

DIVERSITY TASK FORCE MEETING

Meeting Date: THURSDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2021

Meeting Place: THE GROTON CENTER. 163 WEST MAIN STREET. WEST GROTON, MA

Members in attendance: Raquel Majeski, James Moore, Gordon Candow, Amy Degen, Fran Stanley

Handouts: Agenda, Email from Jeff Wallens, Chief Diversity Office for Pittsfield, MA

Meeting called to order by Raquel: 7:02

Meeting ended: 8:16

Vote: Motion to approve the minutes for the meeting that was held on September 30th was made by James and seconded by Fran. Motion passed with Gordon Candow abstaining.

Majeski posed the question of defining our committee and questioned how best to partner with other groups. Majeski also wondered if we wanted to suggest to the SB that the town should have a Chief Diversity Officer to better connect the intuitions in town that are doing DEI work. Majeski provided an example of a recent posting about a job in Pittsfield, MA. Majeski used a recent example of a member of the RSJG asking about moving the training initiative forward for our town employees. The DTF suggested training during our first report out and the SB and Mark has followed up and moved forward with looking into next steps.

Gordon shared about the complexity of mandating training for town employees and gave an example about the police department's mandates on training. The police department is following through on their training but there is an impact on what this training means to the employees, and it is not always easy to follow through immediately with the mandates for several reasons.

Fran felt our committee is well defined and feels it is more impactful if the change comes from the folks who have power and that is where the authority should be. Fran is writing a grant and having both the DTF and RSJG is helpful in the narrative that she is describing in the grant. She feels having both in town is helpful

James mentioned that the groups do not work in tandem and wondered about how the committees are ranked. He also wondered if the DTF and RSJG were connected and the perception of that vs keeping us separated

Amy – Highlighted that the coordination between groups is important. Amy also noted that the DTF has been limited by the town and some of the suggestions by the school's committee regarding swastikas have not been transparent to the folks in town. The hope would be for the SB to embrace the suggestions.

Raquel ended the suggestion highlighting the bird and frog thinking. The suggestion was that the DTF was the bird. It would serve as the strategic thinking to best assist the SB with next steps. The RSJG serves as the frog and more on the ground in developing their own programming and action steps. It was agreed upon that the groups do not have to be connected nor does the RSJG serve the same purpose as the DTF.

Action Steps: Raquel will follow up with Mark to discuss the need for someone to coordinate the DEI efforts that are taking place in town. There was not a need to bring forward the Chief Diversity Officer position. Because there was not a need to coordinate with the RSJG, Raquel posed a wondering about having a seat for a member of the RSJG. NO action is needed at this time about restructuring the group.

Review Jeff Wallens email

Gordon – What is the point of the email? Is he wrong in what he is stating? Strategically, did we bite off more than we could chew with some of our initiatives: going after the seal and road all at once. Should we have done one thing at a time?

Amy – Is he saying that concentrating on the town seal is not going to move things forward? He is missing the fact that the town seal isn't representative of everyone, and that redskin trial is offensive. Are we obligated to respond to the email?

James – one of the problems is saying that affordable housing is related to people of color. The town should make a concerted effort to attract people of color.

Raquel – there are benefits to having two private schools in town that are actively working to recruit and hire folks of color and from underrepresented groups

Town Image

Fran – Sent a Harvard Business school letter which included information on the process for changes to monuments to Mike. I thought removing the words “Holy Bible” was a compromise.

Gordon – Nobody is worried about the words faith or labor. Could we add faith on the book if people are stuck there?

James – Referenced a quote from the Tao, “The word is not the thing”.

Community Outreach

Raquel – Calendar update.

Option #1: we can put our events on a google calendar and send the information to Mike to post on the general community calendar.

Option #2: we can direct folks to the existing community calendar and Mike has a system to determine what will go on the calendar

Action step: We agreed that option 2 was best. Raquel will reach out to Mike.

Amy – Will reach out to the Civil Discourse group for their partnership with the forums. We discussed that they would serve as facilitators and these forums would be open to all.

Raquel – mentioned using trained facilitators from her Equity and Inclusion Task Force group from Lawrence Academy.

