



Mayor's Initiative on Equity and Equality

Tuesday, September 21, 2021

5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

**Councilman Denny Whayne Conference Room • Busch Municipal Building 4th floor
840 N. Boonville**

Members Present: Saehee Duran and Doug Neff, Co-Chairs; Barbara Block*, Christian Lewis, Christa Moss, John Oke-Thomas**, Francine Pratt*, Bob Roberts, Robin Robeson, Jeff Schrag, Jeanne Skahan, and Carol Taylor.

Members Absent: Rita Baron, Justin Clark, Mike Powers, and Shurita Thomas-Tate.

City Council: None.

Staff: Anita Cotter, City Clerk; Cora Scott, Director of Public Information and Civic Engagement; Taj Suleyman, Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; Maurice Jones, Deputy City Manager; Jason Gage, City Manager.

Others: None.

Clerk's Note: *Indicates participation via Zoom

** John Oke-Thomas arrived at approximately 5:40 PM

Welcome

Doug Neff, Co-Chair, welcomed everyone to tonight's meeting, which began at approximately 5:30 p.m.

Roll call was conducted. Present. Barbara Block*, Christa Moss, Christian Lewis, Francine Pratt*, Bob Roberts, Robin Robeson, Jeff Schrag, Jeanne Skahan, Carol Taylor, Saehee Duran, and Doug Neff. Absent: Rita Baron, Justin Clark, John Oke-Thomas, Mike Powers, and Shurita Thomas-Tate.

Approval of July 6, 2021 and August 3, 2021 Minutes

The Initiative members reviewed the draft minutes of the July 6, 2021 and August 3, 2021 meetings.

Robin Robeson noted the minutes of August 3, 2021 contained the following errors:

- Page 2: The top three choices for the vision statement listed an entry twice.
- Page 3: Listed Christian Lewis by the incorrect gender pronouns.

Carol Taylor noted the minutes of July 6, 2021 contained the following error:

- Page 1: The header listed the meeting date as July 4 rather than July 6, 2021.



Anita Cotter, City Clerk noted members may move to approve both sets of minutes contingent upon said errors being corrected.

Robin Robeson moved to approve both sets of minutes as corrected. The motion was seconded by Christa Moss and approved by the following vote. Ayes: Block*, Moss, Lewis, Pratt*, Roberts, Robeson, Schrag, Skahan, Taylor, Duran, and Neff. Nays: None. Absent: Baron, Clark, Oke-Thomas, Powers, and Thomas-Tate. Abstain: None

Opening Remarks

Co-Chair Duran welcomed Initiative members. She noted today's meeting will consist of group activities designed to get thoughts on paper. Five major categories for discussion include Business, Faith-Based, Education, Government, and Non-Profits, each of which have a poster affixed to wall for members to record their thoughts and remarks. She acknowledged the comments from the previous meeting regarding the general feeling that not much progress has been made. She encouraged everyone to remain engaged and commended members for their engagement thus far.

Grounding on Process

Co-Chair Neff noted both he and Co-Chair Duran meet with the mayor recently to discuss expectations. One issue discussed was time limitations. He noted the mayor expressed the one-year timeframe was a way to give members the peace of mind they were not signing on for an open-ended commitment. Although the work may extend past the one-year mark and require an extension, Co-Chair Neff emphasized maintaining a sense of urgency. He reiterated the Initiative is tasked with providing over-arching recommendations for the City to act on regarding the enhancement of equity and inclusion. He asked Co-Chair Duran to explain today's activity.

Co-Chair Duran noted the five major categories to today's discussion are represented by posters affixed to the wall around the room. She read the description of the Initiative's charge as well as a description of the five pillars of change. She explained that the activity requires members to walk around the room and add their thoughts to each poster.

Christa Moss asked for clarity regarding the numbers on the posters. Co-Chair Neff noted for each number one, the individual should ask "what do I not know about this", for number two, the individual should ask "what do I know about this". Members are to get in groups of two and spend a few minutes in discussion with their partner.

Carol Taylor asked for clarity regarding if the group will be working towards establishing a set of value principles. Co-Chair Duran answered affirmatively, noting today's activity should help gather information that will lead to the development of those value principles.

Jeff Schrag asked what the difference is between the non-profit and the government poster prompts. Co-Chair Neff expressed the notion that each group will answer the questions as they relate to that particular segment of the community. Mr. Schrag asked for clarity whether they should look through the lens of a non-profit volunteer, or a decision maker within the non-profit. Co-Chair Neff expressed it should be from the decision makers point of view.

John Oke-Thomas expressed concern the activity may produce far more negative thoughts than positive information. Co-Chair Neff expressed the activity has group members from various backgrounds and perspectives, just as the mayor intended. Co-Chair Duran expressed her opinion the group may be surprised at the results.



Jeff Schrag asked Co-Chair Duran to read the charge again. Co-Chair Duran read the charge. Mr. Schrag noted the word “race” does not appear within the charge. Co-Chair Duran noted the word “race” does not appear; however, it was the motivating factor in establishing the Initiative. She encouraged group members to do the activity through whichever lens they would like, including through racism. She noted all ideas are welcomed.

Jason Gage, City Manager introduced himself and Maurice Jones, Deputy City Manager. He thanked members for their willingness to serve on the Initiative. He noted each person was carefully and thoughtfully selected. He expressed his opinion the work is difficult; however, he has confidence in the group.

Workgroups

Co-Chair Duran thanked Mr. Gage and Mr. Jones for attending the meeting. She asked for members to break into workgroups of two and spend roughly seven minutes discussing each of the five prompts. She asked Cora Scott, Director of Public Information and Civic Engagement to keep time for the group.

Reconvene and Read Outs

After approximately thirty-five minutes of work discussions, the Initiative took a five-minute break.

The group reconvened to discuss their results.

Closing Remarks

Co-Chair Neff noted the City Clerk will categorize the information from today’s activity. Leadership will send out that information with the other sector names and ask members to provide feedback. He suggested at the next meeting having a candid conversation about prioritization and thinking through what members agree is important.

Adjourn

With no further business coming before the Mayor’s Initiative on Equity and Equality, Mr. Schrag moved to Adjourn. Jeanne Skahan seconded the motion, and it was approved by the following vote. Ayes: Block*, Moss, Lewis, Pratt*, Roberts, Robeson, Schrag, Skahan, Taylor, Duran, and Neff. Nays: None. Absent: Baron, Clark, Oke-Thomas, Powers, and Thomas-Tate. Abstain: None.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:25 p.m.

Completed by Johnathan Saunders
Approved on October 5, 2021