

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION ADVISORY GROUP MEETING MINUTES

OCTOBER 19, 2021

A meeting of the River Forest Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Advisory Group (DEIAG) was held on Monday, October 19, 2021 from 7:00-9:00 P.M. in the Room 113 in Parmer Hall at Dominican University, 7900 W. Division Street, River Forest, Illinois.

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:06 p.m. Upon roll call, the following persons were:

Present: Addy (arrived 7:11 p.m.), Austin, Bachner, Baird, Bonner, Credi, Duba-Clancy, Economos (arrived 8:20 p.m.), Foster, Grant, Herrman, Johnson, Johnson, Keskitalo, Kirk, McAdams, Navarro, Nicholas, Papirnik, Rogers, Scheiner, Schumacher, Shea, Simon (arrived 7:49 p.m.), Szerszenowicz-Olweny, Weissenberger, Yoon

Absent: Arauz, Brandhorst, Burkett, Desorbo-Quinn, Graham, Hartshorn, Iverson, Kang, Khaledan, Kreisman, Macaulay, Norman, Oates, Peavy, Riley

II. OCTOBER 4, 2021 MINUTES

A MOTION was made by Navarro and SECONDED by Nicholas to approve the October 4, 2021 minutes of the DEI Advisory Group. On voice vote, motion passed.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairperson Bachner read a land acknowledgement statement.

Credi and Foster stated the Pledge of Allegiance.

IV. SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

None.

V. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Discussion regarding Execution of DEI Goals and Responsibilities

Chairperson Johnson distributed a summary he prepared of the Advisory Group's discussion at its previous meeting regarding the following items:

1. What do we want to do to accomplish our purpose, mission and goals?
2. What do we want to work on?
3. What topics do we want to dig deeper on?

Chairperson Bachner asked whether the Advisory Group had any comments on the notes that were distributed.

In response to a question from Member Weissenberger regarding what the Advisory Group is working on, Chairperson Johnson said the Advisory Group is circling back on its last discussion to determine how they can move forward based on the group's input.

In response to a request from Credi, Scheiner emailed photos that were taken of the notes that Chairperson Bachner took at the previous meeting.

Weissenberger stated the group should be focused on its initial goals, the first of which is to engage a 3rd party consultant who will design a comprehensive work plan on how to approach DEI, and will also assess the Village its departments to create a plan. The documents provided at the meeting suggest the Advisory Group will do the work that was to be completed by the consultant. Weissenberger said it's important that the Advisory Group follows the enabling legislation because it's good process and because it's the role of the consultant to provide them with education.

Chairperson Bachner said the main priority is to bring on a consultant to review the Village and determine where we can be more equitable and provide recommendations to that. To put together an RFP the Advisory Group needs to understand what it's asking for and what will be asked of the consultant. In order to do this, the Advisory Group has been provided information on how the Village works. It's also to understand what the world of DEI looks like, what those terms mean, and how they will be useful. The consultant will not necessarily educate the group but will review the Village itself. The Advisory Group needs to educate itself on those ideas.

In response to a follow-up question from Weissenberger, Chairperson Bachner confirmed that the purpose of the education is to put together the RFP.

Chairperson Bachner said the RFP isn't the Advisory Group's sole function and that they have also been tasked with other things.

Weissenberger said as a group it's hard for them to see the road map and the sequence. He is concerned it could get lost or confused.

Chairperson Bachner said no one here is going to let the RFP get lost. She thinks the point about a roadmap is valid and that's going to be an outgrowth from the summary of the Advisory Group's last discussion.

Chairperson Johnson said everyone in the group is in different places, which may require education to get the group moving together. Members of the group have requested education.

Austin said in addition to the goals the Advisory Group has a number of responsibilities they need to ensure are satisfied.

Shea said she has a bias to action. She reviewed the actions that have occurred to date and stated that she thinks the group may be able to start dividing and conquering based on their interest and expertise. She understands the need for an educational piece and would like to start moving forward.

Foster said he agreed with Weissenberger and asked for the Advisory Group to be clearer about what it's doing.

Navarro suggested ways to approach DEI work: top down or bottom up to let the concerns and ideas help move the group's work forward. He said he would like the group to start with itself. He asked the Advisory Group members to reflect on what they know, what education means to this group, and what educational resources are needed.

Chairperson Bachner asked everyone to take a few minutes to read through the documents that were provided by Chairperson Johnson.

Credi asked why they didn't get a copy of the comments before they were given the summary and said she thinks they are getting manipulated into topics without having a chance to digest what they think are the general themes.

Chairperson Bachner encouraged members of the DEI Advisory Group to also take photos of information they put on the board.

Chairperson Johnson said he thinks they are moving in the right direction and that the group identified several areas they would like to address going forward.

In response to a question from the Advisory Group, Chairpersons clarified the meaning of the term “RFP” and its use and distribution in the Village’s procurement process.

An Advisory Group member asked that documents be distributed in advance of the meeting.

