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Gary Christenson, Mayor

Racial Equity Commission Minutes of January 12, 2023

Meeting called to order at 6:10

1. Committee Members Present:

Present: Abraham Ndiwane, James Song, Brian Vences, Bwann Gwann, Cassandra Davis, Ralph Long

Guests present: City Council President Barbara Murphy, City Councillor Carey McDonald, Language Access Coordinator Elena Martinez and Maria Luise, Mayor's Office.

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes from August 25, 2022:

A quorum of members from the August 25th meeting were not present to vote on approval of the minutes. Also, it is uncertain which copy of the minutes are the actual ones so members will review for next meeting.

3. Introductions:

Each person introduced themselves and spoke briefly about why they wanted to serve on this Commission.

4. New Business:

Discussion on the Commission's work to date and review of the Resolution:

Councillor Murphy and Councillor McDonald asked members to comment on where the Commission is to date, how they would like to see the work move forward and how the Council can help support the work.

Some members expressed concern about the City Council Resolution that formed the Commission and what it involved. There were specific concerns about the time frame. Councillor McDonald stated that the contents of the Resolution were probably in an effort to form the Commission and provide a road map for the group, but that there was some flexibility. It really seemed like the time clock had not even started.

Several members shared their perspective on the mission statement that is still in draft form and that the group is still tweaking. The hope is to come up with measurable and attainable goals. Abraham mentioned and the group talked at length about the benefits of a community needs assessment. The discussion focused on the importance of knowing what the community needs, how to address those needs and then how to follow-up.

There was agreement that this was a large undertaking and that the Commission could set the groundwork, but that the actual work would be an on-going effort.

Next steps and strategy moving forward:

The discussion turned to the demographics of the community and what kind of data is already available. Everyone agreed that it would be important to collect data and from that, the Commission can formulate goals and a specific charge.

Ways to conduct the assessment were discussed. One was through a survey where questions focus on what the community wants to see, what people are experiencing and what challenges they are facing. The group talked about interviewing community members and utilizing community groups for outreach. Cassandra suggested that the City's different cultural festivals would be a good venue to gather information and engage residents. The importance to include and reach out to minority owned businesses was also discussed. Bwann also mentioned including Veterans.

Elena spoke about her role and how language access intersects and overlaps with the work of the Commission. She indicated that much of the data that was talked about is available to her through the Language Access Network, which is a nationwide collaborative of representatives from the DOJ, from the area of Immigration, social workers, and other language access coordinators. The information she has collected helps guide her work and would be helpful for the REC's mission as well.

The group talked about how much of the data may already exist and not duplicating efforts. Councillor McDonald let the group know that the Affordable Housing Trust Fund did a whole needs assessment that looked at some racial equity concerns. Councillor Murphy mentioned that community groups like Malden Cares are also collecting data. The City Council and Mayor's Office could be helpful with gathering data from City departments. The schools may also have information compiled from student surveys. James believed that there might be some information available.

It was also discussed whether a paid consultant or firm would be helpful, but sometimes that is a slower process. Perhaps hiring a clerk to help organize the information. Bwann suggested using a future meeting as a brainstorming session.

The group went on to discuss the second part to collecting and analyzing data. The next step would be to develop a charge, make recommendations, and suggest interventions. The goal is to collect the information and set goals from there. It would be helpful to see where gaps are before formulating a plan.

Next Steps:

1. Find out what there is available for data.
2. Elena will reach out to Cambridge Health Alliance about their needs assessment.
3. Start a shared drive to compile the information.

Next meeting: February 23, 2023