

North Adams Diversity Equity and Inclusion Working Group
Thursday January 7th, 2021
MEETING MINUTES

Members in Attendance

Lisa Blackmer
Alicia Canary
Rachel Hailey
Benjamin Lamb
Ashley Shade
Jessica Sweeney
Houa Xiong

The North Adams Diversity Equity and Inclusion Working Group met via zoom webinar on January 7th, 2021 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 December 3rd, 2020**
 - Motion to Approve: L. Blackmer
 - Second: A. Shade
 - Yay: 6 Nay: 0 Abstentions: 1
 - Motion Carries

COMMUNICATIONS

PRIMARY BUSINESS

- **Introduction of New Member – Rachel Hailey**
 - B. Lamb welcomed R. Hailey to the group. Members of the working group introduced themselves to her and she to them.
- **Continuation of discussion of draft session and updated draft**
 - B. Lamb shared the updated draft for group discussion purposes
 - B. Lamb provided an overview of the process to date and the planned model the group has landed on for R. Hailey to help catch her up. The current plan is to have M. Obasohan and a colleague facilitate the first session, the second session operate as a panel, and hiring a facilitator for a table-top style workshop for the third session.

- A. Shade noted that something about sexism should be added to the overall docket of training and recommended it be included in the panel conversation.
- The group agreed and came up with gender inequity and inequality as the topic, and noted that individuals on the panel could certainly embody multiple identities being brought up during the panel discussion, they don't need to be only one of the identities listed.
- L. Blackmer asked about how to confront sexual harassment issues along these lines.
- A. Canary noted that Angie Ellison noted that in DEI, sexism is included, which includes sexual harassment and other gender equity issues
- A. Shade noted that an employee of the city would already have gone through some level of harassment training for compliance and believes the Council should go through a similar level of training
- B. Lamb noted that unfortunately there is very little consistent training offered to municipal and elected officials, and there is no mandatory training around harassment. Really only optional trainings besides the state ethics required training.
- B. Lamb recognized that we can't expect this training to be truly comprehensive with only three 90-minute chunks and some pre-learning, but if this is a gap in training that this group has identified as a critical opportunity for learning, there is no reason a recommendation couldn't occur to push for that training in the future. We don't want to try to cram too much into what we have here as it may decrease the ability to convey meaningful concepts.
- H. Xiong asked that if we would need to have 7 speakers on the panel should the working group develop the questions or rely only on the councilors to come up with questions for Q&A?
- A. Canary felt a moderator leading the panel discussion with Q&A at the end would be the best fit model so that the councilors will learn the stories of the panelists and then will have a chance to ask questions.
- J. Sweeney felt that in session 2, there are opportunities to bring in people who hold intersections of identities which both tackles the issues holistically and addresses the issue of intersecting identities as we've discussed prior.
- J. Sweeney asked if the not in our county pledge would be the thing to act on as session 3.
- A. Canary asked what the pledge was
- J. Sweeney provided an overview of what it is as a program through Multicultural Bridge and noted that the council felt it important to go through the training before moving forward with a council pledge, noting they are aligned, but that the training should come first.
- B. Lamb noted that the timing of bringing that pledge forward to council was intentional on his part since part of our original paper included a pledge to undertake following a training protocol and that the Not In Our County Pledge may be the best fit for that component of this work with the Council rather than reinventing the wheel. He was hesitant to try and make the pledge session 3 as it

would need to be a public meeting and may create overt discomfort and concerns about taking risks and making mistakes if it were to have to be a public meeting/training instead of a purely educational session.

