



Diversity Equity Inclusion Justice and Belonging (DEIJB) Committee

Draft Meeting Minutes

December 10, 2024

City Council Chambers

37 Green Street

6:00 PM

1. Mayor Champlin called the meeting to order at 6:18 PM. Mayor Champlin chaired the meeting in the absence of Committee Chair Ahni Malachi.
2. Roll Call.

Present: Mayor Champlin, Moe Djabelarbi, Amy Girouard-Crush, Karen Juall, Councilor Kretovic, Cara Meeker (Concord School District Ex-Officio Member) Alison Murphy, Zoey Murphy, Robin Nafshi, Councilor Sekou and Sheila Zakre.

DEIJB Facilitator Bird Guess, Founder and CEO of The Racial Equity Group, was also present via Zoom.

Absent: Vijay Bhujel, Becky Kennedy (Merrimack Valley High School Ex-Officio Member), Clement Kigugu, Ahni Malachi, Ghana Sharma, Usha Shrestha and Noemi Wierwille.

3. Meeting Overview.

Action: Mayor Champlin indicated that the purpose of the meeting was to allow Bird Guess, of the Racial Equity Group, to introduce himself to the committee.

Mayor Champlin provided members of the committee with an update on the status of the City's DEIJB process, noting that the City sent out an RFQ (Request for Qualifications) for a facilitator to help with the work of the committee. Initially, the City received three applications, none of them from New Hampshire companies. He further stated that, as Mayor, he felt that the RFQ should be sent out again to see if there were any New Hampshire companies interested in submitting a response. In response to the issuance of the second RFQ, the City received four proposals, one from a New Hampshire consortium of three organizations, the other three were from out of state.

Mayor Champlin noted that the DEIJB executive committee (the Mayor, Mayor Pro Tem

Sekou and Councilor Kretovic) selected three finalists, developed a series of questions to be asked of each finalist, and directed staff to conduct interviews; as is standard procedure in vetting vendors.

Mayor Champlin indicated that the same questions were asked of each vendor in the same order. After the interviews, the executive committee met with the City Manager to review the staff evaluation and ranking of each vendor.

The DEIJB core/executive committee unanimously selected Racial Equity Group (REG) of Irving, Texas, as its first choice. Racial Equity Group has a team that has worked together for several years with a number of communities, including the Cities of Melrose and Newton, Massachusetts; the Town of Lincoln, Massachusetts; and the Town of Windsor, Vermont. Racial Equity Group is also currently working with the Massachusetts Municipal Association to conduct a DEI maturity index of the 351 municipalities throughout Massachusetts.

Upon their selection, Racial Equity Group's sealed bid for the project was opened and was found to be consistent with the target set in the RFQ. Subsequently, City staff negotiated a contract with REG.

4. Initial discussion with the City of Concord's DEIJB Facilitator, Bird Guess, Founder and CEO of The Racial Equity Group.

Action: Mayor Champlin introduced DEIJB Facilitator Bird Guess to the committee, indicating the purpose of this meeting is to allow him to introduce himself, to talk about his processes, to talk about what his firm is bringing to the table and answer any questions.

Councilor Sekou spoke in support of the facilitator recruitment process, indicating that the core committee members did not take the job of recruitment lightly.

Bird Guess introduced himself to steering committee members, providing the committee with a detailed overview of a draft estimated project timeline of the scope of work he envisions the committee will be tasked with. Bird Guess indicated the draft timeline would be amended to reflect a realistic schedule, and further stated that, once it was updated, he would get it to all the committee members.

Committee members discussed the estimated project timeline, scope of project and tasks. Committee members asked that Bird Guess, as well as members of the committee, be provided with meeting minutes from the previous DEIJB Committee's listening sessions.

Discussion took place about the need for the strategic planning of listening sessions and/or focus groups to ensure that residents would, once again, participate. Mr. Guess indicated that the Racial Equity Group would work with the committee to ensure that communications regarding this project and timeline, as well as the scope of the project and broad City goals, were clearly communicated.

Mr. Guess provided an overview of what a typical focus group would look like, indicating he would have multiple Racial Equity Group team members present, taking notes and gathering data from the meetings.

How attendees could participate, as well as the desire to potentially include students in some of the focus groups and/or listening sessions, took place. Mr. Guess indicated that permission from parents or guardians would be required for anyone under the age of 18 to participate. Discussion also took place regarding the desire to include residents with either developmental or intellectual disabilities. Mr. Guess indicated that if adults with guardians wished to participate, a waiver form could easily be created for guardians to give permission for adults with disabilities to participate.

General discussion took place about the process of the foundational training sessions. Mr. Guess indicated there would be two sessions, noting focus would be on why inequities exist and persist, as well as what the best practices are to look at policies and practices while identifying if they are impediments or advance DEIJB. He further stated that focus would be on how biases impact decision making on policies and social interactions.

Mr. Guess recognized the importance of measurability, indicating that how to measure, monitor, and manage DEIJB would be part of strategic planning sessions with the committee.

Committee discussion took place as to who would be identifying the different demographic groups that should participate in the focus groups and/or listening sessions. Mr. Guess indicated that he would like to get assistance from the City and members of the committee with compiling a list for those groups. Mayor Champlin encouraged committee members to submit suggested names and/or organizations to be considered as stakeholder groups to the City Clerk so that a listing could be compiled for submission to the Racial Equity Group. Mr. Guess further stated that his research team would be soliciting organizations to be included as well.

City Manager Aspell addressed the committee, indicating that, as outlined within the RFQ, the focus of Phase One should be on assisting the facilitator with the creation and implementation of a multi-dimensional DEIJB process for the Concord City Council and its boards and committees. He further stated that, as a starting place, the goal is to identify and prioritize areas for the City's DEIJB strategies.

General discussion took place regarding the charge of the committee. City Manager Aspell indicated that he would see that committee members received a copy of the RFQ.

Mayor Champlin indicated that committee members would be provided with a revised timeline once received, minutes from previous committee listening sessions, as well as a copy of the RFQ.

There being no additional committee business, Mayor Champlin opened the floor to public comments.

Public Comments

Zandra Rice Hawkins, Concord resident, former DEIJB Committee member and City Councilor, referenced the importance of meeting notifications being sent out to members of the public to ensure that all residents are aware of meeting dates and times.

Ms. Rice Hawkins indicated she felt it would be beneficial for committee members to review past committee meeting minutes to gain a better understanding as to what has been discussed to date.

Ms. Rice Hawkins further stated it would be nice if the public could gain a better understanding of DEIJB staff training.

She also suggested consideration be given to having meetings recorded and posted for resident viewing.

5. Other Business.

No other business was before the committee.

6. Adjournment.

Councilor Kretovic moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:36 PM.

A true copy: I attest:

*Janice Bonenfant
City Clerk*