



# CITY COUNCIL

## **Nominations & Appointments Committee**

**Monday, March 15, 2021  
Meeting Report**

**Attendance:** M. Goodman-Hinnershitz, Johanny Cepeda-Freytiz, (electronically) S. Marmarou (via telephone)

**Others Attending:** S. Smith, A. LaMano, F. Denbowski, B. Rivera

The meeting was called to order at 4:10 pm by Mr. Marmarou.

### **I. Interviews**

- **Saoni Segura – Appointment to the Youth Commission**

Mr. Marmarou asked Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz to begin the interview while he gets situated as he was late in joining in the meeting which he apologized for.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz introduced herself and the other council members on the Committee and explained how the interview process is conducted. She questioned Ms. Segura what her understanding of the Youth Commission is. Ms. Segura stated that she was made aware of openings on this Commission by a friend who encouraged her to apply. She stated that she believes the Youth Commission's function is to align the community with its youth to better understand their needs and what they can bring to the community.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned where she goes to school and what her academic course is. Ms. Segura stated that she is currently a student at Penn State Berks and her major is Global Studies with a minor in Business. Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned what she could bring to the Commission given her background. Ms. Segura stated that she is originally from the Dominican Republic but has been raised in Reading as she has been here for the last ten years. She is familiar with how diverse the City of Reading is.

Ms. Segura stated that currently she tutors Reading High School kids weekly through the PEPP Program. This includes middle school, elementary school and high school students. Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that the current administration feels strongly about connecting with the City's youth which comprises approximately 20% of the population. She stated that it is

important to address issues that pertain to youth and to connect with them legislatively, with programming and resources available to them and for them. She stated that the Youth Commission will need much work in the coming months as members will have to coordinate agendas and goals for what they want to accomplish now and in the long term.

Mr. Marmarou questioned if Ms. Segura felt that the students were interested in goals beyond high school when she attended Reading High School. Ms. Segura stated that she surrounded herself with like-minded individuals who, in her opinion, did appear to want to connect with their community after school. She stated that many of her friends in high school volunteered in the community for different needs including working the polls at various elections, working with the Olivet's Boys and Girls Clubs and other groups. Mr. Marmarou expressed how pleased he was to hear that from Ms. Segura as he stated he has always been a supporter of the youth. He stated he was the first director of PAL and he was involved in organizing little leagues in the City. He stated that his goal is to see the youth involved in all things pertaining to the City of Reading.

Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz stated that in viewing her application, she noticed that she is highly active in various groups. She questioned what these groups are. Ms. Segura stated that she is currently involved in Latinos United for Change Club and Student Government Association (SGA).

Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz questioned how her peers would describe her if asked. Ms. Segura stated that her peers would likely say that she is loud as she likes talking once she feels comfortable with the people around her. She stated that her peers would also describe her as being reliable and responsible. She stated that her family has always instilled in her the importance of acquiring an education so she is very focused on her goals.

Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz questioned what she feels are some of her weaknesses. Ms. Segura stated that she has difficulty communicating in getting her point across effectively as she struggles a bit with the language barrier.

Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz questioned if she would be able to commit to the meetings required on this Commission, being as she is so involved in many other groups. Ms. Segura stated that she will not have a problem attending as her schedule can be flexible and allows her to prioritize accordingly.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned if Ms. Segura had any questions for the council members present. Ms. Segura stated that when the group that this Commission is comprised of begins to meet, what roles will each individual need to fill. Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that in a group such as this, there will be a need for a lead facilitator that runs the meetings. There will need to be a specific structure formed and between all the members, you can come up with who will take the minutes at each meeting and who will be responsible to putting together agendas and collaboratively come up with goals that the Commission will have moving forward. She stated that there will be individuals there to help get the Commission started.

Ms. Smith reiterated stating that there will be a moderator and two members of Council to assist in the structuring and anything else that would be required to get the Commission up and running. Ms. Smith also indicated that she can be called on for assistance if the need should arise.

**The Nominations and Appointments Committee recommends the appointment of Saoni Segura to the Youth Commission.**

- **Morgan Hutchinson – Appointment to the Youth Commission**

Mr. Marmarou requested that Ms. Hutchinson tell the group a little about herself. Ms. Hutchinson stated that she is a student at Berks Catholic in 9<sup>th</sup> Grade, she plays basketball and is in most of the high classes at her school. She stated that she has expressed her interest in getting involved in more groups at school but due to COVID-19, that has all been put on hold temporarily.