- A. Canary asked if the pledge will need to be done via a public meeting
 - B. Lamb noted it was referred to committee where it will be processed in a public manner, but that if we were to do this as session 3, it would need to be public because it is directly connected to work happening via the council, not a fictional case study “table top” exercise like we had originally discussion for session 3.
 - H. Xiong asked how we can retain this training in the future?
 - B. Lamb noted the rule adopted by council to conduct this training annually and to continue to provide training for future iterations of the council.
 - L. Blackmer noted concern that repeatedly expecting old councilors to participate in an annual training with new councilors could create discontent with needing to learn the same material over and over.
 - B. Lamb argued that it is in fact very valuable to take the training multiple times with multiple iterations of council in order to promote quality intergroup dialogue and to hone skills of working together on difficult issues. Additionally as the landscape changes, having updated training will keep the council up to date on contemporary issues of concern.
 - R. Hailey added that while there will be the same core training, you can always tune to the most relevant issues of the times.
 - J. Sweeney noted that even though she has gone through many trainings, she sees it as a contextual learning opportunity, especially in that this is applying this work specifically to council work. Even if there are councilors who have worked together for a long time, the conversations will be important.
 - B. Lamb asked if the flow of pre-learning and live-learning made sense now, knowing we still need to place materials accordingly.
 - R. Hailey felt that the first session pieces sequenced well but wasn’t sure if the readings and materials fit well for session 2 around white supremacy in particular. She also noted that BIPOC and veterans were not noted in the panelist list.
 - A. Canary noted that for session 3 we will need to define the table top exercise, but the pre-work will rely on who we use as a facilitator.
 - B. Lamb noted he wasn’t sure if for session 3 we need to focus on a DEI expert or if a facilitator generalist would work.
 - A. Canary felt that if racial impact statement practice were part of the exercise, someone in DEI would be important
 - R. Hailey felt that both would suit well but the end result could be very different. What will support will be being clear in the result goals, which will dictate the facilitator type to pursue.
- **Sharing and discussion of shared materials for session pre-learning**

- B. Lamb recommended we cluster resources as a next step and asked everyone to provide him what they have to include in a repository to work from. We should also land on which implicit bias test we wish to use at the second January meeting.
 - A. Canary noted that going into the first training there will need to be both reading and then practice pre-session
 - B. Lamb recommended additional material about “why this is important training” before the first session. He requested individuals send or re-send materials.
 - B. Lamb asked if anyone from the public attendees would like to ask a question or make comment – none indicated such.
- **Discussion of potential trainers and existing offerings that could accomplish core competencies**
 - B. Lamb noted that Michael Smith had reached out on his own to put himself forward but wanted to ask the group what other trainers may be good to pursue for session 3 so we can establish that person soon.
 - J. Sweeney recommended Dr. Christopher Macdonald from MCLA through his work with anti-racism with the artist impact coalition. He is dynamic and able to present well virtually. She found his style powerful.
 - B. Lamb noted that Dr. Macdonald had shown interest in this effort prior as well. He also noted we should compose an RFP for potential trainers to pitch towards so they all have an even understanding of what we are seeking to achieve.
 - A. Canary mentioned Gwendolyn Van Sant as someone who is readily doing this work and is a core the efforts in the region.
 - B. Lamb noted that he had connected with Maya at Bridge and that they had noted being very interested in supporting this effort, so it is at least on their radar and they are aware of what we are pursuing.
 - A. Canary asked who besides M. Obasohan would help with session 1.
 - B. Lamb believes it was Kerri Nichols who he works with at MCLA, but wasn't sure.
 - R. Hailey offered herself of to be the facilitator for the second session
 - J. Sweeney noted that she had a lead on how to engage some of the Native American folks in the community through Erica Barreto, but noted that they are being tapped significantly already, but she is looking to engage them.
 - B. Lamb suggested we land on an updated schedule before actually pinging panelists would be good so we are not rescheduling
 - A. Shade requested being on the panel for session 2 as well.
 - B. Lamb asked if someone would be comfortable working with him to map out an RFP for session 3. (J. Sweeney and R. Hailey volunteered to help with that before the Second January meeting)

OTHER RETURNING BUSINESS

- **Advisory building, outreach and newsletter**
 - B. Lamb reiterated the ask to the working group for any individuals who might want to be added to the newsletter listserv.
 - A. Canary asked about getting recordings on our landing page on the website
 - B. Lamb noted that he believes the recordings are posted with the meetings but not directly through the working group page but felt there should be a way to link from the page to the recordings where they live.
 - A. Canary offered to coordinate that effort with the City IT Department.

- **Review of status and timeline and needs for next meeting**
 - B. Lamb believes we need to push our start date out to March to account for delays caused by the holidays and other things, which would push the training out into late April, meaning First week of March, last week of March, and then sometime in April. The group felt this was a good approach to take.

- **Discussion of available training and opportunities to share and recommend**
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NEW BUSINESS

- B. Lamb noted that Dr. Malkas is interested in presenting to us at our second January meeting about what the school district is doing so she will be on the agenda.

ADJOURNMENT

- Motion to Adjourn: A. Canary
- Second: A. Shade
- Motion Carries
- Motion Adjourns – 7:23pm