

North Adams Diversity Equity and Inclusion Working Group
Thursday July 23rd, 2020
MEETING MINUTES

Members in Attendance

Benjamin Lamb
Jessica Sweeney
Lisa Blackmer
Khalil Paul
Michael Obasohan
Karen Ruiz Leon
Alicia Canary
Amber Besaw
Isamaya Hagstrom

The North Adams Diversity Equity and Inclusion Working Group met via zoom webinar on July 23rd, 2020 at 6pm EST.

Call to Order – 6pm

B. Lamb read a statement citing Governor Baker’s allowance to hold meetings using remote technology during COVID-19 and noted that this meeting is being recorded.

INTRODUCTIONS OF WORKING GROUP MEMBERS

The group introduced themselves to each other to help others in the meeting know who they are and why they are involved in this work.

B. Lamb gave an overview of open meeting law and the expectations that come along with that aspect of this work.

OVERVIEW OF WORKING GROUP LOGISTICS

B. Lamb gave an overview of a proposed model for the meeting structure for functionality and logistics purposes.

J. Sweeney outlined similar issues as it pertains to social media posts and interactions amongst members of the working group and recommended reading further on open meeting laws for all members.

M. Obasohan asked for clarification on posting on social media and what restrictions that presents.

J. Sweeney clarified that the issue is more in terms of interactions between working group members on social media posts.

L. Blackmer suggested being careful and having discussions not on the agenda, but that items folks wish to discuss be added easily.

A. Besaw raised concerns about work that the coalition is doing around doing this work across North Berkshire and how that might feather.

B. Lamb noted that when individuals have concerns, they have access to the state ethics attorney of the day for opinions on matters.

L. Blackmer suggested it would also be appropriate for everyone to take the state ethics training. She also noted that the issue really lies with having discussions as a majority of the group, as in more than 50% of the working group discussing the issue together outside of a publicly posted meeting.

K. Ruiz Leon asked if there are any clear expectations to be shared from the larger council.

B. Lamb gave an overview of the initial charge and indicated that paper 11,852 initiated this group, but recognized that this group coming together could be of important value to other efforts beyond just the initial charge.

I. Hagstrom noted that she understands the ethics concerns but was curious about how productive the group could be if they cannot discuss the issues external to the posted meetings.

B. Lamb agreed that it is a challenge of governmental process, but that having small subgroups of 3 that are working on issues between meetings it would allow for that between work which can then be brought back for full group discussion at the following meeting.

Hearing no further comment on the topic the discussion concluded.

DISCUSSION OF INITIAL CHARGE BY CITY COUNCIL – COUNCIL PAPER 11,852

B. Lamb introduced the conversation around Council Paper 11,852 including the origins of the paper coming forward through hearing from the National League of Cities which was then brought forward to council to develop a training for the council and others in the city leadership to be used for developing a broader understanding of diversity equity and inclusion in their work, and to subsequently develop a pledge of committing to using the knowledge in their work.

J. Sweeney confirmed similar reasons for bringing this paper forward. She noted that the work can be overwhelming in trying to fuse the work of community and public policy together. This is a good first step towards bridging these efforts. It's important that the MMA is also focusing on

equity in practice and policy. She noted how difficult it is for people of color to live in the community and that this is a step in addressing that.

L. Blackmer noted the layer of focusing on constituent services through this work. She wants the councilors to be informed and educated when addressing the needs of constituents so that we can account for bias that we have. It is clear that this work has moved more to the front of more individuals minds and needs in recent months, which makes it more urgent. It's important we responsibly do what needs to get done and benefit the entire community in that work.

B. Lamb gave an overview of the general goals of this group being called together.