

North Adams Diversity Equity and Inclusion Working Group
Thursday December 3rd, 2020
MEETING MINUTES

Members in Attendance

Amber Besaw
Lisa Blackmer
Alicia Canary
Kathy Hartman (delayed arrival)
Benjamin Lamb
Michael Obasohan
Ashley Shade
Jessica Sweeney
Houa Xiong

The North Adams Diversity Equity and Inclusion Working Group met via zoom webinar on December 3rd, 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 November 5th, 2020**
 - Motion to Approve: J. Sweeney
 - Second: A. Besaw
 - Yay: 7 Nay: 0 Abstentions: 1
 - Motion Carries

COMMUNICATIONS

PRIMARY BUSINESS

- **New Members**
 - B. Lamb welcomed H. Xiong again to the group and indicated that K. Hartman should be joining as well during the meeting. He also indicated that we should expect another new appointee, Rachel Hailey in January.
- **Continuation of discussion of draft session schedule**
 - B. Lamb walked through the draft that he had sent to the group prior and asked if anybody had any thoughts.
 - H. Xiong asked what implicit bias test might be conducted?
 - B. Lamb noted we had discussed the Harvard implicit Bias test

- H. Xiong asked if the expectation would be to take all of them or if there is a specific one from the Harvard website.
- A. Canary noted that perhaps there are specific ones we should use.
- M. Obasohan indicated using one or two that cover issues most relevant to the Council's work
- A. Canary asked if we were still thinking of trainers, because if we are they would likely come with their own training rather than us having control over structure. The question is "what comes first," design or trainer. There are articles out there that would be helpful, but they aren't training modules. She noted the who's history and who tells it module by the Stockbridge Munsee Tribe as an option along those lines.
- B. Lamb noted that perhaps for the second session we move to a panel discussion to hear voices of the diverse communities we represent instead of a facilitated session model.
- J. Sweeney mentioned that perhaps Multicultural Bridge could do the first session.
- M. Obasohan noted that as a good idea, or perhaps himself and a faculty member at MCLA who do these trainings on campus. Whether we are going to do it or bring in an outside facilitator, we should nail that down as soon as possible. He doesn't feel we will do everything justice if we try to fit everything in to the three blocks we have. Perhaps there is follow up optional opportunities.
- B. Lamb paused the discussion to welcome Kathy Hartman who just arrived into the meeting.
- **Kathy Hartman**
 - K. Harman introduced herself to the group as a lifelong local resident interested in helping to make things better in the community.
 - The rest of the working group introduced themselves to K. Hartman as well.
- **Returned to previous discussion**
 - B. Lamb noted that we had not fully addressed how to effectively pursue trainers
 - J. Sweeney felt M. Obasohan would be a great facilitator for the first session and suggested perhaps a large amount of pre-content followed by a discussion during the session.
 - A. Shade agreed that the workshop style for session 2 would not suffice and suggested it would need to be broken up into at least 3 session blocks. She agreed that the lived experience is a good way to go to connect with the intimate stories better.
 - B. Lamb reiterated that there will be pre-readings and materials before each session and mentioned that we want to avoid adding too many sessions because of the attrition potential we would see similar to what Boston City Council experienced.
 - M. Obasohan agreed. He asked if Save Zone training has been considered. He noted that the safe zone curriculum is available on their website and could be used to help prime before the second session panel, or build directly in. He's happy to dig into that curriculum more to see what could be carried over.

- B. Lamb noted that being the facilitator of a session would be another layer of this working group work, so we need to be realistic in our expectations of working group participants. He appreciates the desire to do so, but wants to make sure people don't overcommit.
- A. Besaw reinforced that 90 minutes isn't enough time to respectfully drill into the issues, so perhaps local individuals in deep panel would be the best approach. Because some of the issues are so broad and large, just creating the space to hear lived stories could be more high impact than trying to cram in a number of bigger topics without adequate depth.
- B. Lamb noted this is more of a hearing of the stories rather than understanding of the stories which could be high impact.
- A. Shade agreed that this model of a local panel could be immensely helpful.
- A. Canary indicated being torn. While local people speaking to local issues is impactful, expecting people to speak for an entire community becomes a challenge. Focusing on how the histories are told and by who could give a broader scope of perspective instead. She has seen a lot of videos that could get our goals across better than a panel.
- M. Obasohan agrees that the lived experience should be in the forefront. He likes the idea of a panel, but he doesn't know if a 90 minute panel makes sense. Perhaps adding the "who's history" piece to the session, or providing those materials as pre-readings/watching and then having a historian as the moderator of the panel to fill the gap of history in the discussion.
- B. Lamb noted that a 90 minute panel is actually not unreasonable based on recent examples locally.
- A. Shade imagines that quality pre-materials that supplement the panel, then a 60 minute panel with a 30 minute Q&A would give the opportunity to engage and participate well.
- A. Besaw wanted to clarify that she wouldn't expect someone to speak for an entire community and didn't mean to come across that way. She noted that in working with her staff she's noticed that tackling the big issues can feel like drinking from a fire hose, but hearing local stories helps build intention and intimate awareness by bringing it down to a personal experience through a singular story.
- H. Xiong thinks the panel would work well, and thinking having a youth community member would be important to include. It is hard to learn about issues we don't experience ourselves everyday, but through hearing an individual's story it can help open the door and awareness to understanding. The impact is what matters most.
- K. Hartman agreed that hearing the stories goes a long way. She sees this with her own children who are members of the LGBTQ community. For anyone it can help them understand more to do better within their own realm of impact.
- J. Sweeney noted that the Wabanaki Confederacy Land is also land that North Adams is on. Another layer to consider.

