

Youth Commission
Wednesday, April 6, 2022
Zoom Virtual Meeting
6:00 pm

Members Present – B. Hernandez, R. Flores, B. Gonzalez, N. Lopez

Others Present – S. Smith, J. Zabala, C. Crespo, B. Ayers-Fisher, BCTV

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Hernandez called the meeting to order at 6:06 pm. He stated that a quorum is not present.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

PRESENTATION BY READING'S SUSTAINABILITY MANAGER

Ms. Ayers-Fisher introduced herself and stated that the City uses a model where environmental, financial, and social issues intersect as their definition of sustainability.

Ms. Munoz connected to the meeting at this time. *(Note: a quorum is now present.)*

Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that the City is focusing on energy conservation and is transitioning to reduce its use of fossil fuels. She noted her hope that the City would be completely transitioned by 2050. She stated that the City also focuses on water protection and infrastructure and forest protection and management. She noted the need to be good stewards of local resources.

Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that she is excited that the City has a Youth Commission to help it make decisions. She stated that current decisions will have the most effect on the City's youth and that youth feedback and ideas are important. She stated that she will serve as the Commission's technical advisor as needed and offered to arrange tours of City facilities if there is interest. She stated that tours and field trips are a better way to see and understand issues.

Mr. Zabala questioned if the City collaborates with the School District on education to push sustainability to the forefront. He expressed the belief that 2050 will arrive quickly. Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that she was originally hired as the

City's environmental educator. She stated that she loves educating. She stated that pre-COVID she went to every 4th grade class in the District. She stated that she works with the Environmental Club at RHS and coordinates field trips. She stated that she also works with all four colleges / universities in Reading. She stated that she coordinates City cleanups and expressed the belief that cleanups are a great way to have conversations and make connections.

Ms. Smith questioned how recruitment for the Climate Corps was going. Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that the Climate Corps requires a one year commitment and is part of AmeriCorps. She stated that this program is geared toward young people in need of opportunities. She stated that the focus is environmental stewardship.

Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that so far four people have applied but that the deadline is not until April 18. She noted the need for a high school diploma or GED and that the program is open to 18 – 24 year olds. She stated that all four applicants are female.

Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that she also works with the City's Environmental Advisory Council, Shade Tree Commission and with Berks Nature. She stated that she performs water quality testing at Angelica and noted her hope to begin water quality testing of the Rose Valley Creek and Bernhart's Creek after the water level has been lowered.

Mr. Hernandez thanked Ms. Ayers-Fisher for attending this meeting. He stated that violence often makes the news but the need for sustainability does not. He questioned the number of people that can be involved in the Climate Corps. Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that this is the first year Reading will have a Climate Corps and it is limited to ten participants. She stated that Corps members will earn \$10 per hour and will build their support network and learn employment skills. She stated that each member will also receive \$3,500 at the end of their commitment to use for further education – college, CDL, operators licenses, etc. She stated that the hope is to teach young people that there are good jobs available without the need for a college degree.

Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz connected to the meeting at this time.

Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that violence is heart breaking and she encouraged all to connect with nature to reduce stress and to work through aggressive feelings.

Ms. Munoz stated that she works with a program for people to attain their GED. She expressed the belief that this program will be a great segway to work. Ms. Ayers-Fisher agreed and expressed the belief that this is a great opportunity. She stated that she can also work with college students to achieve their required service hours.

Mr. Zabala suggested providing the information for the Climate Corps to the Facebook Live viewers. Ms. Ayers-Fisher verbally provided her contact information and the Climate Corps website.

Ms. Ayers-Fisher described the Mayor's Water Challenge. She stated that Reading is a water rich community and has a responsibility to conserve and protect this asset. She stated that the Water Challenge is a pledge to be more mindful of water use. She stated that Reading will be giving "swag" to residents who participate.

Ms. Ayers-Fisher reminded all about the events on April 23 in City Park. She stated that the Great American Cleanup will begin at 9 am and encouraged Commission members to participate. She stated that other cleanups can also be arranged. She stated that the Earth Day Celebration begins at noon. She stated that Earth Day celebrates the good work on the environment and sustainability. She stated that lunch will be provided for volunteers and that programming will include making wildflower seed bombs, musical groups, reptiles, raptors and other native animals and an art contest. She stated that the art composition will be taking old items and turning them into a piece of new art. She stated that the contest is open to high school students and there are monetary prizes for winners.

Ms. Munoz stated that the Youth Commission will be present on April 23 for both the Great American Cleanup and Earth Day.

Ms. Ayers-Fisher thanked Commission members for the work they are doing.

APPROVAL OF MEETING AGENDA

Motion was made by Mr. Hernandez, seconded by Mr. Flores, to approve the agenda for this evening's meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MEETING SUMMARIES

Motion was made by Mr. Hernandez, seconded by Mr. Flores, to approve the March 2, 2022 meeting summary. Motion carried unanimously.

LET'S KEEP TALKING VIDEOS

Ms. Arias stated that the last videos were posted in December. She noted the need to continue this project. All agreed.

Ms. Arias questioned who was willing to write a script and record a video. All stated that they are willing to work on this project.

Ms. Arias noted the need for topics and suggested that the videos begin being posted in May.

Mr. Crespo stated that Meta has changed their algorithm and reels has made posting videos much easier. He noted his hope that this would further increase the video's exposure and engagement. He stated that YouTube is also working on a video short program.