Mr. Marmarou questioned if she knew Ms. Marms. Ms. Hutchinson stated that she did indeed know Ms. Marms.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz introduced herself and questioned what Ms. Hutchinson knows about the Committee to have been motivated to apply. Ms. Hutchinson stated that she believes that it is a group of teenagers getting together to try to make Reading better. She stated that her mom is the person who brought it to her attention as she saw it advertised on Facebook and then she looked into it and decided that it was something she wanted to be involved in. Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned if she is involved in any extracurricular activities at school. Ms. Hutchinson stated that she was involved in Government in grade school which basically organized events.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned what she sees herself doing after graduating from high school. Ms. Hutchinson stated that currently she has been looking into colleges because her school has been inquiring about that. She stated that she seems interested in Pharmaceutical Science and the discovery of medicine and new vaccines. She noted that Penn State seems to be the most suited for that course of study.

Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz noted that on her application, she mentioned the negative images regarding the City of Reading and would like to know how she will go about changing the perspective pertaining to that and emphasizing on the beauty that is here. She stated that most of her friends who happen to reside in the Muhlenberg area seem to talk down about the City of Reading and she believes most of that talk comes from people not feeling safe and they question the cleanliness of the City. She stated that initiatives can be presented to help clean up communal areas such as the parks in the City.

Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz questioned what her opinion is regarding the safety aspect of the City of Reading. Ms. Hutchinson stated that safety in the City needs to improve and she realizes it is not an easy fix as the City lacks police officers to be able to do that in the amount it requires.

Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz questioned what her thoughts are in getting more members of our community, of all ages, more involved in taking pride in the City we all reside or work in. Ms. Hutchinson stated that she likes the idea of girls and boys clubs such as the Olivet's that help youngsters find productive ways to occupy their time while learning different things.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz reiterated that this is a new Commission and that it will take some planning and coordinating to pull things together. She stated that once the members are appointed, there will be a facilitator to assist in getting the Commission up and running.

**The Nominations and Appointments Committee recommends the appointment of Morgan Hutchinson to the Youth Commission.**

Mr. Marmarou apologized again to the committee for his tardiness.

## **II. Appointment Recommendations**

Ms. Smith stated that if the applicants today get approved, it will bring the number to ten out of 15 required members. She stated she would like the resolution on the agenda for the Council Meeting on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of this month. Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned if there are more applicants in line to be interviewed at which Ms. Smith stated that she one who has moved and two who have not returned phone calls or emails and one who has yet to remit background clearances. She stated that she may have a few in reserve that she may be able to move forward in the process.

Ms. Smith stated that a planning meeting took place last week which included herself, Ms. Ventura, Ms. Sihelnik, Mr. Zabala and Mr. Denbowski. They spoke about giving a brief Civics 101 to the newly appointed members to allow them to understand how government works, specifically as it pertains to the City of Reading.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz suggested mentioning Youth Violence forums that are being at the Olivet's Club as it would be a good opportunity for their voices to be heard as the Youth Commission.

## **III. Agreement of Responsibility**

Ms. LaMano stated that late last week Mr. Denbowski, Ms. Smith and herself discussed this and she will be making some small proposed changes for everyone's consideration. This is the agreement that is provided to every member in their welcoming/congratulatory packet. She stated that it would be completely up to Council if the changes she proposes will be made to the form. She stated that she will provide the edits that she is proposing for Council review.

Mr. Denbowski reiterated that this form has been a part of the membership to the boards, authorities (only Council-appointed authorities) and commissions (BACs) so it is not something new. It is simply a matter of changing small parts of the language in the agreement.

#### **IV. Application Form**

Ms. Smith stated that she has worked together with Ms. LaMano to have it changed it to reflect the new background requirements for those who will be working with youth. She directed all to the page indicating the changes that were made in highlighted form. Ms. Smith questioned if all are in favor with the proposed changes so that she may move forward with those changes. All were in favor.

#### **V. Background Clearance Update**

Ms. Smith directed all to the coinciding page which shows whose clearances are outstanding. She stated that she is trying to obtain these and giving applicants some deadlines.

Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz inquired about Ms. Harris's background clearances. Ms. Smith stated she has yet to receive them. Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that Ms. Harris works at the Olivet's and; therefore, it is simply a question of her submitting due to her work at the Olivet's.

Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz questioned regarding the Citizens Initiative Commission as she noted that only one appointment has been made by the Mayor. She questioned if this is something that Council needs to be proactive about in terms of recruiting individuals from each district. Ms. Smith stated that there is only one from District 4. This was also a Commission that was created pre-COVID-19 and was unable to move forward. Ms. Smith stated that she can reach out to Mr. Crespo for assistance in getting the word out via social media.

Meeting was adjourned at 4:53pm

Respectfully Submitted,  
*Bea Rivera, Legislative Aide*