

MINUTES

WORKFORCE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION COMMITTEE

FEBRUARY 22, 2006 3:30 P.M. BEVERLY LIVESAY CONFERENCE ROOM

Present: Leslyn McBean-Clairborne, Chantalise DeMarco, Kristina Belanger, Pat Pryor, Tim Joseph, Martha Robertson, Steve Whicher, Dave Richardson, Kathy Luz Herrera, Larry Roberts, Kit Kephart

Called to Order

The meeting opened at 3:30 p.m. Mrs. McBean-Clairborne introduced Pat Pryor and said she was invited to the meeting to discuss a proposal regarding the County's Candidate Demographic Questionnaire in response to a request to include LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender) status on the form.

Announcements

The following announcements were made by various committee members:

- Friday, February 24, 2006, is the Annual Black History Month's talent show at GIAC (Greater Ithaca Activities Center).
- March 9th, 11:30-2:00, at Emerson Suites Ithaca College is the Sister Friends luncheon.
- Tuesday, February 28th, Family and Children's Service will having a workshop called Mental Health Services for the Underrepresented addressing culture-specific risks, barriers and solutions for Tompkins's ethnic, racial and spiritual sub-groups. This event will be held at Southside Community Center.
- A Cornell University student is assisting with setting up a focus discussion group on how Ithaca City School District communicates with caregivers of color. The meeting is scheduled for March 1st from 6:00-8:00 at GIAC.
- The recent incident in the community involving two individuals was acknowledged. The incident occurred at Cornell University where a black gentleman was stabbed by a white gentleman followed with other alleged conversations. Mrs. McBean-Clairborne said it is unfortunate that this work needs to continue and these battles need to be fought. She said there are many other things that happen and people do not hear about. One example of this is in Italy a young black man won a gold medal and the only news being reported about this is the individual not being a team player because he was not participating in the relays. This was the first African American to win an individual gold medal at the winter Olympics. That is an accomplishment and achievement and should go down as history.

Discussion – Candidate Demographic Information

Ms. Pryor provided the Committee with some background information and said she is a past member of the County's Community Affirmative Action Committee and one of the discussions held at that time was the reporting form and how the County collected information on racial and ethnic groups. She said she raised a question at that time about other protected class groups that are not required to report and stated the question was often not addressed.

Ms. Pryor said she heard last week from Mrs. McBean-Clairborne that this Committee is discussing this subject and that she would like some assistance. Ms. Pryor prepared and distributed a copy of a draft proposal to the Committee. She has not had an opportunity to share or discuss this proposal with the LGBT Task Force or LGBT democratic club; however, she will present at the next meetings. She reiterated that this proposal is not representative of any group, but she will be bringing it forward for discussion.

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The one question that is always raised when the subject of gathering data on sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity is discussed is whether people will feel comfortable to disclose and at what risk especially when applying for a position.

Following many conversations with people from the LGBT community, it was suggested that the onus be put on the county to demonstrate adequate outreach to the LGBT community and other protected classes. A form could be used in the interview process to provide details of the methods used for the outreach efforts in the various communities.

However, if the County decides to change the Candidate Demographic Information form, additional language about the purpose of the form such as “...evaluating Tompkins County’s effectiveness in achieving its diversity goals in...” could be added to the shaded paragraph. In addition, the following additions were suggested:

1. through 3. same
4. **Either** Sex: _____ **or** Sex: _____ male _____ female _____ intersex
Add Gender Identity: _____
5. through 6. same
7. Sexual Orientation: _____ (such as: gay, lesbian, bisexual, straight, heterosexual, asexual, etc.)
8. Renumber previous #7.

Ms. Kephart feels that if the Committee recommends changing the form there should be a protection clause that would make individuals feel safe with answering the questions. Ms. Pryor said she had the same thought and suggested the form could include language from the County’s legislation.

Ms. Robertson asked if the social security number was necessary and if not she recommends deleting it. Following further discussion, Mrs. McBean-Clairborne recommended the social security question be revisited another meeting.

