

**MINUTES**  
**BY GREENVILLE HUMAN RELATIONS COUNCIL**  
**February 25, 2021**

The Greenville Human Relations Council (GHRC) met Thursday, February 25, 2021 at 6:00 PM via Zoom. Members absent denoted by x.

Samar Badwan-*	Olive Barrett-x	Montez Bishop-*	Jim Cox-*
Rod Debs-*	Todd Fraley-*	Shane Knight-x	Francisco Limon-*
Antonio Milton-*	Lomax Mizzelle-x	Franchine Peña-*	LaQuon Rogersx
Heena Shah-x	Deborah Sheppard-*	Trish Vu-*	

Rose Glover, Council Member-x    Cassandra Daniels, Staff Liaison-\*

**Samar Badwan, Chair** called the meeting to order and welcomed the members to the Thursday, February 25, 2021 meeting. The Council will use the “**open agenda**” process, giving members of the Council an opportunity to bring up concerns or items they think the Council should or may need to focus on for 2021 fiscal year.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS - None**

**PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD - None**

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES – None**

**OLD BUSINESS: None**

**NEW BUSINESS**

***Background Information: Immigrant Advisory Board - Building Integrated Communities (BIC)***

In February 2011, City staff, the Human Relations Council and AMEXCAN applied for the City of Greenville to be a pilot site in the Building Integrated Communities Initiative. In March of 2011, the Human Relations Officer was notified that the City of Greenville was selected to participate in the “Building Integrated Communities” pilot project offered by UNC School of Government and the Institute for the Study of Americas. Prior to the BIC project, the Council in 2008 hosted six community meetings to ascertain residents perspectives on what is inclusiveness; what is working and what is not working for our community. The Human Relations Council believes this project would assist in their continued efforts for promoting and establishing a more inclusive community for Greenville.

The City’s BIC Initiative was launched in May 2011, to examine the challenges that immigrants experience and to take a look at the city’s efforts to build a community that welcomes immigrants and help them adjust to life. The driving mission of the Human Relations Council to enter this project was to “improve relations and public safety” not only for newcomers, but for current citizens as well.

The City of Greenville and the Human Relations Council hosted five BIC Stakeholders' meetings to discuss new ideas and innovative strategies to facilitate a greater understanding between existing residents and immigrants in the communities. These meetings were supported by BIC program staff, including the presence of a professional facilitator who helped structure the agendas and facilitated each meeting. Meeting dates were:

- Tuesday, May 3, 2011,
- Wednesday, June 22, 2011 (conference call)
- Thursday, October 6, 2011,
- Friday, November 18, 2011, and
- Thursday, February 8, 2012.

After reviewing a listing of goals and action items presented by staff, BIC Stakeholders recommended that a subcommittee be organized to develop a proposal or action plan that will address areas of concern.

The subcommittee has agreed that the following steps should be considered as integral components for a plan of action:

- Establishment of an Immigrant Advisory Committee (IAC) that will serve under the purview of the Human Relations Council.
- IAC will consist of city and county representation.

*Vice-Chair Franchine Pena* question if this remains a viable committee? *Rev. Rod Debs* stated he was reflecting on some of the suggestions from our community meetings about ways to build a more inclusive community.

Staff informed the Council that a name change for any committee/subcommittee requires a vote from the full Council.

### ***Inclusive Community Breakfast***

Staff informed the Council of the Inclusive Community event which is scheduled for the Thursday, September 23, 2021. If the Council decide not to host their annual breakfast, reservations at the Hilton need to be cancelled. An invitation will go out to the members requesting a meeting and an update will be provided at the April meeting.

### ***Annual Award Ceremony***

Staff reminded everyone of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Human Relations Council. The award ceremony and reception will take place Saturday, February 26, 2022. An invitation will go out to the members requesting a meeting and an update will be provided at the April meeting.

