



Diversity Equity Inclusion Justice and Belonging Committee

May 2, 2023

Meeting Minutes

City Council Chambers

12:00PM – 2:00PM

1. Mayor Bouley, Chair, called the meeting to order at 12:00PM.

Committee Members Present: Mayor Jim Bouley, Councilors Byron Champlin and Zandra Rice Hawkins.

2. Meeting overview by Committee Chair, Mayor Bouley.

Action: Mayor Bouley welcomed attendees to the meeting and introduced members of the committee Councilors Champlin and Rice Hawkins. Mayor Bouley provided an overview of the committee's mission, as outlined below. Mayor Bouley noted that this is the first of three listening sessions. He added that after the City of Concord joined the National League of Cities in years previous, the City reviewed internal policies particularly in its Human Resources and Police Departments. Mayor Bouley noted that while that review was an internal look to improve, the City sought to hear from the community via these listening sessions about the community's desires for the future.

Mission:

To create and sustain an inclusive process for public engagement so all Concord residents feel a sense of belonging and can authentically participate in the decision-making processes that impact their lives. Committee members noted that this is a starting point for the committee, members acknowledged that their goals may change as they advance through the process.

Next, Councilor Champlin spoke to highlight and review initiatives the City has taken. Councilor Champlin discussed the Concord Police Department's involvement with the new American community, the Concord Public Library's involvement with the Multi-Cultural Festival, the review and subsequent reduction of fees to utilize the Citywide Community Center, the Human Resources Department's use of a vendor called CircaWorks to reach underrepresented communities with job postings, and the diversity training given to City department heads.

Then, Councilor Rice Hawkins reviewed the committee's goals, as outline below, and opened the meeting to public comment.

Goals:

- Identify those characteristics that would make Concord a more welcoming, inclusive, just, and equitable place where all residents feel civically empowered with a sense of belonging.
- Develop approaches and initiatives that will assure the protection and promotion of those characteristics.
- Establish a model/protocol for community conversations that engage all residents such that the City and its committees can follow the practices set forth for future projects.

3. Public Comment

Oscar Villacis, Executive Creative Director of First Gen Multimedia in Nashua and host of a local radio talk shows broadcast on WNHN 94.7, discussed his radio show which holds conversations with first generation Americans who discuss their lack of acceptance as Americans and their relationship with their parents' country of origin. Mr. Villacis encouraged those working on diversity and equity efforts to not speak for others, but to allow the underrepresented an opportunity to speak for themselves.

Jim Milliken, a Concord resident, reminded the group of the success of the Harmony Forums which were held in Concord in the 1980s and 1990s to address difficulties occurring at that time in the Concord community. He noted that this then led to St. Paul's Church creation of the Phoenix Fund and subsequent Task Force Against Racism and Intolerance.

Charles Russell, a Concord resident and WNHN radio station board member, discussed other communities' creations of municipal positions which specifically manage diversity, equity, and inclusion. Mr. Russell suggested that to engage more new members to City boards and committees, that the chair of the committee provide a brief overview of the board and/or committee's responsibilities prior to the start of their meetings.

Alan Herschlag, a Concord resident, provided anecdotal evidence that working in diverse workplaces helps to integrate people fully into the community and dispels racism. Mr. Herschlag also discussed mixed-income and mixed-type housing.

Jessica Livingston, a Concord resident, responded to Councilor Champlin's outline of the City's work on diversity, equity, and inclusion and noted that she has recently met with members of the Concord Police Department. Ms. Livingston stated they have stopped proactive communication with new American communities due to a lack of staffing. Regarding the reduction in fees for the Citywide Community Center, Ms. Livingston regarded the reduction as an example of equality but not equity. She stated the Multi-Cultural Festival is touted by the City but is not funded by the City. Ms. Livingston's recommendations included looking to other cities such as Manchester's use of a multi-cultural task force and Nashua's certification as a Welcoming City; funding organizations; having government be more accessible through outreach such as greater notice of public hearings; and educating the public about the impact of particular items being considered during public hearings.

Charm Emiko, of Project S.T.O.R.Y., discussed barriers affecting the new American community. Ms. Emiko described the primary barrier for youths aged 5 – 25 is the inaccessibility to space and noted that the hours of greatest need for space occur when the Citywide Community Center is closed. Also discussed were the cost of space rentals. Ms. Emiko also noted needs at Keach Park including lights, additional trash and recycling receptacles, and a water source. Ms. Emiko noted her desire for a more diverse Parks & Recreation staff, and because of her involvement with local youth, she noted that she wishes she would be contacted when there are staffing needs for local youth. Also discussed were the needs for extended hours on the bus schedule, a desire for more diversity training for all City staff, and the desire for the City to publicly advocate a message of anti-racism.

Karen Juall, a Concord resident, spoke about her career educating children. Ms. Juall discussed the lower usage and greater availability during weekday, daytime hours at the Citywide Community Center.

Jayne Simoes declared his opinion that the official City seal does not reflect the current values of Concord. He also declared his opinion that the unofficial City seal which includes a Concord Coach is also unfavorable.

Jessica Martin, of Intown Concord, described her close work with Pride Concord and the impression left on members of Pride Concord by the City regarding only American flags, and not Pride flags, being allowed to be flown downtown. Ms. Martin also described an incident where a drag performance was to be scheduled, but was cancelled due to weather. After the cancellation, Intown Concord was inundated with messages against the drag performance and felt a sense of danger.

Joel Eaton, an ordained minister and chaplain in Concord, discussed the meeting's numerous discussion points regarding helping refugee children. Mr. Easton noted that these children may live in Concord into adulthood and become future constituents. Additionally, Mr. Easton called for the City to fund such organizations and to build sincere relationships with community leaders.

Meredith Cooley, of Concord Greenspace, discussed mistrust of City and elected officials. She discussed her own process of removing her own personal racism and encouraged the City to do the same. Ms. Cooley suggested seeking out a trained organization to help with such endeavors.

Todd Warfield noted he was disappointed to not hear a land acknowledgement for indigenous people. Mr. Warfield discussed the need to review zoning regulations and declared his opinion that zoning regulations protect some while saying no to others.

Tanya Rochette, a resident of Concord Heights, Overcomers volunteer, and member of the Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, encouraged City boards and committees to reach out directly to refugee communities.

Stacey Brown asked if a survey could be created similar to the Ad-Hoc Beaver Meador Golf Course Building Committee.

Mayor Bouley advised Ms. Brown that the Clerk's Office had investigated the potential of a survey and that help may be needed in the execution of a survey. Ms. Brown stated she would connect with the Clerk's office.

Charm Emiko spoke again reiterating her desire for a multi-cultural classroom available to all organizations who help refugee children. Ms. Emiko declared her opinion that the cost to implement such a shared space would be low in comparison to a new clubhouse at the golf course.

There being no further public comment, Councilor Rice Hawkins declared the session for public comment closed. Councilor Rice Hawkins then announced the other listening session meeting dates and times including Thursday, May 4 from 6:00PM – 8:00PM at the Merrimack Valley High School auditorium and Saturday, May 6 from 11:00AM – 1:00PM at the Citywide Community Center.

Mayor Bouley encouraged all members of the public who may be intimidated by speaking in public or have fear about public speaking to email statements to the City Clerk's Office at cityclerk@concordnh.gov or to mail a letter to the City Clerk's Office, 41 Green Street, Concord, NH 03301.

4. Adjournment.

Action: At 2:00PM, there being no further discussion, Councilor Rice Hawkins moved to adjourn the meeting.

A true copy: I attest:

*Elisabeth Harrington
Deputy City Clerk*