

MINUTES
WORKFORCE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION COMMITTEE
MAY 27, 2009 3:30 P.M.
BEVERLY LIVESAY CONFERENCE ROOM

Present: L. McBean-Clairborne; S. Martel Moore; L. Roberts; L. Holmes; M. DeSouza; C. DeMarco; K. Herrera, A. Fitzpatrick

Excused: M. Lynch; P. Carey; K. Belanger; M. Lynch; K. Kephart; B. Doling

Staff: K. Stout, County Administration; S. Estes, Personnel; K. Fuller, Deputy Clerk of the Legislature

Guests: Kirby Edmonds and Laura Branca, TFC Associates

Call to Order

The meeting opened at 3:31 p.m.

Introduction

Mrs. McBean-Clairborne introduced Mr. Edwards and Ms. Branka of TFC Associates.

Announcements

- Ms. Herrera shared a written document entitled “Ten Things to Know About Judge Sotomayer”. She shared her hope that Judge Sotomayer would be approved as a Supreme Court Justice due to her background.
- Mr. Roberts reported that today at 5:00 p.m. the Mental Health Community Services Board would be holding their event to award individuals a Recognition of Personal Achievement award for their personal achievements in overcoming disabilities. It was noted the diversity logo would be utilized on the actual awards presented.
- *Mr. Roberts requested the Committee be provided an update on the issue of interpreters for meetings.*
- Mrs. McBean-Clairborne reported the Diversity Roundtable was wonderful; it was the best attended one yet. She expressed appreciation for the support provided that allowed the WDIC Committee to sponsor the event.
- Mrs. McBean-Clairborne reported the Greater Ithaca Activities Center Festival would be held on June 13th from noon to 6:00 p.m. This will be the last event at the GIAC building; renovations will require the services to be provided in other locations. Anyone interested in having a table at the event should contact Vivian Seina. The band Free Bootie Institute (FBI) would be playing.
- Mr. Estes announced that on June 7th the Boatyard Grill holding a special Brunch for Diversity. Ten percent of proceeds from the brunch starting at 11 a.m., as well as all meals purchased until 4 p.m. are being donated for use with diversity and inclusion events.
- On June 7th the Latino Association will be holding an event at Stewart Park.

Chair’s Report

Mrs. McBean-Clairborne spoke of how important it is to educate individuals on diversity and inclusion. She shared information that recently occurred at a meeting, noting an individual stated they do not use the same questions when interviewing individuals for the same position. She was amazed, particularly since it would not afford the opportunity to truly know who the appropriate individual for the position would be. She said they further did not understand the need to attend diversity and inclusion functions or participate in these efforts. Mrs. McBean-Clairborne stressed the importance of not just speaking of the concept, but rather, to do what is needed to help others learn the importance of diversity and inclusion. She said some have diversity statements and policies, but do not know how to follow them when statements or practices do not follow them.

Report – Cultural Competency Training

Minutes
Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Committee
May 27, 2009

Mr. Edmonds provided a background of the training done to date. He indicated that at this time it is a good point to review and reflect whether the training is still a good idea. He provided a summary sheet that indicated the individuals had the practical training but were not certain how to expand upon the training and bring it forward. Mr. Edmonds suggested there be dialogue groups to allow more time to work on the changes necessary to meet the goal.

Ms. Branca noted there was review in the second session as well as discussion of the County organization as a system. This discussion showed focus on individual departments versus the organization, which resulted in a challenge to show how they would be leaders in the entire organization. The intention of the end of the second session was to share content with those not present and would utilize department head meetings to continue the process. It was recommended to continue dialogue to determine how to strategize to use the information from the training in a practical setting.

Ms. Holmes agreed that the training was valuable and assisted in developing relationships with colleagues in other departments she had not yet known. At the end of the training relationships had been formed that should enable continuation of dialogues, however, the structure is not there to fit into everyone's schedules at this time.

Mr. Estes stated the dialogue pushed his comfort zone, sharing things more with co-workers, however the more you know about someone the more real it is.

Ms. Martel-Moore said toward the end individuals were more comfortable to open up, which lead to more dialogue and discussion.

Mrs. McBean-Clairbone commented she had feedback was the need to have more diversity in the identities of the group. Ms. Branca said the design was to have individuals who had gone through the training, therefore the second session was limited in diversity. It was noted due to the decision to have division managers, deputies, etc. at this training it was in itself limiting diversity.

