



Faith-Based Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes of March 5, 2024

Present were James Lafolette, Chris Hankel, and Dan Mahon. Members Terry Cummings and Dean Hackett were not present. Also present was City Recorder Lilly Alarcon-Strong and Council representatives Rod Hardin and Jackie Linton. The meeting was opened in prayer by Rod at 4:07pm.

Minutes

Dan moved and Chris seconded to approve the January minutes. Motion carried unanimously. No meeting was held in February.

Community Musical Unity Celebration

Jackie stated Julie Puzey was unable to attend the meeting to give information regarding the event.

Lilly stated event information has been posted to the City's website under the Hermiston Live Calendar at: <https://www.hermiston.or.us/hermiston-live#event=77296210;instance=20240413190000?popup=1> Which includes details of the Community Musical Unity Celebration, held on Saturday, April 13, 2024 from 7 pm to 8:30 pm at the Hermiston High School Auditorium. The event is sponsored by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and free to the public; those with questions are encouraged to call 808-561-1496.

The Community Musical Unity Celebration is a collaborative event in the Hermiston area with the goal of nurturing UNITY, RESPECT, and UNDERSTANDING. Join us for an evening of outstanding music and inspirational messages presented by community members representing various ethnic, cultural, racial, social and religious backgrounds.

Stepping Stones Alliance Update

Stepping Stones Alliance (SSA) Executive Director Jesalyn Cole gave updates to include:

- A wonderful amount of donations and support that is regularly receive from the community, including food, and financial gifts to purchase necessities
- Volunteers have dropped by about 50%, from about 40 individuals to about 20 individuals and SSA is very much in need of volunteers and nightly meals to continue to remain open every night and serve those in need. SSA is grateful for all the support received that allows them to remain open
- Average number of guests has increased and SSA is seeing closer to 16 people each night. In January and February SSA had close to 400 stays by 41 and 51 (respectfully) unduplicated individuals
- SSA received a grant to purchase a shuttle bus to transport guests to and from the Sleep Center to Hermiston City Hall. The shuttle bus will also be used to for transportation needs to/from appointments and other guest needs
- SSA is hiring a shuttle bus driver and receptionist. Those interested are encouraged to apply
- Permanent location is getting closer to being ready. There are electric and water issues still being worked on
- There will be a volunteer workday to complete final punch list items on the individual shelter units in the near future
- A security company has been hired to stay at the shelter each night and help with the daily guest intake and check out process
- Addressed concerns and rumors regarding the facility and homeless population



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Chris offered and gave a prayer for SSA, those in need, and all volunteers.

I Love My City Update

Chris stated the I Love My City event is scheduled to take place May 18th and 19th. Saturday, May 18th will be community service activities and Sunday, May 19th will be the City-Wide Worship Service at EOTEC. More planning and information to come.

2024 Committee Service Goals – Food Insecurities Update

Dan and Chris gave information regarding the Food Insecurity Meeting held with community organizations and the faith community the week prior, stating the group narrowed down priorities to be focused on, to include:

- Communication and collaboration from churches/organizations/groups partnering together
- Building trust among those in need to let them know this service is about providing meals and not a reporting agency
- How to provide at least one meal per day from the faith community
- Providing specific foods for specific groups of people including already prepared and prepackaged food

Dan stated he will be having a Zoom meeting with a California group who distributes/delivers food throughout specific areas and hopes to gain ideas and insight on how their process works. More information to come on these efforts.

Other

The Committee gave an update regarding Lead Chaplain and Committee Member Terry Cummings health.

Dan reminded the Committee regarding the National Day of Prayer. The event will be held at New Hope Church on May 2nd from 6pm-8pm.

Lilly stated Mayor Drotzmann will be reading a National Day of Prayer Proclamation at an upcoming City Council Meeting as well.

Public Comment

Joe Gonzalez, Pastor at Grace Baptist Church, asked if the Committee would be interested in pushing out faith and city information through his contacts in radio in Tri-Cities and Walla Walla as the Hermiston area should be covered by their licensing agreements. Members stated KOHU already pushes out community information, however the more news/radio stations sharing information the better.

Next Meeting

Tuesday, May 7th at 4:00pm in the Large Board Room on the 2nd Floor of City Hall.

Adjournment

There was no other business, and the meeting was adjourned in prayer by Joe at 5:01pm.