

NAACP Branch Meeting June 1, 2022

6:03 pm President Dennis Powell (henceforth DP): I want to welcome everyone to this fall day. (joking)

moment of silence

Thank you. We hold everyone really dear in our hearts. We pray at some point that this all comes to an end.

6:05 pm DP Going through treasurer's report to be sent to Rebecca.

6:09 pm Erica: What are you thinking of for donations for criminal justice reform?

DP we are using that for individuals who find themselves in situations where they cannot afford an attorney. We use that to assist them.

6:10 pm DP: We have 3 month of minutes on our website that we really need to get approved. So I'm going to ask that we approve those minutes. Please just review them so that we can approve them at our meetings instead of time reading through them.

6:11 pm

DP: I'm happy to say that we now have an assistant treasure that will be working along side Marcus. Her name is Amina Wilson. She's the daughter of Dr. Frances Jones Sneed. I'm thrilled and delighted she has agreed to take on this task. The EC approved this last meeting.

6:12 pm

DP: June 4th we have the pride festival that the NAACP is a partner with. We will be tabling at that event. I welcome anyone to join me. It's at the Common. Solidarity and support is important here.

Also, our June 19th celebration. Sunday at Durant park. For those of you not familiar with Juneteenth, Black people call it - we call it our Independence Day. In Texas it was announced that slavery had finally ended. We will Collab with all Black orgs in the county. And its replacing of our typical gather-in. Reminder that the Berkshire Pride info is: June 4 11am-4pm. More details here: <https://www.berkshirepride.org/>

Juneteenth Vendor and Sponsor forms can be found here:

<https://www.naacpberkshires.org/announcements/juneteenth-collaborative-committee-to-host-juneteenth-celebration-celebrating-black-independence-day%ef%bf%bc/>

General Meeting Minutes can be found here:

<https://www.naacpberkshires.org/home-dev/minutes-and-reports/>

DP: (regarding Juneteenth) Nothing speaks of Freedom more than education. It's going to be filled with no speeches. We are going to give the proclamation and we're just going to have a good time. Festive event- great entertainment, great food. And fun and games for kids. Just an opportunity for a community to come together and celebrate freedom.

The gala for Jacob's pillow is coming up on the 18th. The executive committee is voting to really support the gala by purchasing a table- at the generosity of Jacob's pillow director we got our table for 10 for half the price. I'm opening it up to the members of the EC that want to attend. If they wish to bring their spouse then they would pay for their spouse. And that's all I have.

We're going to do our committee chair reports and I'm going to ask that everyone be as brief as possible so that we can get to our discussion.

Shirley

6:18 pm Shirley

We've been attending to community complaints and also have been involved in preparing for the Juneteenth celebration. We continue to be busy. Its the reality of how we're living these days in terms of discrimination and racism.

DP: Redress?

6:19 pm

Thasia: I'm not seeing Darcie or Kate yet.

DP: Education: Frances or Linda? (Also not present). Daryl? (Also not present)
Economic development: AJ

6:20 pm AJ: Nothing too significant to report. Still organizing truth telling. BEC is hiring and the community should know that because there will be 3 positions. Executive assistant. Community coordinator position. Enrichment navigator. Soon we'll have a grant going live on BEC's website on behalf of the Blpoc community.

DP: The website is looking really good by the way.

AJ: The website that we have is multi-functional

<https://berkshirebec.org/>

DP: Shirley I forgot you should mention your event.

Shirley: Oh right I forgot. On June 6th the Women of Color Giving Circle in collab with the NAACP and the St. John's masonic lodge number 10 we will be sponsoring our annual graduates event. It celebrates and recognizes high school graduates that identify as Black. Dr. Whitney Battle baptiste will be present, Director of Umass DuBois center. As well as other excellent people. We will also have "Sample Cat"- pretty entertaining and powerful singing duo. We will have a 9 or 10 year old community member who will be reciting poems. I cannot encourage enough - young people who are attending a vocational or technical, community college or 4 year college to please get in touch with us because there are serious scholarship opportunities. We want to support you. We hope you show up to support them.

DP: Political action committee; Helen texted me - she doesn't know if she can make it from work in time. Is Kamaar here?

6:26 pm Kamaar: Good evening - for July we've scheduled a presentation from the ACLU "*Getting to know your sheriff.*" As well as both candidates- Bowler and Alfred Barbalunga to hear the tentacles of the sheriff's department in Berkshire County. August- another ACLU presentation- "*What makes a DA*" followed by the 2 DA candidates- namely Shagru and Andrea Harrington.

6:27 pm DP: Great, don't go anywhere Kamaar, please give us your housing report. We are continuing to do our work that you were familiarized with in april. Other than that we have no sig updates. But if general members wanna join in, please reach out

6:28 pm Rebecca: Regarding the website- we have plenty of information up there. I want to reiterate that we are getting up- the minutes and reports page are up. Otherwise nothing to report. We finished up a second white learning circle. There were 13 of us. It went faster than we thought. We're gonna set up a new learning circle for next year. And perhaps another iteration. .