Housing Update

Fran: Municipal Engagement application and continuing work on the grant

Next Meeting: November 4th @ 7

From: Jeff Wallens <kb1atg@gmail.com>
Date: October 21, 2021 at 1:35:10 PM EDT
To: Select Board <selectboard@grotonma.gov>
Subject: **Diversity Task Force**

This email is intended for the Diversity Task Force

According to Wikipedia, systemic racism is “a form of racism that is embedded through laws and regulations within society or an organization.” It was my understanding that the Diversity Task Force would be a set of fresh eyes that would smoke out what has been in plain view, but perhaps not seen. Instead, we have seen a focus on:

- Symbols (Town Seal for example). Fine to bring up, but not exactly new topics.
- Affordable Housing. Again, fine to bring up and important. However, the discussion has been primarily focused on low income, probably rental, housing. Important, but not the whole picture. Also, not new.
- Sundown Town: If true, this would be an example of systemic racism from the past, not the present. However, I have not seen any documentation that these laws were ever enacted at a town meeting.

And yet, examples of systemic racism in Groton are open and obvious.

- **Zoning:** Many of the by-laws in the town are designed to promote the look and feel of Groton’s rural character and preserve open space. Sounds fine, but it means we limit the amount of housing which raises the value of the land. Raising the value of the land makes developing moderate priced housing much more difficult. The inability to produce moderate-priced housing- say small homes on small lots – directly impacts our ability to attract a group of less-affluent buyers that disproportionality includes new immigrants, people of color and the folks we now call “essential workers,” whom we traditionally treat like crap. President Biden has recently cited that the generational wealth enjoyed by some of us older folks mainly stems from the post-World War 2 tract housing. Examples of these by-laws include:
 - Two-acre zoning
 - Subdivision requirements for things like granite curbing and underground utilities
 - Lack of a by-right by-law to allow small houses on small lots.
- **Tax Policy:** If you want to own a house in Groton you have to pay property taxes. However, the big non-profits do not. I was able to search the Assessors Database. I found 11 properties owned by Lawrence Academy with an assessed value of \$36,759,700. A happy homeowner would pay \$17.38 per thousand, or \$638,883.59. But LA does not pay taxes. They are good enough to pay us something in lieu of taxes, but it is paltry in comparison to a tax. Groton School is supposed to be more generous with their PILOT. They should be. They have property assessed at \$210,777,200, nearly 13 times the size of LA. And by the way- LA has an endowment of \$29.6 million and Groton School is at \$380 million. Neither endowment is subject to tax. As non-profits the wealthy patrons can take advantage of tax-deductible contributions, maybe greasing the wheels for their kids? Just to follow the logic here, the middle class of Groton subsidizes these institutions since we provide services to these institutions and are not sufficiently compensated. It makes it more expensive to live here, a condition that disproportionality affects the same folks I mentioned above.

I suspect that there are other examples, these are the ones that jumped out at me. And, yes, my presentation is one-sided. We have also discussed both zoning and tax policy before, but not, I think, as examples of systemic racism. If we really want to increase diversity in Groton, I suggest that changing our zoning to encourage the development of small homes on small lots would be more effective than changing the Town Seal. I would suggest that working with other towns to change the way that large wealthy non-profits are taxed would do more for diversity than saying that Groton is not a Sundown Town. Rather than just doing things that make some feel good, why not make changes that could provide some affordability to a more diverse community?

Jeff Wallens

Chief Diversity Officer

Pittsfield, MA 01201

Posted 10/13/2021 | Full-time, Exempt | \$69,717.93 - \$90,633.31 | Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Job Description

JOB POSTING

EMPLOYMENT TYPE: FULL-TIME

NON-UNION/EXEMPT

JOB TITLE: CHIEF DIVERSITY OFFICER

DEPARTMENT: OFFICE OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

The Chief Diversity Officer is responsible for administering and leading the Diversity and Inclusion goals and objectives of the City of Pittsfield. The employee is responsible to apply these objectives in the areas of recruitment and retention, leadership career development, cultural competency training, and strategic planning. The employee is to review the ongoing processes of the City's goals in diversity and inclusion and develop policies and programs to recruit, retain, and promote a diverse workforce that resembles the City of Pittsfield at large. The employee is required to perform all similar or related duties.

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS

The primary areas of accountability include compliance, advocacy and education. The incumbent serves as advisor and resource person for management and staff in the areas of diversity, inclusion, equity, and may serve as a liaison in investigation of concerns across City & PPS that pertains to discrimination or harassment. Incumbent

will possess exemplary communication skill with a passion to educate and effectuate change.