Herrman asked that documents be written in plain language, described how plain language is used for and by people who have intellectual disabilities, and offered plainlanguage.gov as a resource to be used. Papirnik also suggested a tool that can be used in Microsoft to assess how a document has been written.

McAdams emphasized the need for education before a RFP is written and reviewed areas of education that she thinks are needed such as how to work better as a group, understanding how to move forward without procedure becoming a barrier, understanding River Forest and other communities, and what people think of River Forest from the inside and outside the community.

Rogers said there are consultants doing work in this area that may be generic and given to all communities. The Advisory Group needs to tell the consultant what they will be expected to do for the community rather than for the consultant to bring concepts that River Forest must conform to and cannot apply. Understanding the issues in River Forest and where the outside expertise can really help the Village achieve measurable outcomes is a worthwhile endeavor and is critical to the effective expenditure of money.

Grant said he agrees with Rogers and McAdams. He said he thinks of education more as information and data gathering.

Chairperson Bachner reinforced that the Village is looking for a consultant who won’t just pull a plan off the shelf; they want it to apply to River Forest.

Grant thinks the information that has been provided to-date has been helpful.

Szerszenowicz said the presentation regarding the Village has been helpful and asked whether the Advisory Group will self-educate and use tools such as a survey of the community’s priorities.

Chairperson Bachner agrees that surveys can be one tool, having other people come and speak to the Advisory Group is another, using subject matter experts from the Village and who are familiar with DEI, can all be utilized.

Shea asked if other RFPs will be gathered and distributed. Chairperson Bachner said yes and suggested that the Advisory Group should look at examples of other communities that did well with DEI and examine what their RFP looked like.

Keskitalo agreed the work is building to the RFP.

The Advisory Group took a brief recess to resolve a technical issue with the Zoom call. Schumacher asked how the Advisory Group will collect specific data.

Weissenberger said he reads the enabling legislation to mean the consultant will collect data. Before the Advisory Group selects a consultant it needs to educate itself about what type of consultant is needed, but he does not think it is up to the group to do a lot of the heavy lifting to gather and analyze

data.

Chairperson Bachner said the consultant will do a lot of that work, but the Advisory Group needs to have a general knowledge so that they can speak with the consultant and be able to reflect intelligently on it.

McAdams said the Advisory Group can brainstorm ways to get more data. As a consultant, she said she thinks the Advisory Group as a client needs to know what they're talking about, know what the issues are, and what they're trying to achieve. Right now the group is in the scoping and planning phase of the project.

Chairperson Johnson said he wants this group to not be divisive and to learn to accept each other's opinions. He said each meeting we'll have some portion devoted to education, whether it's provided internally or by someone outside the organization. He said he thinks the group needs to work on its group dynamics and having some education around that would be worthwhile.

Brandhorst asked that someone such as the Village Attorney provide the Advisory Group with an idea of the authorities and power of the Village of River Forest due to its non-home rule status. What are the things that the Village can do as a Village commission?

A member of the group encouraged members to keep coming back and working through the tension DEI generates.

Chairperson Bachner said that some of this work is uncomfortable at times. She encouraged people to look back at the exercise from the first committee meeting regarding why they're here and what they hope to accomplish.

Credi said she thinks that this group has been divisive and would like to do more to come together.

Weissenberger said he entrusts the three chairs to come up with education but said he does not think that education includes finding out about oneself and doesn't think it's done in small groups.

Chairperson Bachner said she thinks small groups help form connection and relationships between members but it isn't the only way it will occur.

Weissenberger said he thinks small groups are good for brainstorming ideas but not good for getting to know each other.

Austin said she finds the small groups to be worthwhile. She said large group work will require parameters to ensure everyone is heard. She said she does not think the education should all be put on the chairpersons.

A MOTION was made by Weissenberger and SECONDED by Foster that the executive committee of the three chairs construct a series of educational programs that would likely involve speakers, not to exclude small group discussions perhaps afterwards.

Chairperson Bachner said she thinks an education subcommittee would be appropriate.

A MOTION was made by Credi to amend the main motion to suggest that we have a subcommittee to provide speakers to the Advisory Group.

Weissenberger declined to amend his motion.

Credi withdrew her motion.

Ayes: Credi, Economos, Foster, Kirk, Johnson, Scheiner, Simon, Weissenberger, Yoon

Nays: Austin, Bachner, Baird, Bonner, Duba-Clancy, Grant, Herrman, Johnson, Keskitalo, McAdams, Navarro, Nicholas, Papirnik, Rogers, Schumacher, Shea

Motion Failed.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

No action taken.

VII. CONFIRMATION OF MEETING DATES

The next regularly scheduled meeting dates were confirmed as noted on the agenda.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

A MOTION was made by Schumacher and SECONDED by Economos to adjourn the meeting at 9:06 p.m. On voice vote, the motion passed.

Erika Bachner

Ken Johnson

Lisa Scheiner

November 16, 2022