



Diversity Equity Inclusion Justice and Belonging Committee

May 6, 2023

Draft Meeting Minutes

Citywide Community Center

11:00AM – 1:00PM

1. Mayor Bouley, Chair, called the meeting to order at 11:23AM.

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 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 Department. 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 such as people of color, veterans, LGBTQ, and those with disabilities.

Then, Councilor Rice Hawkins reviewed the DEIJB 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

Sheila Zakre, of Concord, discussed the population of people in Concord with disabilities. Ms. Zakre is legally blind, does not drive, and lives in Concord because it is walk-able. She suggested that the City make sidewalk cleaning as much of a priority as it does street cleaning in order to assist the community who walks because they do not drive. Ms. Zakre also suggested making assisted listening devices available at Council meetings and in the City Auditorium as well as having meetings be available online. She noted that those with disabilities should hold positions on disability-related committees. Lastly, Ms. Zakre suggested that the City include its American with Disabilities Act (ADA) policy on the City website along with its complaint procedure and dedicated staff contact.

Cary Gladstone, Ward 9 resident and Area Director for the Granite United Way Merrimack County Region, discussed his professional use of equity funding in which funding priority is given to non-profits with smaller staff and those without 501(c)(3) status. Mr. Gladstone advocated for lights at Keach Park and suggested that a group similar to the Friends of the Concord Public Library be created for the Beaver Meadow Golf Course.

Katherine Wesley, Ward 7 resident, discussed her desire to see data from Concord Police Department regarding arrests by race.

Cindy, part of Concord's multi-cultural community, discussed the positions of community health workers in other communities and her desire for a position like this within the City of Concord.

One resident spoke regarding the fear of the unknown with economics as well as her personal experience with discrimination. She also advocated for those having experienced discrimination being involved with creating policies.

Mary Till, a Concord resident, discussed the concept of community power in which a group of residents communally work with a contractor to build solar panels on a parcel of land. The electricity generated from the solar panels is then sold back to residents at a reduced rate.

Ruhan, a freshman at Concord High School and member of the Bangladesh and Muslim communities, discussed the lack of time-off for religious holidays such as Eid which is the final day of Ramadan. Ruhan also discussed his experience observing times of prayer while in school and the lack of available space to worship in private. He noted that the lack of private space

leads to other students, who are not observing, to invade the space dedicated for worship and to mock those in prayer.

Councilor Champlin noted that because these are issues occurring at school, this would be an issue for the Concord School District.

Cara Meeker, Concord School Board member, discussed how the Committee should involve youth.

Kate West, of New Hampshire, declared her opinion that white people in New Hampshire are comfortable with power being concentrated to white people. Ms. West added that the City should remove barriers to employing people of color. Lastly, Ms. West discussed two instances where she personally was unable to have assistance from the Concord Police Department for a lockout and flat tire due to the liability for the Police Department.

Connor Sporn discussed her experience working with a non-profit to assist homeless individuals and the lack of accessibility to services. Ms. Sporn suggested a Community Navigator position be created in the City which would help connect people to resources.

Sarah Robinson, Concord School Board member, discussed her desire for common vernacular to be used by the community and committee for matters related to DEIJB. Ms. Robinson also called for greater outreach to homeless individuals in regards to City matters.

Meredith Cooley, of Concord Greenspace, discussed her personal attendance at a variety of City committee meetings. She discussed her desire to see equity and impact of decisions become second nature in the decision making of all City committees. Lastly, Ms. Cooley discussed zoning and her desire to see the community jointly purchase the Gulf station across from Concord High School in order to create a belonging center.

Melissa Hinebauch, of Concord, discussed her family's personal experiences with ableism, xenophobia, racism, homophobia, and transphobia. Ms. Hinebauch added that leaders of historically marginalized communities should be involved with the Committee, that fees at the Citywide Community Center should be eliminated, that lights should be added to Keach Park, and that all future parks and buildings should be accessible.

Jessica Campbell, a Concord resident, discussed a lack of financial literacy and accessible transportation.

Fisto Ndayishimiye discussed his move to Concord and personal experiences with discrimination. He called for representation in City government from members of the black, indigenous, people of color (BIPOC) community. Mr. Ndayishimiye called for housing for people of lower income in neighborhoods of higher income and the building of a new welcoming center because the Citywide Community Center won't eliminate its fees. Lastly, Mr. Ndayishimiye discussed the need to prevent youth from moving to other states and advocated for the Committee to be comprised of members of the LGTBQ, new American, and people with disabilities communities.

Children participating in Project S.T.O.R.Y. shared their experiences. Several of the children discussed the need for reduced fees at the Citywide Community Center as well as extended weekend hours at the Citywide Community Center. One child discussed his desire for cleaner porta potties in Keach Park.

Charm Emiko, of Project S.T.O.R.Y., discussed vacation week access at the Citywide Community Center.

Angus Bozeman, Concord resident and former Concord business owner of 30 years, shared his personal experience as the child of a military family living in various countries. Mr. Bozeman commended the City for hosting the listening sessions as well as the steps forward by the DEIJB Committee

James McKim, president of the Manchester NAACP, discussed the need for involvement by the business community. He encouraged a shared vernacular and discussed what his community of Goffstown does with matters relating to DEIJB. Mr. McKim encouraged community members in attendance at the listening session to hold a community session.

There being no further public comment, Councilor Zandra Rice Hawkins encouraged those wanting to stay updated regarding the Committee to check the City's website, sign up for the City Manager's newsletter, and to provide your contact information to Councilor Rice Hawkins so that she may follow up with those interested.

4. Adjournment.

Action: At 1:23PM, there being no further discussion, Councilor Rice Hawkins moved to adjourn the meeting.

A true copy: I attest:

*Elisabeth Harrington
Deputy City Clerk*