RESPONSIBILITIES

- Plans, guides and advises on diversity, equity, inclusion and affirmative action matters. Collaborates with City and School management to create, implement and monitor programs designed to ensure fair and equitable treatment of employees, students, and constituents.
- Leads in implementing strategic initiatives, including the creation of a culture for equity, diversity, and inclusion. Partners with City and School management, employees, students, community leaders, and other internal and external constituencies to ensure programing supports Pittsfield's values and strategic goals. Manage ongoing relationships with internal and external partners (e.g., ROPE, BRIDGE, PPD, PFD, Pittsfield Public Schools)
- Conducts or provides direction for training initiatives on cultural competency, gender differences, disability, LGBTQ+ issues, sexual harassment, building a climate of equity and inclusion, and other topics designed to increase awareness and support of equity and inclusion values, and maintaining compliance with applicable laws.
- Acts as the staff liaison to the Affirmative Action Committee (or other similar committees); collaborate with Chairperson on the vision of the committee, etc. The employee is responsible for advising on progress on D&I goals. Supports other diversity councils and multicultural event programming sponsored by the City or PPS.
- Promotes Pittsfield's commitment to a climate of equity, diversity, and inclusion through interactions with City & PPS employees, students, elected officials, and the community.
- Represents Pittsfield to external community, organizations, and agencies. Collaborates with external and internal constituency groups to promote and advance D.E.I.
- Serves as the Affirmative Action Officer; manages and oversees compliance with the City's Affirmative Action programming, including any reporting requirements (refer to affirmative action ordinances).
- Collaborates with the City and School's human resources department on efforts surrounding recruitment and retention; Build relationships with external talent pipelines who specialize in recruiting candidates from underrepresented backgrounds.
- May assist with investigatory matters that include claims of discrimination and harassment.
- Assesses and monitors program effectiveness and keeps management informed of equal opportunity progress and issues through periodic reports. Measure ROI

and communicates outcomes to key stakeholders/champions on a regular basis; create executive summaries and provide recommendations for improving metrics.

- Responsible to oversee compliance with the Equal Opportunity Employment standards and relevant city, state and federal statutes.
- Attends DEI related conferences, trainings, and professional development opportunities.
- Performs other related duties as assigned.

QUALIFICATIONS

- A Bachelor's degree in public administration, social justice, post-secondary education, sociology, social anthropology, human resource management or other related field. Master's degree is strongly preferred.
- 5-7 years of experience advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion in a complex organization, preferably in government,
- Experience performing the duties described in previous section may substitute for the education requirement on a year-for-year basis.
- Experience working in an affirmative action and EEO compliance function, creating and utilizing related reporting.
- Thorough knowledge of City/School department operations preferred.
- Strong ability using computer and internet software, social media, and web site use.
- Comprehensive knowledge and ability to explain departmental positions verbally and in writing to employees, legal departments and other departments in the City and PPS.
- Maintain an understanding of the Pittsfield City Ordinances.
- Ability to work independently and be self-motivated; ability to perform multiple tasks in a detailed, timely, accurate, and organized manner.
- Ability to interact effectively and appropriately with the public and other departments and/or City personnel, elected officials, students, and community at-large.
- Proficient written and oral communications skills; Effective presentation skills; Proficient customer service skills.
- Valid Massachusetts's Driver's License.

WORKING CONDITIONS

(The working conditions demands described here are representative of those that must be met by an employee to successfully perform the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the position's essential functions.)

Work pressure, disturbances of work flow, and/or irregularities in work schedule are frequent and require significant adaptation. The work environment rapidly evolves, requiring continual upgrading of skills. Work is partially sedentary and confined to an office setting with periodic outside activity for training and intervention. Extended work hours are common, including attendance at after-hours/evening meetings. Early morning, evening and/or weekend work occasionally required.

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

(The physical demands described here are representative of those that must be met by an employee to successfully perform the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the position's essential functions.)

Physical exertion includes standing during training and/or other presentations, carrying materials and hand-outs, flip charts and other audio-visual equipment. Frequent travel within the community is required. May be required to push/pull/lift objects weighing up to 20 pounds.

HOURS: Monday – Friday, 35 Hours per week

SALARY: \$69,717.93 - \$90,633.31

APPLICATION DEADLINE: Friday, November 12, 2021 @ 4:00PM

Company Description

The City of Pittsfield is the cultural, commercial, legal, and medical center of the Berkshires – a region renowned for its wonderful people, outstanding standard of living, beautiful landscapes, and the finest in cultural and recreational attractions.

We are an affirmative action/equal opportunity employer committed to promoting a multicultural work force, excellence in public service, and on-going mutual respect in our working relationships. Minorities are encouraged to apply.

We strongly encourage people of color, people with disabilities, LGBTQ+ community, and people from other underrepresented groups to apply for our open positions - recognizing and respecting that diverse perspectives and experiences are valuable to our team and essential to our public service.

Benefits

- Health Insurance
- Dental Insurance
- Life Insurance
- Retirement Savings Plan
- Up to 13 paid Holidays
- Personal Days

- Vacation Time
- Earned Sick Leave
- Employee Assistance Program
- Tuition Reimbursement