

North Adams Diversity Equity and Inclusion Working Group
Thursday September 24th, 2020
MEETING MINUTES

Members in Attendance

Amber Besaw
Lisa Blackmer
Alicia Canary
Benjamin Lamb
Michael Obasohan
Ashley Shade

The North Adams Diversity Equity and Inclusion Working Group met via zoom webinar on September 24th, 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.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Minutes of August 27th, 2020

- Motion to Approve: L. Blackmer / Second: A. Besaw
- Motion Carries

Minutes of September 3rd, 2020

- Motion to Approve: L. Blackmer / Second: A. Besaw
- Motion Carries

COMMUNICATIONS

No communications provided

PRIMARY BUSINESS

Report back and discussion on draft survey developed to administer to planned training participants

- B. Lamb provided an overview of the draft survey that he drafted with help from M. Obasohan.
- The working group provided feedback and made edits to the questions and format of the survey to meet the goals of gathering information without potentially making respondents feel singled out through their answers.

- The group discussed concerns of anonymity when it comes to the data being shared in a public discussion of the Working Group. B. Lamb noted that the information collected can be treated in the aggregate as to not share individual answers in any identifiable manner, and that any specific names or otherwise can be removed before it is brought forward for discussion by the group for training development purposes.
- The group determined that a clear disclaimer of this, as well as how long it should take and what the information will be used for should be included when the survey is distributed to the councilors
- The survey will be conducted using google forms and B. Lamb will build the survey out and distribute to the group.
- At this point B. Lamb indicated that he had accidentally not recorded the first portion of the meeting, but that edits were made in real-time to the draft so the discussion was fully captured through the edits.

Report back and discussion on draft council rule

- B. Lamb presented a draft rule for consideration that aims to provide accountability for the council to include in their own rules.
- L. Blackmer recommended several grammatical changes to the rule draft.
- B. Lamb clarified that the rules are yet to be updated with rule 27, thus the numerical difference with this being a proposed rule 28.
- L. Blackmer questions the twice per year reporting out to the public on participation. She wanted to make sure it was enough to keep people engaged, but not cumbersome.
- B. Lamb noted that the training is not being offered nonstop, so it needs to be captured during the points when it is. The only real accountability that can be developed is public awareness of participation or not.
- A. Besaw indicated concern that the language as it stood would allow for someone to only take the training at the end of a term rather than pushing them to take it early in their term.
- L. Blackmer raised that we are already mid-term
- B. Lamb responded that this is not only focused on this council
- L. Blackmer emphasized that this would need to be adopted by the council.
- B. Lamb reinforced that the council voted for this training to be developed, so it should be relatively easy and acceptable for them to adopt the accountability measure.
- M. Obasohan echoed concern about taking the training at the end of a term, it should be something taken at the beginning of their 2-year term.
- L. Blackmer noted that the only current obligation is the conflict of interest training, so there isn't a docket of required training that this could be tagged onto.
- A. Besaw recommended that this needs to indicate that it's specifically the training being offered that needs to be taken, rather than letting it be any training available out there.
- B. Lamb felt that it should be specifically this one rather than being broadly adopting any trainings out there.
- A. Shade felt that it should be offered within the first 60-90 days of their term to get the full council trained early and uniformly.

- L. Blackmer raised concern about the training not being offered on the right cycle for everyone to be able to participate.
- M. Obasohan noted that it is upon this group to offer it accordingly to fit the requirements being set forth. More weight needs to be put on the working group to ensure the ability to be compliant with the council rule.
- B. Lamb stated that this is an absolute that it needs to be offered, there isn't a question.
- L. Blackmer noted that it's only a rule, so people don't need to comply.
- B. Lamb emphasized that if they don't do it, the public will be made aware through the reporting out model included.
- A. Besaw noted that perhaps they don't need to be reported out twice per year if it's being offered in the first quarter. She also asked about the "each two year term" language and wondered if that meant that returning councilors would need to take it.
- B. Lamb said he would recommend this be taken every term since language changes over time and issues of inequity also change and evolve and the council should be as up to date as possible to those ends.
- A. Besaw noted that repetition is helpful for people, so taking it multiple times may also be a healthy learning strategy to help the councilors grow their knowledge and awareness.
- B. Lamb read the rule as drafted.
- L. Blackmer raised that we shouldn't need to report it out every year
- B. Lamb noted that the public memory is short, so it would be important for this to be reported at least annually to make it clear who has or has not followed through on this expectation so it is maintained on the public record.
- M. Obasohan requested more direct language that clearly lays out what the training will do and that the councilors are expected.
- A. Shade pointed out that reporting annually would also allow for new councilors to be included if vacancies get filled over time.
- B. Lamb noted that this makes a good point as it may need to be offered annually due to filled vacancies to give each councilor the same opportunity as the rest of the council.
- A. Besaw noted that this makes sense since we are also hoping to get more than just the city councilors engaged in these trainings.
- B. Lamb requested a motion to refer the rule to the full council for consideration of adoption
- Motion: A. Shade / Second: A. Besaw
 - o L. Blackmer asked if this would go to General Government.
 - o B. Lamb noted that it could not because we have two members of that committee in this group so if it needs to go to committee it would have to go to another committee.
 - o M. Obasohan asked where this would go then
 - o B. Lamb stated this would go to the full city council to be proposed for inclusion in our council rules.
 - o A. Shade asked if this could include requiring the Mayor to take it.