Ms. Arias reviewed the project and stated that the November videos focused on sex education issues and December was holiday fun. She suggested creating a theme for each month.

Mr. Crespo stated that there are many months, weeks or days that help to increase awareness about issues. He suggested using these as a starting point to help with choosing themes. He also suggested addressing social issues such as sexual consent, abortion / birth control, and "don't say gay" laws. He stated that the Commission can also work with local organizations and nonprofits that may be affiliated with these themes.

Ms. Arias noted the need to set a deadline to get restarted. Mr. Flores suggested having content ready by April 24.

The group agreed to have their scripts to Mr. Crespo by April 24 so filming can begin and videos can begin to be released in early May.

RECRUITMENT VIDEOS

Ms. Arias stated that all the video clips have been provided to Mr. Crespo. She thanked Mr. Hernandez for his work on this project. Mr. Crespo stated that he has begun producing the video.

Ms. Arias noted her hope that this video would begin being shared this week.

Mr. Hernandez thanked Ms. Arias for her work on this project. He stated that he is very excited to see the final product.

Mr. Crespo stated that he has a new software program to help with videos and he is excited to use it.

RECRUITMENT FLYER

Ms. Arias shared her screen to view the flyer.

Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz disconnected from the meeting at this time.

Mr. Crespo questioned where the flyer would be shared. Ms. Arias stated that it should be shared on social media and will be physically handed out.

Using the chat feature, Ms. Smith stated that the coloring of the flyer may not translate well to printing.

Mr. Crespo agreed with Ms. Smith. He suggested that some modifications be made to the print version. He stated that copies of the flyer will be made by the Mayor's office.

Ms. Arias stated that she and Mr. Hernandez will work with Mr. Crespo on the printed flyer.

POSSIBLE PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Ms. Smith screen shared her summary of the meetings with possible partner organizations. Mr. Zabala reviewed the organizations.

Ms. Arias questioned if a meeting could be held in person with partner organizations to continue the conversation. Ms. Smith stated that in person meetings are now possible. She noted the need to re-advertise the meeting.

Mr. Crespo suggested also meeting with Olivet about partnering. He suggested holding a future meeting there. He stated that he will be able to stream the meetings on location.

All agreed to begin meeting in person.

Mr. Zabala stated that the YMCA is ready to partner and Ms. Simmons from TheRealDeal610 is very excited.

Ms. Smith stated that she can arrange a meeting space.

Ms. Arias suggested meeting with Ms. Simmons in May. All agreed.

Ms. Rodriguez suggested meeting with The Village to discuss partnering. Mr. Hernandez agreed and stated that Ms. McClendon is very enthusiastic. Ms. Smith stated that she will contact Ms. McClendon to schedule a meeting.

Mr. Zabala expressed the belief that many people are working to ensure that youth voices are heard and want to partner with the Youth Commission.

Ms. Arias agreed with Mr. Zabala and stated that people are listening and paying attention. She expressed the belief that the video series has also gotten a lot of attention.

Mr. Zabala agreed that the video series has increased engagement. He expressed the belief that people want to know what Commission members have to say. He noted the need to keep an open mind and work with many organizations.

Mr. Lopez stated that there are tons of organizations with great programs. He stated that it would be difficult NOT to collaborate. He agreed that the Youth Commission should work with any organization that has good programs to spread the message further. He expressed the belief that collaborating will get more accomplished for all the groups.

Mr. Flores stated that he is very exciting and suggested getting started as soon as possible. He agreed with beginning to meet in person and expressed the belief that big changes can be made if everyone works together.

Ms. Rodriguez agreed that there are many organizations to collaborate with. She noted the need to start doing more hands on work and also agreed with the need to begin meeting in person.

Mr. Hernandez echoed all members' comments. He stated that he is ready to get to work and expressed the belief that the Commission has the tools that it needs.

There was a brief discussion about where to hold the May meeting. Suggestions were the YMCA, CollegeTown and the offices of TheRealDeal.

The Commission decided to plan the meeting at TheRealDeal offices (645 Penn St 3rd floor). Ms. Smith stated that she will make the necessary arrangements and re-advertise the meeting.

Ms. Rodriguez questioned if parking would be free in the lot across the street. Ms. Smith stated that she will confirm the enforcement times for this lot. (*Note: enforcement in this lot is determined by whether or not there is a downtown event in the evening.*)

Mr. Crespo suggested that the Parking Authority may provide vouchers to members for this meeting. He expressed the belief that parking issues should not limit where meetings occur.

Ms. Smith suggested having a backup location in case there are issues at this location.

WRAP UP

Mr. Hernandez stated that he will share the Google Doc to plan the video series.

Ms. Arias suggested sharing video topics by April 13 and to have the script to Mr. Crespo by April 24.

Mr. Crespo stated that April 24 begins National Youth Violence Prevention Week and suggested using that as a theme for the next series of videos.

Ms. Arias reminded all about attending the Earth Day events on April 23. Ms. Rodriguez, Mr. Flores, Ms. Arias and Mr. Hernandez will attend both the cleanup and the Celebration.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Youth Commission will be held on Wednesday, May 4 at 6 pm at TheRealDeal610 offices.

Motion was made by Mr. Hernandez, seconded by Mr. Flores, to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 7:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by
Shelly Smith, CMC
Deputy City Clerk