

MINUTES
WORKFORCE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION COMMITTEE
DECEMBER 17, 2008 3:30 P.M.
BEVERLY LIVESAY CONFERENCE ROOM

Approved 2/25/09

Present: L. McBean-Clairborne, Chair; K. Belanger; C. DeMarco; D. Richardson; S. Martel Moore; R. DeLuca; L. Holmes; M. Lynch; M. DeSouza; A. Fitzpatrick; B. Doling
Not Present: C. Hill; K. Kephart; L. Roberts; P. Carey; K. Herrera
Staff: K. Fuller, Deputy Clerk of the Legislature, J. Mareane, County Administrator; M. Robertson, Legislator

Call to Order

The meeting opened at 3:35 p.m.

Announcements

Introductions were made to Joe Mareane, County Administrator, who stated he plans to do as much as possible to advance the goals put forward by the Committee.

Ms. Robertson spoke of US Air magazine is planning to feature an article on Ithaca Tompkins Airport and is seeking input. The magazine would be made available on all US Air flights. Mrs. McBean-Clairborne has spoken to the US Air representative and indicated the article should represent as a diverse and inclusive community, and will be sharing ideas of what it should look like. She has previously had a similar conversation with the Continental Airline marketing representative. Mrs. McBean-Clairborne indicated to the US Air representative the work of the Committee and recommended using members for additional suggestions.

Ms. Belanger reported the Diversity Consortium is now incorporated as 501(c)(3) and is now working on the tax-exempt portion of the incorporation. The consortium is now able to seek grants as well. The roundtable discussions will be held at the Clarion hotel on May 7, 2009, and at this time it appears many topics, including immigrant issues and religious accommodations would be included.

Chair's Report

Mrs. McBean-Clairborne, Chair, reported the Downtown Ithaca Alliance has developed a work plan included a segment desiring to see two to three mini-conferences held in the downtown areas to assist with providing reasonable pricing for downtown hotels and also reach a more diverse population. She suggested people utilize the downtown area for small conferences.

She spoke of the "Fa La La" button campaign, a Downtown Ithaca Alliance initiative supporting the Greater Ithaca Activities Center **50 Serve Program** that provides a hot meal to youths. The program started with serving meals three nights per week and is now up to five nights. The Center would like to expand the program to include youth not necessarily within the program. Mrs. McBean-Clairborne shared with the Committee that the program was a result of a young girl expressing her extreme hunger, followed by further inquiries that showed how many of the youth did not necessarily have a hot meal in the evening. The Downtown Ithaca Alliance felt the button campaign would assist in funding the program.

Mrs. McBean-Clairborne spoke of the following events to take place for Martin Luther King (MLK) Day and the upcoming Presidential Inauguration:

- The Northside/Southside Center would have a lunch on January 15th
- Greater Ithaca Activities Center (GIAC) would have the MLK Community Breakfast Saturday January 17th from 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.; the Human Rights Commission MLK awards for art and poetry would occur at this event.

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- Monday, January 19th the Community Dispute Resolution Center would be awarding the Peacemaker Award and are seeking nominations of individuals who have brought about conciliation and resolution.
- January 19th would be the unveiling of the dual-designation naming of Martin Luther King/West State Street. This will take place at the corner of West State and Albany Streets at 9:30 a.m.
- Ken Glover of Cornell University Ujamma residence has reserved a bus and is seeking donations to allow twenty-five Junior and Senior high school students, accompanied by twenty-five adults, to attend the inauguration ceremonies January 20th in Washington, D.C. In addition to attending the ceremony, the students would visit Howard University. Donations may be made to Greater Ithaca Activities Center. Students would have a meal at GIAC and then leave for Washington; they would sleep on the bus.

The Committee spoke of the possibility of local events that would include big-screen access to view the inaugural events.

2009 Spending Plan

The Committee was informed that the Legislature approved \$40,000 multi-year spending for Workforce Diversity and Inclusion initiatives and a determination was needed with regard to how to use the funds. Previously, initiatives included the marketing campaign, development of the logo and diversity statement, distribution of framed statements, and items relating to the marketing aspect. The video that was hoped to complete has not yet been completed, and there is not dedicated staff for diversity and inclusion. Last year the Committee spoke of the need to perhaps have a Project Assistant assigned for the project, attempt to assist in the civil service process by using sample tests, and obtain materials regarding diversity and inclusion. Mrs. McBean-Clairborne spoke of the need for the Committee to brainstorm how to best use the funding made available for the next several years.

With regard to the possibility of a Project Assistant, the Committee heard that if it is a dedicated project an individual could work for up to eighteen months; if it were a temporary assignment to fill a vacant position, after 120 days the County would be required to provide benefits. It was estimated that if for the work that would need to be done it would cost an estimated \$22,000 to \$25,000 for a part-time project assistant for an eighteen-month period.

The Strength in Diversity Award option was also presented as an option this next year.

Ms. Belanger and Ms. Martel-Moore spoke of their use of interns that are Traditions and Community Action Fellows, whose wages are covered by scholarship. One in particular has been dedicated to a project that includes diversity and inclusion. It was suggested that this individual could assist by providing an additional five hours per week to help with the Committee's initiatives. The also expressed a willingness to review applicants for next year who could assist with the Committee's work.

