

MINUTES
WORKFORCE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION COMMITTEE
MARCH 25 3:30 P.M.
BEVERLY LIVESAY CONFERENCE ROOM

Present: L. McBean-Clairborne, Chair; S. Martel Moore; L. Holmes; B. Doling; C. Hill; P. Carey; C. DeMarco; R. DeLuca, A. Fitzpatrick, K. Herrera

Not Present: K. Belanger; M. DeSouza; M. Lynch; L. Roberts; K. Kephart

Staff: J. Mareane, County Administrator; K. Fuller, Deputy Clerk of the Legislature

Legislator: M. Robertson

Call to Order

The meeting opened at 3:35 p.m.

Announcements

- Ms. Herrera called attention to an article appearing in today's *Ithaca Journal* regarding amendments to proposed route changes for Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit (TCAT) routes. The article included a schedule of public hearings on the topic and she encouraged individuals to participate in the hearings. She also noted a *New York Times* article indicated their transit, MTA, is raising fares and cutting service. She stressed TCAT is trying to increase efficiency but wanting to assist the underserved and populations relying on their service.
- Mrs. McBean-Clairborne announced the African Children's Choir would be appearing at the State Theatre on March 27th. She announced the Sister/Friends event would take place March 27th at the Clarion Hotel. This event, with many sponsors is now in its fifth year. She expressed disappointment that the County, one of the four major sponsors of the Diversity Consortium (Cornell University, Ithaca College, City of Ithaca, and Tompkins County), would not be represented at the event. The event hands out "goody bags", and at this year's event Tompkins County has provided mini-candy bars with the Diversity Logo on them. There will be cultural performances from participants of all ages. She then announced the First Annual Hip-Hop Dance would take place at 6:00 p.m. on March 28th at Beverly J. Martin School; the event provides children with an outlet and assists in enabling parents, families, students, and others to get to know one another.
- Ms. DeMarco shared written material on how the Free Choice Act would affect the LBGT groups. She also announced she would be participating in a union certification workshop that deals with inclusive language with bargaining units. She noted compared to other municipalities Tompkins County is more advanced in inclusive language in bargaining agreements. Ms. Herrera noted statistics indicate the Latino population is becoming a large portion of new bargaining unit members. Ms. Carey spoke of the New York State agencies recognizing the more diverse population as they are providing the appropriate software to assist in helping recognizing the varying populations seeking assistance.
- Mr. DeLuca shared the article in the *Ithaca Journal* recognizing Marcia Fort, Greater Ithaca Activities Center Director, as the recipient of the J. Diann Sams African American History Month award from Common Council. The Community Mental Health Service Board will hold its annual reception on May 27th from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. at the Holiday Inn. The goal is to recognize a system of care for those individuals of various challenges and disabilities that the department deals with. He reported on having seen a gay and lesbian unfriendly-workplace listing, which included Urban Outfitters (which is coming to the area), as well as Auto Zone and WalMart. This list was dealing primarily with the lack spousal rights for insurance and other benefits.

Chair's Report

Mrs. McBean-Clairborne spoke of the importance of the work being done within the County. She said on a recent "What Would You Do" television program focused on racism and discrimination. She spoke of how a black woman dressed in casual clothing was harassed while shopping, hearing comments

of how she did not belong, how she could not afford anything in the store, etc. Of 128 shoppers seeing this action, only one black man, one black woman, and one white woman spoke up. The white woman responded to the harassment by crying; when she left the store others followed to see if *she* [the white woman] was okay. Other segments in the program highlighted a gay couple having supper, with only one individual speaking out in support of their right to dine. She appreciates the members of the Committee taking time to work and she too is committed to ensuring the County is not an unfriendly place to be, noting it is important to recognize good behavior as well as educate individuals of the importance of acceptance of everyone.

The next meeting would be held on April 22, 2009 and will include a discussion on the Diversity Statement, which requires amendments.

