

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION COMMITTEE MEETING
MT. CALVARY AME ZION CHURCH
800 LASALLE STREET
MONROE, NC 28110
www.monroenc.org

May 8, 2025 – 6:30 P.M.

AGENDA

Meeting will be conducted in the sanctuary.

1. Call to Order
2. Approval of Minutes
 - a. Minutes from March 13, 2025 meeting
3. Old Business
 - a. Review of Job Fair participation – April 29, 2025
4. New Business
 - a. Discussion on future projects:
 - i. Training for businesses on how to obtain government contracts or grants
 - ii. DEI presentation to the public
 - b. Discussion on bringing Dr. Samuel back:
 - i. When do we bring him in?
 - ii. What will his role be? Completion of quarterly projects?
 - c. Discussion on committee size:
 - i. Reduce size or keep the same number
 - ii. Attendance
 - iii. New applications
 - d. Tablecloth quote(s) from Melissa McKeown
5. Other Business
6. Adjournment

Mission Statement

The City of Monroe is committed to ensuring that barriers of inequality are removed and all voices are heard. We will develop and improve socio-economic opportunities. We pledge to promote open and inclusive conversations to foster cultural sensitivity that creates a sense of belonging.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee
Mt. Calvary AME Church
March 13, 2025

Present: Chairperson Surluta Anthony, Councilman David Dotson, Councilman Franco McGee, Co-Chairperson Melvin Tate, Althea Richardson-Tucker, Melissa McKeown, Cynthia Baez, Tamara Williams, Tiffany Wilson, Benita Sanders

Absent: Sheila Couick, Minute Taker, Human Resources

Staff: Leesa Jensen, Liaison, Director of Human Resources,

Chairperson Anthony opened the meeting at 6:30 p.m. stating that there was a quorum based on the number of committee members present.

Approval of minutes from October 29, 2024 meeting:

The minutes from the October 29, 2024 meeting were approved. Tamera Wilson made the motion to approve the minutes as presented. Melissa McKeown seconded the motion. Chairperson Anthony asked for a vote on the approval of the minutes:

Ayes: All present

Nays: None

Chairperson Anthony stated that the minutes from the October 29, 2024 meeting were approved as presented by the committee.

Chairperson Anthony commented that the committee was committed to help with the job fair which will be April 29, 2025 which is hosted by the Union County Chamber and South Piedmont Community College. Chairperson Anthony asked for members to raise their hand if they could help on that day with the job fair. The job fair will be April 29, 2025 from 9:30 am to 1:00 pm at the Union County Agricultural Center. Vendors will arrive around 8:30 am and would need to be set up by 9:00 am. Last year's attendance was around 500. There will not be any childcare available this year, maybe next year or later in this year at another job fair. The help provided last year was very helpful. Chairperson Anthony stated that the committee would help get the word about the job fair on April 29. Chairperson Anthony commented that she would let the Chamber know if a resume writing workshop would be conducted prior to the job fair.

Chairperson Anthony commented that there had been a lot of talk about the DEI committee and the DEI committee is still in effect. The committee may be dissolving but not as of right now. Chairperson Anthony commented there is an executive order that all DEI agencies in the federal government have to be dissolved. The mandate was not for this committee and the state legislature has to rule on it. The reason that this may affect us if we do not dissolve this committee is that it may affect the federal grants that the City receives. The DEI committee may dissolve physically but we will always stay committed that the City of Monroe is an inclusive city and will continue with the DEI committee mission statement. This has been placed on the agenda for the March 18 Council meeting for discussion. It will take a majority vote to dissolve the committee by Council, which will be a minimum of four members.

Chairperson Anthony stated that there were funds in the budget and a vote would be needed in order to pay Dr. Samuel. Melissa McKeown stated that she thought Dr. Samuel had been paid from the previous year's work. Chairperson Anthony stated that she had met with City Manager Watson to ensure that the funds would be placed in an account that would use the funds towards an inclusive project, which could be Winchester project. Chairperson Anthony open the floor for discussions on the funds. Comments were made that if we had a contract with someone then the contract needed to be honored and Dr. Samuel needed to be paid.

Chairperson Anthony stated this is not a new committee and it is five years old. There has been a problem with getting a quorum at the meetings and that is why we are not any further along than what we are. The budget was approved by council. Councilman McGee made the motion to finish out the contract with Dr. Samuel and get those funds used. Motion was seconded and Chairperson Anthony asked if there was any discussion on fulfilling the contract with Dr. Samuel and paying him \$9,000. Chairperson Anthony ask for a vote on the motion to pay Dr. Samuel:

Ayes: All present

Nayes: None

Chairperson Anthony stated the motion passed and we will pay Dr. Samuel for services provided.