At this time the Committee discussed various strategies and aspects of civil service preparation, review, and understanding to enable individuals to pass the exams. Mrs. McBean-Clairborne shared information of how an individual with knowledge and training in their work area was unable to pass the test required for the position. Another aspect discussed was marketing directed toward individuals seeking entry-level positions within the County.

Appointment

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It was MOVED by Ms. Fitzpatrick, seconded by Mr. DeLuca, and unanimously approved by voice vote by members, to recommend the reappointment of Kit Kephart to the Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Committee.

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It was MOVED by Ms. Belanger, seconded by Ms. Holmes, and unanimously adopted by voice vote by members, to approve the minutes of June 25, July 23, and October 22, 2008, as amended. MINUTES APPROVED.

2009 Spending Plan – Continued

Ms. Robertson spoke of civil service exam review books and suggested information be obtained regarding the cost for the most commonly used tests. Ms. Fitzpatrick spoke of resource guides needing to be available and accessible to all individuals; in addition, the State has indicated it would not be appropriate for the individuals giving the exams to provide the preparation training. Although there have been test preparation seminars provided with little turnout. Previously the review guides were approximately \$4.95 each.

Mr. Mareane spoke of the importance of marketing as it related to bringing about an awareness of the potential employment within government and how they could be assisted in being successful, particularly toward the youth. Mrs. McBean-Clairborne liked the suggestion of seeking individuals who have participated in the creation of the civil service exams. Mr. Mareane expressed a belief that to accomplish the goals suggested may not require a large budget. He believes that utilizing the Project Assistant to provide outreach to high school guidance offices, the colleges, etc. would not have as high a cost as initially anticipated. He also spoke of analyzing the cost benefit of the test preparation work.

Mrs. McBean-Clairborne spoke of the high cost for diversity and inclusion materials and spoke of the possibility of collaborating with other municipalities/counties in an effort to develop awareness. She will take ideas that individuals have shared and will work with Ms. Fitzpatrick and Ms. Martel to determine costs. This information will then be forwarded to committee members for consideration of the actual spending plan at the next meeting.

Civil Service Test Discussion

The Committee discussed various aspects of civil service testing, including the feasibility of a pass/fail test system, general level testing of positions versus specific job title, and cross-filing for positions. Ms. Fitzpatrick suggested that someone outside of the Personnel Department provide an overview of civil service testing to individuals prior to their taking tests. She said it is difficult and frustrating to individuals who do not have a clear understanding of how the process occurs. Mrs. McBean-Clairborne spoke of fifteen to eighteen years ago there had been discussions regarding pass/fail but nothing had changed. She reported on Department of Social Services Commissioner Patricia Carey's efforts to work with the state to develop a pilot program with regard to pass/fail to determine its effectiveness.

Mr. Mareane suggested a collaborative effort with Cornell University Labor Relations staff and the County to work with the State Civil Service Commission to fundamentally amend the regulations that exist.

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Ms. Robertson likes the idea of a pass/fail civil service exam but expressed the concern that the work force diversity would also require outreach efforts to encourage individuals to seek employment with the County.

Ms. Fitzpatrick informed the Committee on the need to include the City of Ithaca, Cornell University, and Ithaca College in a partnership regarding civil service. She would like to have a two-year pilot program regarding pass/fail and/or experiential exam to determine effectiveness. She thought a partnership within the County coupled with New York State Association of Counties (NYSAC) would be worthwhile. Mr. Mareane spoke of NYSAC's efforts to expand approved candidates to more than three candidates from an exam list.

Mrs. McBean-Clairborne will take the suggestions made and review costs as well as develop a small group to consider the proposals. She would like to see the purchase of up-to-date materials be made available for use. It was noted there is an ICMA grant that could assist in providing materials that could be maintained at the library for general use; the Committee requested it be pursued. By doing so, the Committee could concentrate on finding a staff person to work on the other aspects of diversity and inclusion training.

It was noted that CSEA does provide sample civil service tests to members of the union, with more selections and more thorough material than available at the library. CSEA is working on a partnership with the State to allow sharing with local governments, including civil service preparation as well. It was believed that unions would be in favor of the work to assist in a positive experience regarding civil service testing.

Ms. Robertson spoke of the numerous advisory boards within the County that could assist with recruitment and workforce diversity and inclusion training.

Mrs. McBean-Clairborne shared the following information provided by Ms. Hill, who was unable to attend the meeting:

"I can not attend the meeting, but I approve the minutes and have no personal changes and as far as the budget I am good with whatever everyone else agrees with. My only goal for the up-coming year is for us to get out like we've discussed to the various departments to present and discuss the WDIC mission and purpose and canvas the employees for ideas or whys they see will help improve and change the culture of the workforce now as it stands."

Members were asked to review the goals and be prepared for a discussion at the January meeting.

It was decided that Mrs. McBean-Clairborne, Mr. Mareane, Ms. DeSouza, and Ms. Carey would meet with representatives of the colleges to discuss potential collaboration efforts.

Next Meeting

It was decided the next meeting would occur on January 28, 2009, at 3:30 p.m.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:52 p.m.