Review of 2009 Spending Plan

The Committee was provided with a worksheet indicating the objectives of the Committee, achievements from 2005 through 2008, what deliverables it would like during 2009 through 2010, and projected expenses associated with the deliverables. She briefly reviewed the deliverables and indicated there may be need to revise the Civil Service Preparatory Program to increase funding due to the cost of materials.

A discussion took place regarding the suggested spending plan and noted there are additional achievements to be added to the form, as well as more detail regarding the deliverables. It was explained the position would be working with Administration and Personnel, with Mrs. McBean-Clairborne stating that the position may not be able to complete every item listed and it may be more routine works to be done in another manner.

Ms. Robertson suggested further explanations be given as to what is one-time funding versus things begun by the individual in this position and then taken over by other departments.

Ms. Martel-Moore suggested the breakdown of funding be more specific to each year, rather than a lump sum for both years involved.

Ms. Hill expressed a desire to see marketing related to participation in community events rather than a continuation of providing items with the logo; she felt it would be better to have events people could better relate to diversity versus having items that may not be clearly understood.

Ms. Fitzpatrick spoke of the workshops that have taken place. Department heads have undergone training, which would continue down through the department and division managers. There will be a ½ day session for those having already taken the full-day training. At that time an evaluation and assessment would be complete prior to additional training. Mrs. McBean-Clairborne expressed a desire to have the entire organization being offered the opportunity to undergo training.

Ms. Fitzpatrick spoke of the Supervising for Success training that would be forthcoming. Invitations were sent out for the Diversity Roundtable, with some funding available for interested individuals.

Ms. Robertson inquired about the video listed on the chart and was informed of the work being undertaken by the Public Information Officer and Administration.

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Ms. Holmes said she would be pleased to provide articles for County Corridors relating to the work done regarding diversity and the committee meetings. Mrs. McBean-Clairborne said Ms. Lynch had requested articles for the *County Corridors* newsletter.

Mrs. McBean-Clairborne spoke of liking the idea of give-away items, however, she stressed the importance of recognition of work completed. She believes there is a need to indicate what the items is about.

Civil Service Reform Proposal

Mr. Mareane prepared a written draft of the possible proposal regarding Civil Service reform as it would apply to the testing procedure. He explained his vision of it being a collaborative effort that would include many participants being approached for involvement (Tompkins County, City of Ithaca, Civil Service Employees Association, and Cornell University). The purpose would be to develop, implement, and assess a pilot program intended to address barriers to employment and thereby improve the diversity of local government workforces by providing greater flexibility in the selection of candidates for positions subject o Civil Service law and procedures. He shared his experience in government that indicated a firm belief that the present testing procedures are culturally biased. The proposal would work on a pass/fail system and be proposed for a five-year period to allow adequate time to document whether it is successful.

With regard to the timing of the pilot, Ms. Hill expressed concern that due to the present financial downturn it may not be feasible to undertake such a proposal. Mr. Mareane explained the proposal would take some time to develop. It was thought the development could be undertaken by a Cornell University class of 10 – 15 students that would act as consultants. The actual proposal would not be completed until 2010. Mr. Mareane stated there would be a point that the Committee would need to determine whether they felt the proposal was worthwhile to continue, noting it is a long process to go through. He believes it worthwhile to pursue the proposal, but is not certain it would be successful.

A lengthy discussion occurred regarding individual experiences going through civil service exam processes, how it would be determined what candidates for positions would provide diversity, etc. it was noted there would be the need to have a policy framework developed. Ms. DeMarco said there could be a potential problem with the union regarding a pass/fail basis, noting it may enable prejudicial selection.

Following the discussion consensus was to proceed, with Ms. DeMarco noting the need to include all parties involved (staff, administration, unions, municipalities, etc.).

Next Meeting

Mrs. McBean-Clairborne said the next meeting will include items such as amending the Diversity Statement and reviewing marketing plans.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 5:10 p.m.