- B. Lamb added that there is potential that the city might get a small grant that could help connect this training to a widened community engagement piece to reach beyond the Council and municipal leadership. It is also on use to curate the best material possible for the pre-learning components.
- A. Canary is going to draft up a categorical list of resources to send out so we can all review them as potential materials.
- L. Blackmer wondered if a trainer would have their own pre-trainings they would want included.
- B. Lamb noted that we had landed on a panel discussion so there isn't a facilitator.
- L. Blackmer asked if the panelists would have specific materials they would require.
- B. Lamb noted that it's really a moderated panel of lived experience so not as much of a training style. But that session 3 may be more in need of a direct facilitator. He noted the also has a call in with Multicultural Bridge next week to discuss what facilitation might look like.
- M. Obasohan likes the direction that this has gone and the model of foundations, lived experiences, and then putting it into practice for the third session. In his training he has the students read MLKs Birmingham Jail writing as an activity and feels its important to have a group reflective activity.
- B. Lamb also noted that according to the Mayor, the new City Administrator Angie Ellison has a level of experience in doing DEI training in municipalities prior which could be helpful.
- J. Sweeney wondered if we could break the council into three subgroups to process a piece of legislation as the activity.
- A. Shade noted that if we are using this training for other departments each situational piece would need to be changed for each phase of implementation so should it be more generic?
- B. Lamb noted that there will need to be pretty significant changes made as the training is translated to different departments, so making it as directly relevant and specific to a particular job would be expected for each phase anyway.
- A. Shade, with that in mind she thinks there should be a legislative piece and a responsiveness piece, like a tabletop exercise to contend with.
- A. Canary suggested the inclusion of racial impact statements as part of the process of developing legislation, so perhaps including something around what to include and how to structure it.
- B. Lamb suggested that perhaps that is part of the pre-session work for session 3 so that during the tabletop activity it can be included in the process. He indicated he would take comments and thoughts raised during the meeting and polish up the session outline/draft for the January meeting. His sense is that the third session is the one that needs a trainer, while the first and second don't seem to require us bringing in an outside trainer.
- J. Sweeney wondered if perhaps there are helpful connections we could make through the National League of Cities.

- A. Besaw said a facilitator for the tabletop would be really important to push through and forward as a third party.
- L. Blackmer agreed that a third party may be less threatening and better received by individuals going through the training. She noted National League of Cities does have training they've done with municipalities and the MMA that might be options, though there is a cost associated.
- **Discussion of potential trainers and existing offerings / resources that could accomplish core competencies**
 - Based on the conversation already, B. Lamb noted that the working group should send all materials, any facilitators they know of, and other ideas for pre-session materials to him so he can compile them for the January meeting.
- **Initial date recommendations for training**
 - B. Lamb suggested February 2, February 16, March 2, March 16, and March 30 as potential dates, though February 16th and March 16th would need to start late due to pre-existing meetings earlier in the evening. He hopes to get these dates on council's calendars now to save the dates.
 - J. Sweeney suggested perhaps doing one session per month for 3 months instead, but also appreciates the challenges of spreading it out.
 - L. Blackmer agreed that perhaps having it be the same Tuesday each month could work.
 - B. Lamb recommended instead doing February 2nd, March 2nd, and March 30th to avoid going into April if possible just to avoid the busier times with the annual budget cycle. Seeing no objection he will reach out to the council to save the dates in the next day or two.

OTHER RETURNING BUSINESS

- **Advisory building, outreach and newsletter**
 - B. Lamb gave an update that we can all aggregate together individuals who are interested and he will add them to a master listserv. This group will receive monthly newsletters about the work of the working group, upcoming meetings, topics of focus, and how to contact members of the working group. He is looking to have a newsletter subscription button put on the working group page of the city website as well if possible so the listserv can self-populate as well. He added that he needs the contact information from all the working group members that can be posted on the working group website for community access.
 - J. Sweeney offered to take on the lift of newsletter development knowing B. Lamb's limited remaining capacity.
- **Review of status and timeline and needs for next meeting**
 - B. Lamb noted we are on track generally with some reordering of steps due to how the sessions are coming together.

- A. Shade noted we need to begin collecting together panelists for the second session immediately, B. Lamb agreed and requested everyone send those individuals to him as well to pull together.
- B. Lamb noted that the Mayor had agreed to fund the training, meaning around \$3500 is available for this first set of sessions which should be adequate to hire a quality facilitator for the third session and support any peripheral expenses for the full three session set.

- Discussion of available training and opportunities to share and recommend
 - A. Canary shared a talk on the center for lgbtq studies training around intersectionality around disabilities. Here is that link.
https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=432681188130095&ref=watch_permalink
 - J. Sweeney shared a link to the Artist Impact Council youtube link where they are posting their recordings. Here is that link
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u517QZqcWIM>
 - B. Lamb made note that there were no attendees of the public present this evening to indicate why had hadn't called for any public comment during the meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

ADJOURNMENT

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