



Mayor's Initiative on Equity and Equality

Tuesday, December 7, 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, Co-Chair; Doug Neff, Co-Chair; Barbara Block*, Christian Lewis**, Christa Moss***, John Oke-Thomas*, Mike Powers, Francine Pratt*, Bob Roberts, and Carol Taylor.

Members Absent: Rita Baron, Justin Clark, Robin Robeson, Jeff Schrag, Jeanne Skahan, Shurita Thomas-Tate.

City Council: None.

Staff: Cora Scott, Director of Public Information and Civic Engagement; and Taj Suleyman, Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

Others: None.

Clerk's Note: * Indicates participation via Zoom
**Indicates participation via phone conference
*** Christa Moss arrived at approximately 5:35 PM

Welcome and Opening Comments

Doug Neff, Co-Chair, welcomed everyone to tonight's meeting, which began at approximately 5:35 p.m.

A quorum was not present. Members of the Mayor's Initiative on Equity and Equality (MIEE) agreed to have a generalized discussion without taking any formal action. Co-Chair Neff noted both Co-Chair Duran and he will be meeting with Mayor McClure tomorrow to provide him with an update on work accomplished thus far. He noted Jeff Schrag highlighted a potential group name change, the Mayor's Initiative on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, to more align with other groups across the nation.

Carol Taylor expressed concern with potentially duplicating existing community organizations by establishing a permanent working committee to compliment the work Director Taj Suleyman is doing.

Christian Lewis asked if an overarching board could be established to aid existing community organizations rather than duplicating their efforts. Ms. Taylor expressed her belief it would be difficult to know what has already been done by those working in established groups. She further expressed potentially having members of various working groups that are deeply entrenched in the work to serve on a proposed new board.

Francine Pratt gave an overview of the work existing groups have accomplished.

Christa Moss arrived at approximately 5:57 PM, establishing a quorum of members present.



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

Approval of November 2, 2021 Minutes

MIEE members reviewed the draft minutes of the November 2, 2021 meeting.

Francine Pratt moved to approve the minutes of the November 2, 2021 meeting. The motion was seconded by Mike Powers and approved by the following vote. Ayes: Block, Lewis, Moss, Oke-Thomas, Powers, Pratt, Roberts, Taylor, Duran, and Neff. Nays: None. Absent: Baron, Clark, Robeson, Schrag, Skahan, and Thomas-Tate. Abstain: None.

DEI Update

Taj Suleyman, Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion noted he will be presenting to the City Council at the December 21, 2021 luncheon. He expressed his desire to continue learning from faith groups and potentially gathering them together for a discussion.

Barbara Block expressed concerns of MIEE's recommendations and their impact on the faith community. She noted various faiths have different practices concerning men and women worshiping together or serving in leadership roles. She further expressed her opinion the MIEE does not have jurisdiction in these realms.

Francine Pratt echoed Ms. Block's comments.

Carol Taylor highlighted MIEE's role in celebrating the differences among cultures and faiths, honoring their practices, and educating others.

Mr. Suleyman noted the difference between cultural integration and cultural assimilation. He expressed his belief MIEE will encourage cultural integration.

Bob Roberts expressed his belief there is a healthy respect that exists already among the various faith groups in Springfield. He noted his experiences with groups coming together despite faith differences.

Co-Chair Neff expressed his opinion the MIEE should coordinate educational resources and facilitate dialogue within the community.

Review of Working Documents

Members of the MIEE spent several minutes discussing word-smithing phrases within their working documents pertaining to guiding principles and pillars.

Next Steps

Co-Chair Neff noted the group will discuss the final two pillars at the next meeting.



Adjourn

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

The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:20 p.m.

Completed by Johnathan Saunders
Approved on January 4, 2022