

Minutes

African American Heritage Commission of Asheville and Buncombe County July 17, 2014 6th Floor Training Room, City Hall

Planning Retreat

Committee Members Present: Johnnie Grant, Marvin Chambers, Phyllis Utley, Angel Redmond, Isaac Coleman, Sasha Mitchell

Committee Members Absent: Desmond McAfee, Jan Goffney (excused)

Council Liaison: Chris Pelly

Staff: Steve Garrison, Roderick Simmons, Brenda Mills, Alex Carmichael

Chairwoman Grant called the meeting to order at 11:47 AM.

1. **Introduction and Outline:**

- a. **Introduction** - Roderick Simmons went over the day's schedule and introduced the facilitator, City staff Brenda Mills. Brenda outlined the process for the Commission's mandated report to the City Council and County Commission, 180 days from the first meeting of the fully appointed Commission. She emphasized the importance of setting achievable goals. She explained the retreat notebooks.

The Commission and staff introduced themselves and the strengths, experiences, resources, and passions they brought to the group.

- b. **Ground Rules Exercise** – The Commission set ground rules for the retreat that included: one person speaking at a time, agreeing to disagree without being disagreeable, allowing everyone's opinion to count, following the agenda, treating each other with respect, having fun, and establishing clear objectives.
- c. **Review of the Asheville Way** – The core values encompassed in the Asheville Way are: continuous improvement, integrity, diversity, safety and welfare, and excellent service. City Councilman Chris Pelly discusses the Council's strategic goals as they pertain to the African American

Heritage Commission, and specifically highlighted economic development, affordability, and quality of life. Steve Garrison discussed the County's objectives as defined in the Sustainability Plan. The City and County Plans are developed separately, but overlap significantly.

2. **Approval of the June Minutes:** Marvin Chambers asked to have the spelling of his name corrected in the minutes. He then motioned to approve the June minutes as amended. Isaac Coleman seconded. The motion passed with all in favor.
3. **Discussion of Goals:** The City/County joint resolution that established the Commission was reviewed. The resolution charged the Commission to “advise the Asheville City Council and Buncombe County Board of Commissioners on issues concerning the enhancement of the economic, social, cultural and educational lives of African Americans in Asheville and throughout Buncombe County” and to “...discover, develop, promote and implement projects and programs to recognize African American history in Buncombe County.”
4. **Key Objectives and Next Steps:** The Commission identified key objectives as community outreach, education, travel and tourism, and economic development, and discussed ideas to meet those objectives.
 - a. The identification of historical or culturally significant sites and the creation of a self-guided ‘urban trail-style’ tour were discussed as potential projects for the enhancement of travel and tourism.
 - b. To promote education of local African American history, the Commission discussed the identification of living and deceased community leaders, creating a cultural scavenger hunt, writing curriculum aligned with state education standards. Partnering with groups like CAYLA, UNCA, Building Bridges, the Public Art Commission, the Historic Resources Commission, the Convention and Visitor’s Bureau, Hood Talks, and the public information offices of the City and County was suggested for community outreach. Additional ideas discussed included a ‘listening project,’ and a ‘state of black Asheville’ report.
 - c. The Commission discussed minority business tax incentives as a potential means of economic development.
 - d. The six month report due to the Council and Commission must include a budget. Roderick Simmons discussed the need to take the concepts, priorities, and visions outlined in the retreat and translate them into a dollar amount.
5. **Closing Comments:** Marvin Chambers requested that the Commission receive parking passes during the meetings. Phyllis Utley suggested that the Commission members attend a Public Art Board meeting to establish relationships with that

organization. Alex Carmichael committed to distributing staff contact information. Angel Redmond stated that the retreat was fun and that she felt respected. Sasha Mitchell stated that it felt productive. Isaac Coleman stated that the next Moral Monday would be August 4th and he invited everyone to attend.

The retreat adjourned at 3:20 PM. The next meeting will be 08/14/14.