Chairperson Anthony asked the committee how they felt about dissolving the committee. The question was asked how would dissolving the committee effect the City of Monroe. Chairperson Anthony stated that if the committee continued and continued with the projects that were in place it would make the City of Monroe a more inclusive city and would help us learn others cultures and become more unified. It can also potentially hurt due to all cities needing federal funds and Mr. Trump uses that as a bargaining tool. Melissa McKeown stated that since there is an executive order being challenged in court, we are making a snap decision to dissolve DEI before we know what is going happen and we would be disvaluing the citizens of Monroe. She is disappointed that we are even having this conversation. We are making decision based on “maybe” and that does not feel good to her. The City of Monroe received the Great Jobs Good City imitative partly based on the work of this committee. A comment was made that this committee is being undervalued. Chairperson Anthony commented that we are dealing with a different set of values. The comment was made that they though the committee would be dissolved based on a local decision not a state decision. Chairperson Anthony commented at some point the committee may be dissolved however we are not at that point. Councilman McGee commented that nothing had been passed and this would be a Council decision and nothing has mandated that this committee be dissolved. The bill has not been passed as of right now and is on the floor in pending. Chairperson Anthony stated that she had talked to a representative and they are waiting on the vote to happen. Melvin Tate commented that leaping to a conclusion hastily would be killing this committee. Melvin Tate commented that we have a lot of work to do introducing new residents to the City of Monroe – we need to have something to show residents what Monroe has to offer. Chairperson Anthony commented that we may call this committee something else in the future. Everyone has the opportunity to come to the meeting and sign up to speak about the committee. Benita Sanders commented that this committee needs to nail down what this committee is going to do before the bill hits the floor so that Council can see what the committee is doing currently and what this committee has done. Maybe use someone besides Dr. Samuel. Benita Sanders comment on reducing the size of the committee so that we can have a quorum at meetings. We need to go ahead and schedule something on how to obtain a government contract for small businesses, writing grants, etc. Chairperson Anthony commented that we needed a quorum at meetings to decide on things however we could never get the quorums at meetings to make decisions and time has basically ran out. Benita commented that we had all the people here tonight and could we make a commitment to be there at the next meeting to discuss government contracts. Chairperson Anthony commented that Council was supportive and provided funding and we dropped the ball. Melissa McKeown commented that we should not dissolve ourselves.

This committee is seen as a vehicle of hope for change. Speaking of next steps this could be a call to citizens to help pick up the work in this committee to help with citizens projects. There are citizens that would like to work with this committee. If citizens want to step up that would be great to help with this committee.

Chairperson Anthony commented that there are two types of committees within the City – Mayor and regular. The Mayor has the authority to make Mayoral committees.

The question was asked why the Special Needs committee is allowed to remain and this committee is not allowed to remain. What are the parameters around DEI that they are trying to get away from - is it the name? The committee needs to get away from DEI and call it Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

This should be a community lead committee and not necessarily a function of the City of Monroe. The City cannot determine what is diversity is because it is different for everyone. If it is important to the community, the community will find a way to fund it - if it is a priority.

This committee is doing work that is community driven and to bring people together. As a city we should be willing to do that.

Benita Sander stated that we need to show the relevance of DEI in the community.

Melvin Tate commented that we needed to get back to the mission statement created and read the statement to the committee.

The community needs to be education on what DEI is – take race out of the statement. Now that programs are being cut residents are now seeing that these programs fall under DEI.

We need to have a plan on how to spend the funds that we have. Chairperson Anthony commented that the budget has line items with funds associated within these categories. Chairperson Anthony commented that we could not spend these funds now that time has come that we may possibly loose these funds.

Chairperson Anthony commented that decisions have to be made and this committee is on the Council agenda meeting for discussion. There is no way to tell when the bill will go to the floor.

Melvin Tate commented that we established a track record with the job fair. The job fair was successful last year due to the resume writing program and other agencies that helped with employment. The job fair was also successful due to other programs also being there with additional information from other organizations. Public schools brought buses of student who were looking to transition into the work force after graduation.

Chairperson Anthony commented that funds were allocated for certain programs. Funds were allocated when presented to Council for approval.

Benita Sander asked if funding could be spent now for Juneteenth if there are funds available. Chairperson Anthony stated that we have items left from last year. Chairperson Anthony commented that the funds had to spent on what is listed on the budget spreadsheet.

The committee could be dissolved based on the mandate and we need to continue to be active until the bill goes to the floor. The committee needs to keep doing what it is currently doing.

The committee can make a recommendation to Council that this committee should not be dissolved and provide reasons. We need people to show up on March 18. We need to be prepared for whatever happens.

Chairperson Anthony asked if anyone was willing to help get the word out about the job fair. Need to reserve a room at the Old Armory to conduct a resume writing workshop.

Melissa McKeown made the motion to not dissolve the DEI committee and the motion received second. Chairperson Anthony asked for a vote on the motion

Ayes: Chairperson Surluta Anthony, Councilman Franco McGee, Co-Chairperson Melvin Tate, Althea Richardson-Tucker, Melissa McKeown, Cynthia Baez, Tamara Williams, Tiffany Wilson, Benita Sanders

Nayes: Councilman Dotson

Councilman Dotson commented that this committee has struggled to get quorum at meetings and this committee would be better organized by the community. Now that there is talk of dissolving the community everyone has showed up for the meeting and it took seven months to get a quorum to approve minutes from October 2024. This is why he is not supporting the motion.

The commitment has to be there regardless of what the name of the committee is from the committee members.

How would a community run committee come to the Council to express their needs and have them listen? Community members can reach out to Councilmembers at any time. You have to have citizens to commit to coming to meetings.

Melvin Tate commented that some of the committee members have been at the table for three years. Some members move out of the area and therefore the committee became smaller. People here tonight want to be on this committee based on them showing up tonight. Every community is not alike and you have to deal with the type of community you have.

The City made a committee and provided funding however, it did not move forward.

We made movement forward with participating in the job fair. If this is a community-based committee, it is going to be hard to go to the City and ask for fundings.

There are a lot of community groups doing this work and what is special about this committee is that the citizens could see that the City cared out the citizens. Chairperson Anthony commented that the City adopted the DEI mission statement. Need to remind the City of the mission statement.

Chairperson Anthony asked for a motion to close the meeting and stated that it was voted on and passed not to dissolve the committee. The mission statement was read aloud by all members.

The committee created a logo and hosted a DEI informational session for residents to attend.

Chairperson Anthony adjourned the meeting with no further business to discuss.

Minutes submitted respectfully by Sheila Couick.

Chairperson Surluta Anthony