



# LEE'S SUMMIT MISSOURI

## City of Lee's Summit, MO Human Relations Commission

Summary of the April 22, 2019 Meeting

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**Members Present:**

Evonne Medrano  
Vanessa Workcuff  
Karen Schuler  
Ben Tonga  
Roby Little  
Susan Coffman

**City Staff:**

Anita Dickey  
Colene Roberts

**Guest:**

LaShawn Walker

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**1. Call to order**

Ms. Medrano called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m.

**2. Approval of the March 25, 2019 meeting summary**

The summary of the last meeting was approved.

**3. Public Comments**

None.

**4. Presentation on Suburban Balance**

Ms. Medrano introduced LaShawn Walker, founder of Suburban Balance. Ms. Walker founded Suburban Balance six years ago to provide education and cultural opportunities for students of color in the Lee's Summit area. What began with five families has now grown to 250 families from Lee's Summit, Raymore, Belton, Blue Springs, Overland Park, and Lawrence. The organization provides a support system for families of color. They have approximately 20 to 22 events each year. There are book clubs for students, career days, influential speakers, ACT seminars, a student mentor program, a youth leadership team, and an Equity Task Force. The organization has been involved in the equity conversations at LSR7. They are funded by membership fees but will begin looking at grant opportunities to expand their efforts into other student issues, like mental health and college prep. They partner with the Plaza Library for their book clubs and utilize parks and churches for other events. They primarily use Facebook to communicate with members and the public. They help parents learn to navigate school district resources and, engage with teachers and the school board. Suburban Balance is based in Lee's Summit and the majority of the members are in Lee's Summit but events are held around the metro area. The first annual book festival will be held this year, featuring local authors of color. Suburban Balance has been featured by the Kansas City Star, Lee's Summit Tribune, and Fox 4 but most members find the organization through word of mouth.

**5. Coordinating with community partners to tackle difficult issues**

Ms. Medrano said that she has been chosen to serve on the panel responsible for reviewing the proposals submitted in response to LSR7's RFP for equity training. They read submissions last week



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and will conduct interviews next week. Communication and community/parent involvement are expected to be addressed in the equity training. Training will include board members, administrators and teachers. Trainers will also be trained for future teachers. Ms. Medrano will check with Dawn Smith about providing HRC with a brief presentation on LSR7's equity plan.

Mr. Tonga suggested that HRC members break into teams to work on specific goals. Ms. Schuler proposed following up on Ignite plans. Ms. Dickey said that the Ignite leadership group has been meeting with different groups to gather ideas. They also have a website for citizen input. Affordable housing has come up several times in group meetings and will likely end up as a goal of Ignite. Some HRC members are planning to attend this week's Ignite meetings. Ms. Schuler suggested inviting someone from the Ignite leadership team and someone from R7's equity team to discuss how HRC can support their goals.

### **6. International festival**

Ms. Coffman said that May 30, 2020 is the date selected for the International Festival. The planning committee is meeting this Friday to discuss entertainment. The event will be held at the John Knox Village Pavilion. Food trucks will be outside and other vendors inside. Three high school students have been serving on the committee and providing many connections to the international community. They are graduating and leaving the area. Their help has been greatly appreciated. The Chamber and the City have also been supporters. They will both provide event promotion. The attendance fee will be \$5 and the vendor fee will be \$150. All HRC members are welcome at the planning meetings.

### **7. Budget**

Ms. Dickey stated the new fiscal year will begin on July 1, so funding will be "reset" at that time. HRC has funds leftover in this year's budget. In previous years, a paid speaker has been utilized for the MLK celebrations, but this year's speaker was Mayor Baird.

### **8. Roundtable**

Ms. Dickey provided copies of the results of the 2013 HRC diversity survey. Members will review and discuss at the next meeting.

### **9. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:42 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Colene Roberts