6:29 pm DP: Freedom Fund- nothing to report

DP: Kamaar would you like to introduce Meg?

Kamaar: With us this evening to help moderate a discussion is Meg Basson. Director of intimate violence prevention.

(Kamaar then shared the following:)

Building Healthy Communities and Neighborhood Safety An Open Discussion:

A talk on what we can do with our neighbors, friends, and family, to build places of joy and opportunity.

Moderated by Meg Bossong,

Director of Sexual Assault Response, and Health Education at Williams College.



Meg Bossong is the Director of Intimate Violence Prevention & Response and Health Education at Williams College in Williamstown, MA, where she is responsible for all aspects of student-facing sexual assault, dating/domestic violence, and stalking prevention, response, advocacy programs and health education.

Prior to her current role, Meg worked for seven years in a variety of roles at the Boston Area Rape Crisis Center, organizing communities to prevent sexual violence and working with colleagues to improve systems responses based on the experiences of those harmed by sexual violence.

She has been a commissioner with the Berkshire County Commission on the Status of Women and Girls, and is a founding member of Invest in Pittsfield, a multiracial coalition of community members and organizations advocating for the reallocation of the municipal budget from policing to health, housing, youth services, and other programs and structures to make Pittsfield, MA a just, healthy and thriving community.

Meg's education has come from institutions (a B.A. from Williams College and an M.S. from Northeastern University), but more fully from the history of many justice movements, books and podcasts, storytelling, being in community with people and in the words of Amita Swadhin, with "people who trusted me with wisdom that goes beyond my own experience," for which she is deeply grateful.

6:32 pm Meg: I'm glad to be here. I'm excited to create the container for this conversation. Which will have lots of opportunity for interaction.
Share screen. Building healthy communities and neighborhood safety.

We're all in different places in terms of vocabulary and familiarity. A principle that I like to use is "make space, take space." A request that we lean into dreaming and possibility. We can feel crushed by the suffering. This is a really powerful opportunity to practice hope as a political praxis. And that's exciting and energizing.

6:37 pm Meg: From an individual perspective- what does a healthy, thriving community look like? Feel like? Sound like?

When you have been in a crisis, what were resources you wanted and got? What were resources you wanted but didn't get?

In breakout rooms- don't share the crisis but just the examples.

I'm gonna randomly assign folks to breakout rooms now. I'm gonna show you a jamboard

What does a healthy thriving community look, sound and feel like?

6:40 pm- Meg moves everyone to break out rooms

6:41 pm breakout room

6:53 pm

Sharing

6:59 pm

Imagine what we would most want

(The following examples were shared as hypotheticals:)

- You are experiencing a mental health crisis and you are afraid.
- Some people are sleeping in doorways and public places downtown.
- Incidents of gun violence are rising in your neighborhood.
- You don't realize it, but your brake lights aren't working.
- Young people in the community are being very loud and boisterous on the street and making it challenging for neighbors to move through the neighborhood.

Do some big dreaming.

Michael Vincent Bushey: Mental illness is the myth we hide behind in lieu of rugged individualism. It's a mark of our privilege that we can do that.

7:29 pm DP

Thank you Meg. It's important for us to talk about this. Our feelings and hopes. I would encourage everyone to really- I'm tired of talking. I am so tired of everyone repeating the same phrase. This is not who we are. This is exactly who we are. This is America. And until we admit that - we can't correct it. This is who we are. Look at our history.

7:36 Helen:

Thanks Meg

DP : Everyone here that was part of this needs to talk about what happened tonight- maybe other people will. I found so much value in tonight's discussion. And again thank you Meg it was so well put together. It made us think in and out of the box.

7:39 pm DP: How did everyone feel about having this type of a meeting?

AJ liked it

Kamaar: We're all in some way carrying this forward. But is there a way where we can carry this conversation and this kind of idea of a Pod and connecting with people in the conversation forward in a more formal way as a branch?

Our Political action community is open

7:42 pm Wendy: I liked the pod idea.

Shirley: This type of convo is enlightening and gives opportunity to learn

7:45 pm Thasia: Community is a muscle and we can be that resilient community. I also really valued this time and the breakout rooms.

7:46 pm Michael Vincent Bushey: One of the best things about this format and the overall tone is that this is- dream big, this is proactive rather than reaction.

7:48 pm DP: Thank you everyone, especially our political action committee for bringing this to us. We are looking forward to our July and August meetings. And again i wanna remind everyone of the pride festival june 4th. And really standing in community.

7:50 pm DP: should we motion to adjourn?

Kelan motioned to adjourn

Seconded by Shirley

All in favor, adjourned

recorded by Marisa Massery