

SOCIAL JUSTICE, RACE AND EQUITY COMMISSION

Working toward a more equitable Brookhaven

Where do we go from here?

*By John Funny,
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 Social Justice, Race
 & Equity
 Commission
 (SJREC)
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“People fail to get along because they fear each other; they fear each other because they don’t know each other; they don’t know each other because they have not communicated with each other.” Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

A year ago, on May 25, 2020, George Floyd lost his life due to the illegal and excessive force used against him by former officers of the Minneapolis Police Department. His death and those of several other Americans of color at the hands of their local public safety personnel awakened our nation to a summer of race and social justice protests, and the deeper introspection which has followed about the lack of equity in many aspects of American life.

As a nation, we are still seeking to fully achieve many of the lofty goals of equality, opportunity and the pursuit of happiness as outlined by our Founding Fathers. We have faith that we may eventually get there, but there remains a good bit of work to be done.

Like many other suburban and exurban communities across the country last summer, Brookhaven, Georgia saw its own marches in support of racial justice and in sympathy for those injured, killed or wrongfully harmed.

In September of 2020, Brookhaven’s Mayor and Council created a Police Transparency Initiative for the Brookhaven Police Department which is a web-based clearing-house of Brookhaven P.D. public information, including crime stats and mapper, use of force and body camera policies, training requirements, and updates and the ability to request police/detective reports, arrest reports and warrants served.

The Police Transparency Initiative, continually implemented by Brookhaven Police Chief Gary Yandura, along with community policing initiatives and demonstrably diverse and frequently bi-lingual police officers, are each part of the City of Brookhaven’s efforts to build trust and two-way communication with the communities which it serves and protects.

But like an iceberg, with only 10 percent of the mass above the waterline, Brookhaven’s City Council and Mayor chose to take a deeper dive, to assess potential other areas for improvement related to race and equity, in city government and across four primary areas of priority. The Brookhaven Social Justice, Race and Equity

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Commission Charge

The SJREC was formed on Sept. 22 by a resolution passed unanimously by City Council. The Commission was charged with:

- I. Review of Brookhaven City Charter, Vision and Mission
- II. Recommendations for improvements to Brookhaven policies and protocols to guide:
 - a. Hiring and Retention
 - b. Procurement and Contracting
- III. Recommendations and best practices to guide Brookhaven Police Department policies, actions and accountability regarding continuum of force
- IV. Proposal to ensure continued, robust citizen participation related to social justice, race and equity
- V. Examples of innovative policy statements across aligned, connected issues

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@BrookhavenGAGov

Sub-Committees

The Social Justice, Race and Equity Commission (SJREC) is comprised of 37 members, who include representatives from the various faith, education, and business communities, and Brookhaven Character Area geographic locations. The SJREC has established four sub-committees to accomplish the commission's work effectively. Each sub-committee includes two co-chairs, a staff liaison, and includes several commission members. The sub-committees will take a deep dive into specific topic areas of the City of Brookhaven for review and provide recommendations for improvements. Details on sub-committee meetings are available on the SJREC website at BrookhavenGA.gov/SJREC.

Vision and Mission MEETS 1ST THURS OF MONTH AT 7PM

Co-Chairs: Commissioners Tiffany Russell and Aixa Pascual
Staff liaison: Christian Sigman, City Manager
Members: Commissioners Amy Corn, Melissa Owen, Vena Cain, Jose Hardy, Josh Hearshen, Matt Paetzhold, and David Alexander.
Objective: Review and provide recommendations for improvements for the City Vision and Mission statements.

Hiring and Retention MEETS 1ST TUES OF MONTH AT 7PM

Co-Chairs: Commissioners Tywana Minor and William Naglich
Staff liaison: Helena Kallas, Human Resources Generalist
Members: Commissioners Charlene Bowden, Catherine Murithi-Wohl, Ruben Cruz, German Barerra, Rudy Baserra, Thomas Woodward, and Kyle R. Williams
Objective: Review and provide recommendations for improvements to Brookhaven policies and policy on hiring and retention.

Procurement and Contracting MEETS 2ND MON OF MONTH AT 7PM

Co-Chairs: Commissioners James Moses and Alex Thomas
Staff liaison: Steve Chapman, Assistant City Manager and Chief Financial Officer
Members: Commissioners Zaki Anwer, Anibal Torres, Chris Corces-Zimmerman, John J. Funny, Danita Knight, Marco Palma, and Beth Wendl
Objective: Review and provide recommendations for improvements to Brookhaven policies and policy on procurement and contracting.

Policing and Continuum Use of Force MEETS WEDS BIWEEKLY AT 5:30PM

Co-Chairs: Commissioners Shahrukh Arif and Monique Hudson Wright
Staff liaison: Major Shameta Jones-Harrell, BPD Commander of Support Services Division
Members: Commissioners Conni Todd, Janis Niese, Loren Collins, Davis Burnett, Kathy Wells, Jeremiah Hinson, and Kirk Nelson
Objective: Review and recommendations on best practices to guide the Brookhaven Police Department policies, actions and accountability regarding continuum use of force.