- B. Lamb noted that council rules do not dictate the responsibilities of the Mayor, but that knowing the current Mayor he has already shown interest in taking it. He noted an ordinance in the future could integrate such expectations.
- L. Blackmer noted that an ordinance or a personnel policy could achieve that, but suggested taking the council rule step now and then move down that direction as part of the long-term training and information goals.
- B. Lamb noted that this gives us 1 year of runway with the existing council that we can spend time working to build out those expectations in a more binding manner.
- No further discussion
- All in favor, Motion Carries

Report back on establishing definitions for development of the eventual training/tool kit in regard to Council Paper 11,852

- A. Canary shared an updated version of the definitions she has been working on. She put everything in alpha order and took out duplicates. She noted that she took mostly Gwendolyn Van Sant's definitions which is helpful since it also has local connections already. She also added the citations at the end of the list and began building a new list that is more about the future and policy work that may be undertaken.
- B. Lamb noted that this is a living document too, so it's good to keep thinking forward and bringing in new definitions and tools as we can.
- A. Canary plans to integrate aspects from GARE and various elements that could be useful in the future as well. She also noted bringing in some specific issues into the list
- M. Obasohan appreciates the addition of language and definitions as we go forward, but also thinks its valuable to break these up so that we don't overwhelm individuals in the training at the start.
- A. Canary noted that the new definitions are really for the working group, so she is planning to create a new document just for the working group to utilize.
- B. Lamb noted that he liked that and sees this as an additional toolbox beyond just base level definitions so that councilors and others can access these resources more readily in their work and efforts.
- M. Obasohan noted that it would be great to use this as an activity in the training, but also perhaps as a printed resource for them to take with them going forward as a reference source.
- A. Canary indicated that perhaps we need to clarify if we are training or if we are going to find training to give the council.
- B. Lamb mentioned that it is perhaps a hybrid. He gave the example of the youth leadership program he runs which involves volunteers, experts, and projects. So perhaps activities run by the working group members that leads to an expert trainer and rounds out with resource providing. He is cautious of putting the full training expectation on the working groups due to the longevity of that specific commitment going forward. He also mentioned that he has reached out the IT department of the city to get our page set up so we can begin to build out our resources and other useful pieces for the committee.

- A. Canary affirmed she would polish the list and create the new document for the training tools aspects.

OTHER RETURNING BUSINESS

Review of status and timeline and needs for next meeting

- B. Lamb noted we are on target with our timeline. For our next meeting we should finalize our survey to begin distributing and review a draft initial financial need for a training. B. Lamb will send a draft of the survey in its formal format to everyone and will build a draft budget for next meeting.

Discussion of available trainings and opportunities to share and recommend

- B. Lamb shared a link to Culture Amp which he has been looking into as an opportunity. <https://www.cultureamp.com>
- L. Blackmer noted she is taking one through the MA municipal human resources group over a three week period coming up, but doesn't believe it is available to the public. The Councilors Association will be doing a workshop in November on Immigration as well.

NEW BUSINESS

Discussion of new working member identification and recommendation

- B. Lamb noted to the group that Khalil has indicated a need to leave the group. He mentioned that we technically have 2-3 spots that we can and should recruit individuals for, one who is a local youth, and two to fill the vacancies left by Karen and Khalil. He would like to get individuals referred for appointment to Councilor Hopkins and asked that the group engage their networks to that end. He also raised the topic of the peripheral advisory group that could be aggregated and engaged as a group of knowledge partners who can help work through aspects of the working groups' efforts.
- M. Obasohan asked about the youth and would a college student be eligible.
- B. Lamb noted that I. Hagstrom he believed is in fact a college student but that that youth seat could certainly be a college or high school student.
- M. Obasohan mentioned he could connect with the Roots Teen Center participants as a potential group that there may be someone interested from.
- L. Blackmer asked if we have anyone from the immigrant community that we can work with.
- B. Lamb noted he would reach out to Michelle Lopez at the Berkshire Immigrant Center to see if there might be individuals engaged with them that live in North Adams and might be interested.

Discussion of Working Group Webpage and Recording Posting

- B. Lamb noted he would continue nudging the city to have us represented on the City website.
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ADJOURNMENT

Motion: L. Blackmer / Second. A. Canary – Motion Carried
Meeting Adjourned 7:32pm