

CITY OF BARRE
PUBLIC BODY DRAFT MEETING MINUTES

Committee/board: Diversity and Equity Committee

Date of meeting: Monday, May 16, 2021, 6:00 PM

Location of meeting: Zoom Videoconference with Call-in Option

Board/committee members in attendance:

- Ellen Kaye
- William Toborg
- Joelen Mulvaney
- Danielle Owczarski
- Svetlana Zhexembeyeva

Board/committee members absent:

- JD Fox
- Christopher Roberts

Others in attendance:

- Greg Quetel
- Steve Mackenzie - City Manager

Topic(s) Discussed

1. Call to order at 6:05 PM.
 - a. Welcoming guests - All committee members and guests introduced themselves.
2. Acknowledgement - Read by Ellen Kaye
 - a. We acknowledge that Barre City was developed on Sokoki Abenaki land, which the Western Abenaki nation never ceded, made treaty for, nor were they conquered. We aspire to create a space in our meetings that is inclusive, participatory and equitable. We acknowledge we all come from different experiences and that our experiences may be affected by racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, ableism and many other systems of oppression. We are here to address equity within the systems of our city in order to inform the City Council of our findings. We acknowledge that systemic inequities exist and do not debate the personal experiences of marginalized and underrepresented community members. With that in mind, it is important that we are thoughtful of the impact of our words on each other in this space.
3. Adjustments to the Agenda
 - a. Discussion of solicitation language at end of meeting - Steve Mackenzie
4. Participants/visitors open mic
 - a. One visitor - Greg Quetel from Berlin is interested in what our group is doing and is attending the meeting to learn more. They support and are interested in equity work.
5. New Business:
 - a. Assessing committee progress – Joelen

- i. Joelen asked folks to present their thoughts on the committee's progress thus far.
- ii. Joelen - after doing work for two years, she's grateful for the volunteer time of the committee. Recognize that the city is at a disadvantage and has not identified commitment to this work. Reviewed work of other committees, including the city of Winooski, that showed committee work/goals. Winooski put together an audit of the city: <https://www.winooski.vt.gov/1515/Equity-Initiatives>. The city has not shown capacity to support grants even if the committee is willing to do most of the leg work. School does not have capacity, the library is willing to provide support, but doesn't have the budget for books, this is one example.
- iii. Ellen - Provided an Equity Impact Assessment Tool overview. Echoes Joelen's sentiment and feels this work should be permeating everything in the city. This is a volunteer committee, not all of us are experts, and are not paid staff, but it seems capacity gets in the way. Other groups have said that if the town doesn't give you a budget, that shows their commitment to the group. We need commitment from the city. We want to create a safe environment for people and this is serious work. It's not enough to assign a committee without power or budget
- iv. Steve - Hears what Ellen is saying about the budget. New budget drafting will begin in August and this can be discussed with the new manager. D&E committee should be prepared to advocate during the budget cycle in August. This can be prepared for before August to develop the request - provide this no later than September 1, 2022. Ultimate decision is left up to the council for July 1, 2023.
 1. Add closed caption service to the meetings.
- v. Ericka Reil - It's not enough just to have the training but to have that training enforced. In some areas they will hire a person for that particular purpose. Ericka is informally that person at her job. Ericka can provide a description.
 1. Danielle - may need to have HR policy established for this.
- vi. Svetlana Zhexembeyeva - New to the city and learning about it. Her background as a social worker and experience with equity and working with a population of people who were homeless, she feels open dialogue with the communities we are serving is crucial, and the people leading the dialogue need to be trained. B/c of media, people are polarized, and we need to have conversations and dialogue with the training. Lots of time reflecting on people's identities and making sure we create a safe space. She is not aware of places in the community where these safe spaces exist. If the city wants diversity, they may try, but if people don't feel safe, they are more likely to leave. And for people who want to do the work, but are unsure, they may need support. We are not here to police people or do other people's work. The groups who are interested should be willing to do the work and not rely only on the workgroups or committees primarily

for the work. If we want diversity, we need to do the work, and we need help from people with experience.

