

MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY RELATIONS ADVISORY BOARD METING HELD ON TUESDAY, JANUARY 12, 2016, IN THE COUNCIL ROOM OF THE MUNICIPAL BUILDING.

The meeting began at 7:34 p.m.

Members present were: Rick Ransom, Jacquie Carrington, Kevin Hammett, Jamie Krauk, Dan Hamlin, Dea Zugby, Edward Putens, Council Liaison and David Moran, Staff Liaison.

Also present were: Michael Hartman, Josh Hamlin, Kyla Hanington, Bill Orleans, Naomi Littlefield, Melissa Ehrenreich and Stephanie Warner.

Rick described CRAB's purpose and some of CRAB's past activities. He stated that recently CRAB had become more proactive.

Rick noted that a letter from CRAB would appear in the upcoming News Review issue.

Minutes from 11/12/2015

Dan moved approval. Jacquie seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Turner Cemetery Maintenance & Preservation

Dan summarized that his wife had done research on the Turner Family Cemetery. He believed there were stones marking 9 distinct graves. Dan stated they were anonymous graves. He stated they may be graves of enslaved people owned by the Turner Family. Dan presented a proposal to preserve the area. He stated that the Turner graves should be maintained at the same level as the adjacent City Cemetery.

Dan's proposal listed the following recommendations:

1. The perimeter of the area with known graves be marked with steel posts and chains similar to that used in the modern section of the cemetery.
2. The underbrush, leaves and debris be cleared from the area.
3. The display case containing the gravestone of Thomas P. Turner be refurbished so that the stone is more clearly visible.
4. The inaccurate and incomplete historical monograph in the display case be rewritten to:
 - a. Correct the age of death of Tomas Turner who was married to Flavia Parker in 1843 and 45 years old at the time of his death in 1855, not 15.
 - b. Include mention of people held as slaves by the Turner family as documented in the 1790 census and Turner family bible and likely buried on the site.

Dan felt strongly that the graves there are likely to be of enslaved people. He stressed that the graves there needed to be treated with dignity and respect regardless of who was buried there.

Dan moved approval of these recommendations. Jamie seconded.

Jamie believed that this was an appropriate item for CRAB to consider and that these were an appropriate set of recommendations. She hoped these recommendations would not preclude other steps the City might wish to take.

Michael suggested that forensic science could be used to identify the graves. Dan indicated this could be a latter step in the process.

The motion passed unanimously.

Kevin suggested that the monograph reflect that there may be other graves in the area. There was discussion about the exact boundaries of the Turner family plot and possibly designating a larger area.

Michael suggested these recommendations could be phase 1 of the process implying later phases. Dan stressed the proposed recommendations did not limit additional future steps.

Syrian Refugee Referral

David reported on the referral.

Rick believed it was CRAB's job to make sure that community relations aspect was handled properly. He believed that there were people out there who disagreed with the Council's action. He stated that a community forum was a possible next step.

Rick distributed a document developed by Josh Hamlin.

Jacque wanted to share the purpose/mission of CRAB. Dan read the community pledge. He wanted the Board to determine how Greenbelt can live up to the pledge. He was concerned about public statements being made. He believed the Board should be able to come up with some recommendations to the Council.

Jacque wanted to know what the pledge means to the residents of Greenbelt. She wanted to know how CRAB could solicit feedback on the Pledge.

Jamie indicated that part of being respectful was listening to those who don't agree. She suggested a facilitated discussion about this issue. Jamie believed this issue could help galvanize support for the pledge and make a statement about what CRAB was about.

Jacque believed the Syrian issue needed to be addressed quickly. She wanted to provide an opportunity for both sides to be heard. Jacque referenced the Spellman overpass issue as an example that brought people out and fostered community engagement. She wanted to be able to reach out to people whether or not they attend meetings.

Ed stressed that there were misconceptions and fear in the community. He referenced an example of a KKK incident that occurred when Windsor Green was built.

Kevin believed the Pledge was the foundation of the City's values. He wanted to work with other organizations and groups, again similar to the Spellman Overpass issue, to reach out and facilitate conversations.

Dan read the purpose statement of CRAB listed in the City Code. He asked how can CRAB live up to its purpose with regard to this issue and alleviate fear. Dan wanted to ask the audience for their thoughts.

Jamie believed you could alleviate fear by listening to all sides of the issue and wanted to have a facilitated meeting to hear all sides.

Rick asked for input from the audience.

Bill wanted to hear the actual referral. He suggested there are practical items that CRAB should address.

Josh noted his document was some next steps, some of which were CRAB appropriate and some were not. He suggested that a forum target specific issues such as authorities on Syrian resettlement. Josh noted Greenbelt had incredible international diversity. He suggested CRAB review "The Role of Immigrants in Growing Baltimore" Josh stressed the value of education. He referenced a Syrian refugee family placed in Riverdale and listed some practical needs that could be put together down the road. Josh believed CRAB could help facilitate a dialogue with an educational focus in the near term and longer term, look at the role of immigrants in Greenbelt. He suggested that eventually the City should look for volunteers to help with practical resettlement needs.

Stephanie expressed concern for her friends and neighbors who were identifiably Muslim and asked how do we keep them safe. She was concerned about the level of fear being expressed in Greenbelt and asked how we make this a welcoming place for any refugee.

Melissa suggested that Greenbelt could become a welcoming community that would expose Greenbelt to a network of other Welcoming Cities. She noted that Montgomery County had hosted a series of discussions about bullying and islamophobia. Melissa stated these folks were already part of our community. She believed this was an opportunity to educate Greenbelt that we have a large foreign born population.

Michael announced that on Monday at New Deal Café there was a reel and meal on January 18. He stated that there was already a community forum happening on social media and suggested that CRAB make a statement affirming the pledge. Michael also noted there some refugees who were not Muslims. He liked the idea of town forums and education.

Naomi suggested that CRAB reach out through the clergy. She suggested that the interfaith clergy group could help. She stressed an understanding of both sides of the issue.

Josh reported on an event on Sunday at 6:00pm in downtown Silver Spring near the ice rink. He also reported on a meeting at a Lutheran Church on Wednesday night. He expressed support for the Welcoming America.org program.

Melissa also referenced a website partnership for a new immigrant economy. She believed this should be aware as part of the City's Economic Development plan.

Other Business

David distributed handouts about a child sexual abuse training session.

Members discussed the next meeting and agreed to schedule it for February 2 or February 4.

The meeting ended at 9:40 p.m.