A brief discussion followed regarding how to get this done is to bring the training to another level. It was noted to see if department heads made the training voluntary versus a directive, which could have a difference in participant viewpoints. It needs to be communicated in a consistent manner. It was noted it is difficult to plan due to schedules, it is important to attempt to get the training on the calendar in advance.

Ms. DeMarco suggested that it may be worthwhile to open up the participant group and ask who would be interested in attending, therefore having individuals at all levels rather than a top-down approach.

Mr. Roberts said this discussion is ongoing; how to permeate the organization in a manner that indicates diversity is positive at every level.

Mr. Edmonds said the challenge is that there is not one manner that would work for all departments; to have training voluntary may not include all departments.

Ms. Branca said they had met with Mr. Mareane, Mr. Estes, Ms. Fitzpatrick, and Ms. Younger to discuss what to do from here. She provided written recommendations that came out of the meeting. Mr. Mareane spoke of needing a better connection between administration and WDIC. One suggestion was to have a subgroup of WDIC that could articulate what the next steps could be to obtain momentum. It was stressed it is important to know the importance of taking ownership in diversity and inclusion.

Ms. Herrera feels it is important to let staff know that administration feels diversity and inclusion is important. Although the Legislature may change to have administration stress it will be maintained. She said it has to be approached from a lot of different directions at once.

Mr. Edmonds said for everything to happen regarding diversity and inclusion there needs to be shifts in resources, finding whether there is support, a mandate, etc., which are more difficult to answer. Ms. Branca spoke of the difficulty regarding change; decisions need to be made regarding implementation and having it from the top down would be supportive of individuals.

Mrs. McBean-Clairborne spoke of having to continue working at the Legislature level to develop policies, which includes providing knowledge, involvement, dialogue, and exchange to ensure the Legislators have an understanding of what it means and its importance. She said it is important to show what it means to the organization, not just a department.

At this time Mrs. McBean-Clairborne inquired whether it is time to expand the training to other employees. Ms. Branca said if it is supported by Department Heads and Deputies support it, without that support it might not be effective. Mr. Edmonds said the next step would be for Department Heads and Deputies indicating what they may need to effectively support diversity and inclusion. Without leadership support he is not certain training larger groups would not be cost effective.

Ms. Branca spoke of diversity and inclusion occurring over time; talking to one another and encouraging communication and feedback will bring about a level of comfort that provides a welcoming place that is diverse. She said it was important to start at the top to develop the support mechanisms that make it work.

Mrs. McBean-Clairborne said some Department Managers who want to embrace diversity and inclusion do not know where to go at this time. Mr. Edmonds spoke of the participants not knowing how to assess how well doing with the public. He said it may be interesting to know to provide direction of how to advertise and let the public know of what services are available. It was noted a review of how well a department is doing is not just the outside public, but staff as well.

Mr. Edmonds spoke of the Human Services Coalition Compass survey, noting it would be a useful tool to determine what may be needed. It was also suggested to have internal surveys as well to determine what is needed. Ms. Herrera spoke of creating benchmarks for each department to determine what is needed. Mrs. McBean-Clairborne spoke of the need for consistency throughout the organization. She noted she meets weekly with the County Administrator and have talked about a climate survey to understand what is occurring.

Ms. Herrera said it was considered good practice to go from top-down, with managers evaluated on how they handle diversity and inclusion, tied to pay. Although it would not be a basis for salary, but having an individual during the evaluation process tie in diversity and inclusion. Mrs. McBean-Clairborne said it is being discussed with administration that two areas, diversity and inclusion, and communication should be evaluated. Ms. Martel-Moore said this was an issue discussed in detail with the prior County Administrator, that it should be part of a performance dialogue.

Ms. Martel-Moore requested to be provided a written synopsis of the material. Mrs. McBean-Clairborne would also like to have this information to provide to the Legislature. It was requested that the comments provided by participants be provided for review.

Minutes
Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Committee
May 27, 2009

It was suggested a survey be completed of participants to determine what they felt would be useful to them.

Ms. Branca requested to be informed what the Committee would like regarding the recommendations provided.

Civil Service Initiative

At this time no further information was available.

Budget Strategy

Mrs. McBean-Clairborne spoke of the need to determine how to utilize the funding for the Workforce Diversity and Inclusion initiatives, stating the 2010 budget will be difficult with cuts in all areas. Ms. Martel-Moore said the project assistant position would utilize some of the funds this year. It was noted there is a need to have talking points that indicate the benefit of the work being done regarding diversity and inclusion.

Next Meeting

The next meeting would be held on June 24th.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 5:08 p.m.