

I. Call to Order

Names (First and Last) of Members Present: King Kaseen, Chair; Arica Bronz; Harly Rodriguez; Marielle Matthews; Lily Hammerling; Ruth Steinmetz and Amanda Goldstein

Name of City Council Liaison Present: Councilor Al Turkos and Deputy Mayor Bryn Oakleaf

Name of Staff Liaison Present: Justin Huizenga, Police Chief and Jenny Willingham, City Clerk/Staff Liaison

Names of Guests Present: Elaine Wang, City Manager; Kalanni Gagne; Razan Alrubaii and Pam Laser

Call to Order by: King Kaseen, Chair

Meeting Start Time: 6:00 PM

Minutes Recorded by: Jenny Willingham, Staff Liaison

II. Public Comment

None

III. Approve Previous Meeting Minutes

Motion by: Lily Hammerling

Second: Ruth Steinmetz

Decision: Approval

Minutes approved 3-0

IV. Discussion/Approval: Background Checks for Commissioners

The City Manager provided an overview and the purpose of conducting background checks on all applicants for Boards, Commissions and Committees. The background originated from a previous applicant that was determined to create a distraction. The Staff Liaison had concerns and the City Council decided not to approve the applicant. Since there was not a formal policy regarding not appointing applicants, the discussion amongst Leadership came up with a proposal for a Background Check for all applicants through the Vermont Crime Information Center. Another reason for the Background Check would be for Staff Liaisons' safety who are routinely here at Council alone conducting hybrid meetings.

There was an extensive discussion regarding background checks and an alternative for reference checks.

- King Kaseen, Chair (I & B): Had concerns about people who were previously

incarcerated and now are making changes to be a positive person. In his belief, people might continue to judge and creates a barrier for people to better themselves by applying for civic engagement opportunities.

- Kalani Gagne: Sometimes people judge for past violations and do not know the accuracy of the information. A background check does not dictate who you are as a person and how you relate & contribute to society/relationships.

- Pam Laser: Raised questions about the timing of the request for a background check and who would have this information.

- Elaine Wang provided an answer stating it would be the Human Resources Director who would be notified of the results.

- Harly Rodriguez: Inquired about if an applicant was denied, would they be provided a reason of why they were not recommended to advance to Council.

- Arica Bronz: Had concerns about potential applicants if there was background checks vs. reference checks. What option would create less barriers.

- Razan Alrubaii: Questioned reference checks vs. background checks

- Councilor Al Turkos: Asked the attendees, what problem trying to solve? It is safety concerns or the definition of a perceived safety concern. Does this proposal make it more difficult for this City to be more inclusive.

- Lily Hammerling: Both sides have valid arguments, just need to find a balance.

- Ruth Steinmetz: Is currently not in favor of background checks. It is not a guarantee of a persons' behavior. There could be more subtle statements that can be traumatic. The purpose is to add more participants without creating unnecessary burdens or trauma to people interested in civic engagement.

- Deputy Mayor Bryn Oakleaf: Concerns about the goal of this proposal. Bryn Oakleaf is concerned about the safety of the staff or a perception of safety. There are still other risks present that might not be identified. A further discussion is needed to find an alternative direction.

It was decided this is an incredible challenging complex topic and currently not a concrete answer for Council. The next steps would be to have another discussion about this proposal.

Decision: Discussion

V. Other Business

None

VI. Adjourn

A motion by Harly Rodriguez seconded by Ruth Steinmetz to adjourn at 7:38 pm.

Motion passed 4-0.

DRAFT