1. It's important that our conversations are guided by a very skilled person so that people aren't afraid of being called racist or bad because of things they think or say. It's not a personal fault, we all have biases. We all have things to work on, but if we don't understand the structures and power dynamics, it may make people feel less personally responsible.
- vii. William Toborg - Look at two things: If we have a staff person and money, what can we do, and if we can't get funding, what can we do. William has been encouraging the school board to ask students to participate. What can we do with no budget to encourage diversity? Get people together of different persuasions to have conversations, and William is willing to pull people together. Focus on what we can do with what we have right now. Believes people have the same goals but different ideas on how to get there.
 - viii. Ellen Kaye - VLCT aspect of this work. Towns and cities are members of VLCT. VLCT provides insurance and guidance and care enough about equity to institute a committee to advise their board about equity and this may help with this work. Putting together a toolkit. It will have some kind of enforcement mechanism, which may help.
 - ix. Joelen
 1. Will put together information on her research in Winooski and other attachments.
 2. Application process should be more developed to ensure people who are on the committee share the mission and vision of the committee.
- b. Barre City Pride Weekend – Ericka Reil
 - i. Ericka is a disabilities rights advocate and does free training on etiquette and other related topics.
 - ii. Teamed up with Lisa Liotta - Baked with Love - June 11 at City Hall Park - by donation bake sale, family activities, tarot reader, story teller, get together, community resources, teaming up with Pride Bike Ride for a ride in Montpelier, starting at 5PM is a drag ball at the Labor Hall. Donating to pride Safe Space in honor of [Fern Feather](#), who was murdered in Morrisville this spring. Montpelier is doing their pride work.
 - iii. June 10 is Shakesqueer at the Labor Hall.
 - iv. Vermont Cares and People's Health and Wellness will be there.
 - v. Vermont pride calendar for more information
 - c. Steve Mackenzie - Hiring document draft language update - at some point language should be approved by council, but doesn't have a deadline in the next week or so.
 - i. Steve would appreciate feedback through email or other means, looking for a concise statement that is effective.

1. Ellen - Asked Steve if there is other organizations that could provide the language - Winooski or VLCT - Two examples are provided below:
 - a. The **University of Vermont** is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, disability, protected veteran status, or any other category legally protected by federal or state law.
 - b. **Winooski** is proud to be an Equal Opportunity Employer. We celebrate diversity and are committed to creating an inclusive environment for all employees. The city encourages persons with non-traditional skill sets and experiences to apply, even if candidates believe they do not meet 100% of the qualifications and hiring criteria described. All employment decisions are made without regard to race, color, religion or belief, national, social or ethnic origin, sex, age, physical, mental or sensory disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or expression, marital status or any other status protected by the laws and regulations within our municipality.
- ii. Annual appointments process - 7 members, 3 with expiring terms in 2022. Members with expiring terms need to indicate their interest to continue. Steve is clarifying if there is a need to indicate by written account to continue. Needed by June 1 if needed.
 1. JD Fox is not continuing on the committee. Steve asked that he would send an email that he is resigning.
6. Old Business:
 - a. Working Group Reports - No report outs
7. Approval of from April
 - a. William moved to adopt meeting minutes with the agreement that Will will be changed to William.
8. Set next meeting Date: Monday, June 20, 2022, 6:00 PM
9. Round Table
 - a. Greg Quetel - Visitor - Keep going, keep doing the work, b/c it's important, and if we don't do it, who will?
10. Adjourned at 7:22 PM.

Action items

1. **Joelen** will work with city staff to ensure the meetings are closed captioned for the hearing impaired.
2. **Joelen** will gather and share information for an application process to join the D&E Committee.
3. **Joelen** will gather information on equity work being accomplished in Winooski and share with the group.

4. **Danielle, Ellen, and William** (D&E members with expiring terms) should indicate their interest to continue to Joelen. Term expiration is June 30, 2022.
5. **JD Fox** to send a resignation email to Steve. **Joelen** will check in with him.

1) Motion: Move to adopt minutes

Mover/Second: William/Ellen

Result of vote: All in favor.

Meeting adjourned:

Mover/Second: Danielle/Ellen

Time: 7:22 PM

Next meeting date/time/location: Monday, June 20, 2022 at 6 PM via Zoom

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Danielle', with a large, stylized loop at the end.

Danielle Owczarski