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Commission (SJREC) was formed as a result. The 37-member SJREC has been meeting since January of 2021 and is divided into four working sub-committees reviewing the realities and future planning for DeKalb County's most populated city.

Those sub-committees are Vision and Mission; Hiring and Retention (of city employees); Procurement and Contracting (municipal contractors and vendors) and Policing and the Continuum Use of Force.

At their June 2, 2021 meeting, the Policing Sub Committee waded into the use of force training by the Brookhaven P.D. Those SJREC commissioners themselves went through an abbreviated version of the two-part training. While most all commissioners found the exercises and training useful, it also brought up more questions.

Policing and Continuum Use of Force Sub-Committee Co-Chair Shahrukh Arif, spoke about the role-play portions of the training, "You knew that you were addressing a person who could potentially be violent... When that's not the case...what are the policies of how to engage that person?"

Like most questions around race, there are not short, simple, or easy answers. But we hope that some trust-building is occurring during the ongoing dialogue. If nothing else, folks from along the Buford Highway spine of our city are now interacting with not only their city government and police department, but the elected and civic leadership of a broad cross-section of the greater Brookhaven community as well.

Hating, or even disliking, up close is difficult. When intentions are genuine, empathy, and willingness to listen is real, real progress can be made. Perhaps incremental at first, but each positive step makes possible a longer stride and lessening those chasms to cross the next time.

Brookhaven's SJREC will make final recommendations and a summary report to the Brookhaven City Manager, Mayor, and Council, in December 2021. The City of Brookhaven has only existed as a municipality since 2012, and yet it has quickly become a hot spot for relocating Millennials. City leaders hope that the greater acceptance, apparently reduced

prejudices, and desire for a sense of community and belonging so prevalent among Generation X, Gen Y, and Gen Z, can be shared and perhaps transferred among the city's many ethnic communities. You cannot win if you do not enter, and you cannot improve race relations and equity if you are not at least willing to try.

HOSTED BY THE CITY OF BROOKHAVEN'S SOCIAL JUSTICE, RACE, AND EQUITY COMMISSION

Conversations on Racial Equity

**Just bring yourself and a desire to join the conversation!
Attendance is free and the cost of the meal is covered, but registration is required.**

**August 9, 2021. 6:30 PM-8:30 PM.
Arnette's Chop Shop, Petit Violette,
EATaliano Kitchen, or Villa Christina.**

This conversation confronts the issues of racial injustice and explores how we can achieve true equity for all.



Join the City of Brookhaven's Social Justice, Race & Equity Commission for a Civic Dinner. The purpose of these dinners is to share our stories, build connections and inform the work of the Commission. Attendance is free, but registration is required. Please register here at your choice of restaurant: <https://civicedinners.com/brookhaven>

Learn more about SJREC at a Council District Discussion!

Meet the Commissioners and learn more about the Commission at one of our Council District Discussions in August. These events will include a brief presentation about the Commission, followed by an open Q&A with you and other attendees. See below for event details:

DISTRICT	LOCATION	DATE	TIME
District 1	Our Lady of Assumption Catholic Church	Tuesday, August 10	6-7:30pm
District 2	Brookhaven City Hall	Tuesday, August 17	6-7:30pm
District 3	Brookhaven City Hall	Tuesday, August 24	6-7:30pm
District 4	Latin American Association	Tuesday, August 31	6-7:30pm

City of Brookhaven, Georgia

4362 Peachtree Rd
Brookhaven, Ga 30319



Upcoming Meetings

Upcoming meetings

Aug. 19
Sept. 16
Oct. 21
Nov. 18

The SJREC meets on the third Thursday of the month from 7p.m. to 9 p.m. Due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, meetings are held virtually via zoom and are streamed live on the City's Facebook page www.Facebook.com/BrookhavenGaGov.

Public input is accepted via email at PublicComment@BrookhavenGA.gov.

For each meeting's zoom link and more information visit: www.BrookhavenGA.gov/SJREC.

Visit the SJREC website

Curious about who is part of the Commission? Do you want to dive deep into the work of the Social Justice, Race and Equity Commission? Visit the SJREC website where you can find in one organized place all things SJREC.

www.BrookhavenGA.gov/SJREC



How to Get Involved

Interested in being a part of the conversation? Here's how you can get involved: Attend a Commission meeting in person or virtually on the third Thursday of each month between now and November 2021; sign up to host or attend a Civic Dinner; attend a council district discussion in August. To learn more, visit our website!

Sign up for the Brookhaven Blast

The Brookhaven Blast is a weekly email newsletter of all things happening in the City. Free of charge, no paid ads, and of all things Brookhaven. To sign up visit the City's website: www.BrookhavenGA.gov/Communications