Mr. Roberts said he likes both ideas in the proposal, however, he is not so sure about the word “intersex”. He also spoke about the section concerning disability and said the language is problematic to him. He suggested a subgroup be established to review the form in its entirety.

Mr. Joseph cautioned putting legal language on the form for gender identity and sexual orientation that implies the County will protect them as he is uncertain the County could guarantee that protection. Mr. Joseph also reminded the Committee of the last discussion on this subject and the request to ask the LGBT Task Force to discuss this and make a recommendation; he stated this has not happened yet.

Ms. Belanger said she agreed with Mr. Roberts suggestion to establish a subgroup. However, she raised a concern and cautioned the Committee with listing sexual orientation on the form as she feels there are a number of legal intricacies that need to be reviewed before it is included.

Mr. Richardson said there needs to be a baseline with collecting data. If the County does not start doing this, then there is no reason to continue discussions. Also since the County passed the Fair Practice Law he feels it should be able to protect them.

Ms. Herrera commented on the discussions and feels they have matured and is reflective of all other discriminations talked about. She spoke in support of the proposal and believes the suggestions are concise and is closer to what is being recommended. In her opinion, even if this information is only on an employment form it is telling her that an effort is being made and they are trying to do better.

Ms. Pryor commented that there are more than one LGBT groups, but said she would ask that the LGBT Task Force review the proposal and make a recommendation.

Mrs. McBean-Clairborne also stated she likes the proposal and said this discussion will continue until a decision is made. She said she would like feedback on this proposal and would be willing to attend any meeting to share the discussions that have been held by this Committee.

Further discussion followed on the form and Mrs. McBean-Clairborne said it will be reviewed at a later date. Ms. DeMarco suggested a box to decline be included on the form for someone to check if they do not wish to disclose information.

Mr. Whicher reported that the County has changed its recruiting efforts and said in one area that this has occurred is with the position of Deputy County Administrator. There are now 71 applications on file and that five or six individuals have self-identified.

Mrs. McBean-Clairborne asked the Committee to recommend a direction for Ms. Pryor. Mr. Joseph feels that the questions as suggested in the proposal should be included on the form as he feels an individual seeing them self identified in one of the categories is welcoming. In response to Mrs. McBean-Clairborne, Mr. Joseph said he would like Ms. Pryor to go back to the LGBT Task Force and ask their opinion and get a response from them. The Committee agreed with this direction as well. Ms. Pryor agreed to contact Mrs. McBean-Clairborne following the Task Force meeting.

Mrs. McBean-Clairborne asked if any members were interested in serving on a subgroup to review the County's Candidate Demographic Questionnaire form. Mr. Roberts agreed to chair the subgroup and the other members that agreed to serve included: Kristina Belanger, Chantalse DeMarco. It was felt that a staff person from the Personnel Department should also be included.

Other Announcements

Ms. Herrera said she received an email recently announcing the Rochester Workforce Diversity Network 2006 Conference – The Case for Diversity – It's Everybody's Business being held May 22-24, 2006.

Report from the Diversity Policy Subcommittee

Committee members reviewed the comments received by some County employees from one department concerning the draft Diversity Policy and said they appreciated the comments made. Discussion followed concerning next steps and it was felt that more outreach and discussion concerning format should take place. Mr. Whicher agreed to send the policy back out to department heads asking for feedback and Ms. Belanger agreed to reconvene the subcommittee.

Other Business

General Conditions – Cornell University

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Mr. Richardson provided Mrs. McBean-Clairborne with copies of Cornell University's contract language as requested at the last meeting. Mrs. McBean-Clairborne asked Mrs. Covert to distribute copies of the contract to appropriate County staff and others as requested for review.

Ms. DeMarco announced a television show that will begin airing March 8th and is a documentary called Black White.

Adjournment

Mrs. McBean-Clairborne noted that Ms. Martel-Moore has agreed to chair the meetings in the absence of Mrs. McBean-Clairborne. The meeting adjourned at 5:10 p.m.