## *Comments*

**Rev. Rod Debs** stated that at the last meeting there were reflections on Mr. Mark Rasdorf and the feelings he expressed in his letter. I would like for the Council to provide some reflections for discussing. **Mr. Montez Bishop** asked “reflections on what”? **Mr. Antonio Milton** stated he does not want this to be a situation where the Council continues to hop on and not focus on our goals. Everybody is not HRC material. The Council has to put aside our individual positions to work towards our common goals. Not everyone can put aside our identity to work towards the bigger picture. Before people join, they may have to do self-reflections for their personal biases or beliefs that may conflict with the work of the Council. **Ms. Deborah Sheppard** asked what the Council will do if it happens again. This situation should make us think about what we see and how the Council is seen in public. The Council has to be mindful of what we are putting out, because people are watching us. Members of this Council are holding positions where they represent everyone. **Rev. Rod Debs** stated the Council should look for a representative on the LGBTQ community. The Council consists of a diverse group of people that should stand for everyone. **Mr. Montez Bishop** stated you can’t have a conversation about me; without me. The Council should be the group to stand up for the total community; serving as champions for all regardless of race, age, color, sex, ability, sexual orientation or sexual identity. **Mr. Antonio Milton** stated Rev. Jessica Stokes did an excellent job keeping us informed while she served. She was able to communicate to the Council about events and things going on in the community. Everyone on the Council should understand there should be involvement on both sides. However, you can’t just say “what I feel should be a priority”. Members of the Council have to put who we are aside and work on those issues. The Council should not appease, just to be appeasing; because you lose the focus of the Council. Everyone has to understand the priorities. For example, a house fire and a flat tire, let’s put out the fire first then we can deal with the flat tire. This Council consists of a group of fighters and we don’t give up, if there’s an issue or concern, we continue to be advocates and voice it. Not everyone is Human Relations Council material. **Mr. Francisco Limon** stated when it comes to Mr. Mark Rasdorf, we’re done. However, what we are not done with is working on inclusion. It’s important that we work on finding an individual from the LGBTQ community to serve on the Council. The Council must not allow ourselves to be distracted from the larger issues. The issue with Mr. Mark Rasdorf brings to the forefront the issue of “equity”; and that’s the bottom line of the work we do. **Mr. Antonio Milton** stated the Council should not appease just to be appeasing, because you lose the focus of the group. Everybody has to understand the priorities. As members of the Council, we are fighters and we don’t give up. If there’s an issue or concern, the Council has to advocate and voice the concern. This is an opportunity for the Council to reflect on how we can become more inclusive for the community. **Rev. Rod Debs** presented the following “The Thought Experiments”:

What if the Human Relations Council was made up of all men and a woman who said a minister on the list was preaching a woman should not speak in public or be in position of authority; preaching authentically, but it was not about hatred. If that minister was on this Council, that’s supposed to be about inclusiveness; but advocating against the full inclusion of women.

What if the Human Relations Council was all white with one black member? The black member came to us and said “there is a Klan leader on this Council, that is committed to

an inclusive community and is speaking publicly based on his faith that black people are inferior, and in an inclusive community where inferior and superior people live together. In the meetings, they are kind and generous towards the one black member. However, in public he's speaking black's as inferior. This concerns me.

**Mr. Montez Bishop** stated he understands everything that was said. However, the Council is missing an important element; and that is we don't know if the sermon was a hate speech. Paradigms provided shows hatred towards a specific group of people. However, just like a parent and a child, you can love your child, but not condone what they do. It's not the Council's responsibility to judge what people say or preach. **Chairperson Samar Badwan** stated, we don't all agree on everything. We have different faiths, beliefs, etc. However, when it comes to the Human Relations Council, we have to set our differences aside and work together as a team. Sometimes you have to put your feelings aside for the betterment of the community and the Human Relations Council.

## ADJOURN

There being no further business, a motion was made by **Mr. Montez Bishop**, seconded by **Mr. Todd Fraley**, to adjourn. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

*Cassandra Daniels*

Cassandra Daniels  
Human Relations Officer