diverse committee attendance is critical and difficult due to unintended consequences for people of color participating in a public forum.

Yamaguchi spoke about the importance of making space for this important work and asked how the City might garner support to do this work.

Muse recommended Paul Kivel as a key resource for beginning to understand these issues. Houston reflected on regrouping to consider how to do the work rather than proposing actionable steps. Simon encouraged a pause on recruitment and to turn towards clarity on what SERJAC. Yamaguchi spoke about building relationships within SERJ itself to practice what listening circles are by listening to each other first. Houston agreed that time together to dream together is important.

1. Anya Wave Model Image

V. NEW BUSINESS

Juneteenth (10 minutes)

Yamaguchi shared two upcoming events that relate to SERJAC:

1) The Equity Diversity and Inclusion department at Southern Oregon University will host a 2024 Juneteenth Celebratory, Commemoration, and Flag Raising on June 11, 2024 at 11am at Churchill Hall.

2) Black Alliance Social Events (BASE) is hosting its Juneteenth event on Saturday June 15, 2024 from 11am to 7pm at Pear Blossom Park in Medford.

VI. UPDATE FROM MEMBERS

Update (10 minutes)

Seltzer shared an update that the flags for Juneteenth will go up on the three flagpoles in Ashland on June 10, 2024. The

Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) did not approve the Juneteenth banner application for over Main St.

Tyler shared that the local group Ashland Together have had informative conversations at Carpenter Hall on the second Monday of the month and encouraged participation.

Houston shared about two conversations coming up at Carpenter Hall on the Oregon Shakespeare Festival campus scheduled from 6-7:30pm:

1) On July 8, 2024 Author Sarah Sanderson will talk about her experience with Jacob Vanderpool who was expelled from Oregon on the basis of its anti-Black exclusion laws.

2) On July 15, 2024, in collaboration with Ashland.News, Lomakatski Restoration Project will talk about their Indigenous-led forest restoration practices and about wildfire preparations.

Yamaguchi honored Seltzer on her last SERJAC meeting for all her work as Staff Liaison. Yamaguchi thanked and wished everyone the best as this is also her last SERJAC meeting.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Next Meeting Date: August 1, 2024