

Meeting Minutes

Business Diversity Council – Feb. 6, 2020

Council Members Present: Atiya Stokes-Brown, Nicholas DeStefano, Diane Green, Becky Large, Tim McCray, Bonnie O'Guin, Heather Orr, Jerome Randall, Eileen Soisson.

Staff Present: Cindy Gettig, Amanda Blomquist.

Others Present: Billy McGonigal

Meeting called to order at 9 a.m. by Atiya Stokes-Brown

I. Welcome & Introductions

Atiya Stokes-Brown introduced herself and invited all others to introduce themselves and share their pronouns if they wish.

She explained sharing pronouns (she/her/hers, he/him/his, they/them/theirs) is one way to be inclusive of gender identity and expression. There are individuals particularly transgender, gender nonconforming or gender nonbinary that use they, them, theirs. Seeing feminine or masculine qualities in a person does not mean they identify as feminine or masculine.

II. Committee Packet Overview

Cindy Gettig guided the council through the committee packet which includes the list of council members, information on who the chamber is, what the chamber does, what the business development division does, what the Business Diversity Council does, who is on the board of directors and the chamber's abridged version of Robert's Rules of Order.

III. Upcoming Events

Gettig shared flyers for upcoming events including the S.C. Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony, the BMW Supplier Diversity Conference, the Legislative Reception and the Annual Meeting.

Registration is open online for the BMW Supplier Diversity Conference. Anyone affiliated with a minority-owned business is welcome to ride a bus provided by Coastal Carolina University to attend the conference in Greenville, SC. BMW also has discounted room rates should anyone want to drive up themselves.

There also is a chamber bus that travels to the annual Legislative Reception in Columbia, SC. Registration is available online for that event, too.

Nominations are being accepted for the chamber's Annual Meeting and awards dinner. One of the awards came from the Business Diversity Council called the Champion of Diversity award. Membership with the chamber is not required for this award. The council was encouraged to nominate themselves, their business or someone else for the award.

IV. Proposed changes to mission statement

Stokes-Brown asked the council to look at proposed changes to the council's mission

statement.

Soisson said she appreciated the inclusion of a definition of diversity.

Green also said she found that helpful.

DeStefano said he appreciated that it speaks directly to the development of businesses owned by individuals from underrepresented and marginalized groups and that both of those were included because they are different and people don't often recognize that.

Large asked to confirm that ability status would capture all disabilities. Stokes-Brown said yes. Large said the mission was encapsulated well in the proposed statement.

Randall said the mission is great but he hopes the issue of race is not pushed off and out of mind.

Stokes-Brown thanked Randall and clarified that there is no intent to minimize the impact race has in terms of outcomes ... but said it shouldn't be the only thing on the radar.

McCray asked the council to go back to talk about how the council started. He said he approached the CEO and the board asking them to create this council because there was a group that wanted to start a black chamber of commerce and he didn't see it as viable. He said he still wants to see a mentor-protégé program implemented.

The council moved on to discuss items V and VI. Later in the meeting Jerome Randal moved to accept the changes to the mission statement. Second by Tim McCray. All approved. Gettig explained the proposed change will be presented to the full board of directors for approval.

V. Core Framework for engagement

Putting the mission statement into action, Stokes-Brown said she sees employer education, talent recruitment, networking and targeted development as the framework for engagement.

VI. Key Initiatives that align with core framework

Stokes-Brown suggested the formation of a diversity and inclusion pledge that could form a coalition of businesses. She said the pledge and coalition were modeled after other chambers.

The coalition would have benefits such as priority access to possible events including diversity council sponsored Lunch n' Learns, a diversity and inclusion academy, the diversity and inclusion forum/summit and a job fair.

The council discussed a possible sponsorship program where coalition members could

sponsor a minority-owned business that may not be able to afford chamber membership that could include an incentive for joining. The council also discussed the need for requirements of the sponsored business and benefits of sponsorship. Would mentorship be part of the sponsorship?

DeStefano asked whether all businesses who pledge need to be members of the chamber. Stokes-Brown said her thought was no. Gettig said anything we've offered related to the diversity council has been open to anyone. DeStefano asked what the purpose of the sponsorship would be then? If the point is to get them to join the chamber, why are we offering all these things? Gettig said there is even more available to full chamber members.

Gettig and Blomquist will discuss internally what benefits we could offer the sponsors.

Council and staff will do homework to suggest requirements of the sponsored business, privileges of the coalition and whether mentorship and sponsorship can be separate.

Council also will suggest topics and potential speakers for diversity and inclusion related Lunch 'n Learn/Chamber Academy classes. Monthly classes would start ideally in May and would help promote the forum in August.

The council suggestions should be emailed to Stokes-Brown (astokesb@coastal.edu) and Blomquist (amanda.blomquist@visitmyrtlebeach.com) by Feb. 28. Blomquist will compile all suggestions and send it to the council within a week. A conference call/meeting may be called.

Soisson updated the council on the subcommittee's work to-date on the forum. She said we're looking at a half day with a goal of about 75 people attending. She said Aug. 10-12 are available with a cost of approximately \$300. There would be a keynote, three breakout sessions running concurrently and a closing panel. Breakfast would be served, and the forum would end at noon. The overall goal is to raise awareness of the importance and start small with education. Gettig asked Soisson to lock in Aug. 12.

Blomquist also will research ways to best communicate whether its through Facebook, Google or Microsoft Teams.

The meeting adjourned at 10:52 a.m.