



CITY OF PORTSMOUTH

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION WORKING GROUP

Nancy Colbert Puff, Steve Butzel, Juliet Walker, Kelly Harper, Vincent Hayes, Tracy Gora, Jane Ferrini, Jessica Griffin, Nicole Cloutier, Eliza Gilmore, Katie Czajkowski, Laura Horwood-Benton, Elise Annunziata, Brinn Sullivan, Jordan Wells, Brian Goetz...

Minutes

Wednesday, January 6, 2021

Zoom Meeting, 10 am

- I. **Introductions/Welcome to New Members**
- II. **Acceptance of Minutes from 12/16/20:** Deleted “other” discussion from draft - unanimously accepted.

- III. **Progress Updates on Goals**
 1. Using broad employee input, develop a values statement for the organization to be used in recruitment and retention efforts. (Elise, Kelly, Laura)

Elise updated the group on the email to all employees and the survey effort. She invited feedback on both the content and the method of outreach. Referencing the 1st question, Jane pointed out that employees may be new to the topic, and wondered if it could be simplified, maybe a little more direct, to improve response rates. She suggested flipping the order of the question to directly ask: what are the three words phrase...” Another suggestion was to highlight the survey a bit more, as it is the principle purpose – the call to action link.

Juliet asked if the Committee was intended to complete the survey as part of the testing? Elise thought yes.

The idea to send out a preliminary email to all staff introducing the topic and following up with a separate email, say a week later, with a link to the survey was discussed. Elise offered to work on the “primer” email, as well as the wording on question 1 to simplify. Perhaps the primer email could call attention to one of the DEI resources (a

video?) on our internal web page as an introduction to the topic. Maybe no more than 3 minutes?

Nancy wondered if the group should think about promoting DEI issues regularly, much in the same manner as the videos focused on cybersecurity. Laura offered to look at the Library's training list and see what might be appropriate.

2. Begin to offer monthly luncheon series "Sometimes It Takes a Story..." to all employees to promote discussions on DEI. (Tracy, Nancy)

We talked about how to get additional volunteers to host future months of the Brown Bag lunches. Tracy admitted that she was worried that people would be intimidated if they confused diversity with explaining what your personal issues/troubles are. She offered that we could talk about lighter topics such as ethnic recipes, dance, etc. Maybe in the future we should choose a topic to discuss instead of focusing on one person's story.

3. Engage with partners to develop resources and identify educational/outreach opportunities beyond the City's internal employee pool. (Vincent, Laura)

Vincent and Laura reported they were scheduled to speak with Gather, and the Cohen Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies in Keene (with Peter McBride, from Belfast, who specializes in post-conflict reconciliation) this week.

Outreach to the NAACP ended up referring them to 9-10 other organizations. The Housing Authority, Crossroads House, etc. , have expressed interest in being in touch, as well as the Seacoast African American Community Cultural Center. Providence, RI, Burlington and Essex VT are scheduled. Vincent invited Jordan to join the call with VT, as they will include a police transformation director in their group, and invited Kelly Harper, as human resources would also be represented.

4. Other

Vincent thank Katie, and the Library in general for helping to respond to a City Council request for the naming of a new street off of Banfield Road for Thomas Wolford. As was discovered, Wolford owned a “plantation,” but there was no history associated with slavery.

Discussion about place naming ensued. Juliet reviewed the City’s past practice of street naming, which resulted in the development of a list by former Planning Director David Holden.

Laura suggested we could create a community process where people would nominate community heroes for placement on a list for future place naming purposes. It could be an interesting public-facing action of the group.

Caution over re-naming streets (which involves people’s addresses) proceeded to discussion of pocket parks, and other opportunities. Thought about how to balance renaming efforts – e.g. George Washington, had slaves, but undeniably did a lot for the country. How to honor certain parts of a person w/o fully “cancelling” them.

We do have new places being created that will be named: the rail trail (State-owned, but maybe portions can be named?), No. Mill Pond pocket park, etc. There was a public renaming of a street in Kittery that got very good press.

Steve asked if the Library staff would maybe suggest some names from history for use in Council’s future deliberation? Juliet responded that the Planning Board plays a role in street naming, and would appreciate being able to give the Board such a list if one existed.