

Minutes of Monday, August 12, 2019, 6:00 PM

Present:

Nicole DiCello – District 4

Patrick Hare – District 5

AiVi Nguyen – District 1

Savvas Kosmidis – District 1

Reese Bernard – District 2

Staff:

Suja Chacko, Chief Diversity Officer

1. The meeting was officially called to order at 6:05 PM by Patrick Hare, chair.
2. The chair called for a motion to approve minutes on 1/14/19. On a motion by Patrick Hare and seconded by AiVi Nguyen, the minutes were approved.
3. No public comments were made.

4. Committee Membership Updates:

Florette Willis and Khym DeBarros tendered their resignation from the board. Reese Bernard introduced himself as a new member of the board and shared his passion for diversity, inclusion, and equity as well as his commitment to serve on the board.

Suja Chacko announced that the membership of the board will be changed from a nine-person committee to a seven-person committee, effective in September. Suja Chacko also addressed the board about change of membership and quorum, and she restated the attendance policy that was instituted: If a member accrues more than three (3) unexcused absences during their term as an active board member, they will be asked to respectfully resign. All board members responded in favor of the new policy.

Election of chair/vice chair: AiVi Nguyen made a motion to keep the structure as one chair and one vice chair, and Nicole DiCello seconded the motion. Patrick was elected to be chair and AiVi was elected to be vice chair of the board.

5. Presentation from Niko Vangjeli, Assistant City Clerk/Elections and Edgar Luna, Business Development Manager, Executive Office of Economic Development

Niko Vangjeli discussed the importance of accurate and inclusive reporting in the 2020 Census. The City relies on the number of responses collected from the Census Bureau to fund schools, roads, public works, city programs, and many other resources that are integral to the wellbeing of the community. Niko Vangjeli shared with the board that the Elections Office has partnered with community organizations, including faith-based groups, non-profits, colleges, and other groups, to spread the word about the census and to encourage community members to respond to the census regardless of citizenship status. These organizations will work alongside the city committee to engage with residents about the importance of responding to the census.

Edgar Luna stated that the City's objective for the 2020 Census is to have every single Worcester resident register. He noted that, historically, the least accounted for demographic groups have been people of color, children, and senior citizens. Several partnerships and advertising campaigns are being established in response to low-response rates in the city, especially among inner-city residents. The City will rely on the Housing Development Division of the Executive Office of Economic Development to engage with community members residing in subsidized housing or public housing projects about the importance of responding to the census. Also, the Elections Office is preparing to launch an outreach campaign with Worcester Public Schools in an effort to use children as a mechanism to broadcast the 2020 Census. In addition, a webpage and Facebook page have been developed for the City of Worcester 2020 Census to further increase awareness about the census. Niko Vangjeli also explained that the Elections Office has applied for a grant to launch a social media campaign involving the placement of iPads containing census registration information in community centers throughout Worcester.

Niko Vangjeli and Edgar Luna also detailed the registration process for responding to the census, which they noted can be done online at the City's website, over the phone, or through the mail. All reported information is confidential and protected under the law.

In response to questions from the board members about marketing, Edgar Luna shared that he has been speaking one-on-one with Latino church parishioners and has encouraged fellow community leaders from a spread of diverse backgrounds to engage with subpopulations about topics relating to the census in culturally relevant ways, including using the appropriate language. Edgar Luna also announced that translation services provided by Ascentria Language Bank are being used to

translate advertisements and informational guides and resources about the census into many languages to best reach the diverse communities in Worcester.

AiVi Nguyen inquired about the dollar equivalent of each reported census respondent, to which Niko Vangjeli and Edgar Luna provided a rough estimate of \$2,500 in municipal funding per person.

In response to Reese Bernard's question about outreach to the homeless population, Edgar Luna informed the group that there is a point-person, Dr. Castille, who will work with homeless shelters to provide people who are registered at shelters information about the census and how to respond. In addition, the City will partner with clinics and free-healthcare providers across the city to inform community members utilizing these services, and especially homeless community members, about the census and provide them with information on how to respond.

6. Board Recommendations:

The board discussed the optimal strategy to ensure that all items on the Vision Plan be accomplished. The board agreed to reassign current membership to three subcommittees: Retention, Recruitment, and Hiring Plan & Policy. Nicole DiCello and Reese Bernard elected to join the Retention subcommittee. Savaas Kosmidis elected to join the Recruitment subcommittee, and Patrick Hare and AiVi Nguyen elected to join the Hiring Plan & Policy subcommittee. Each member has agreed to continue the work accomplished by previous subcommittee members and to hold each other accountable across subcommittees. Each subcommittee is expected to report back to the board about their progress. Suja Chacko will establish meeting dates and subcommittee goals in collaboration with subcommittee membership.

Suja Chacko announced the updates to the Diversity & Inclusion webpage on the City's website and noted that a quick link to the page has been added to the homepage of the website. She also announced that the updated Affirmative Action Plan, which the board played a pivotal role in creating, can be found on the Diversity & Inclusion page.

7. Patrick Hare thanked Florette Williams, Nicole DiCello, and Suja Chacko for their contributions in establishing the Affinity Group Program. Patrick Hare announced the success of the first LGBTQIA+ Affinity Group event at the Worcester Historical Museum, hosted by the Diversity & Inclusion Office. Patrick Hare

recommended as more events are hosted and employee interest grows, the board will evaluate the effectiveness and progress of the Affinity Group Program in contributing to employee retention rates. Advertising strategies may be modified as the group learns how best to engage with employees about future programming.

Suja Chacko announced that the Diverse Business Directory is a necessary measure in giving promotion and representation to the local diverse businesses. The programming of the Diversity and Inclusion Office has utilized and will continue to network with diverse business owners as vendors for events.

Patrick Hare announced the upcoming recruitment and community engagement events, including the Latin American Festival, Caribbean American Festival, and the Worcester Pride Parade. Suja Chacko noted that she has collaborated with Worcester Pride to create an advertisement featuring Diversity & Inclusion.

As a final note, the board discussed attending an upcoming U.S. Naturalization event in Worcester to show support for Worcester's diverse community. On a motion by Patrick Hare, and seconded by AiVi Nguyen, Patrick announced that he will inform the board about the next naturalization event and invite board members to attend.

8. The meeting was adjourned at 7:12 PM.

C/o Suja Chacko, Chief Diversity Officer
FIRST FLOOR, CITY HALL, ROOM 109
455 MAIN ST., WORCESTER, MA 01608
TELEPHONE (508) 799-1030 | FAX (508) 799-1040