

DEI Committee Meeting Minutes – March 20, 2023

Meeting Called to Order at 5:33 PM

Present: Liam, Sydney, Irene, Anne, Danica, Andrew, Bistra, Flo (via zoom)

Guest: Mouhamadou Diagne, Assistant Vice President of D.E.I. at St. Joseph's College of Maine

Updates shared by Danica:

- The Policy Committee approved the calendar. It did not need to go to council. -> we need to decide if this is something that we would like to post on the webpage.
- The City Council approved the hiring of the D.E.I. coordinator for the city and they will eventually staff this committee rather than Danica.

Presentation by Mouhamadou Diagne- Assistant Vice President of D.E.I. at St. Joseph's College of Maine:

- Have you defined for the city of Biddeford what D.E.I. is?
 - Liam read our mission statement
- Mr. Diagne asked for clarification on what diversity really means in Biddeford
 - Differences that impact access, ability, facing barriers, etc.
 - Spoke about the importance of accessible and affordable housing
 - Way to build wealth, access to school districts and good neighborhoods
- Equality vs. Equity: some people have more needs than others and the city is responsible for supporting those people
 - Equity is not comfort for the wealthy
 - Equity work isn't just reading books or learning, it takes action too
 - Equity work should not be reliant on a budget-it should be prioritized because otherwise it tells underrepresented people supporting is a luxury
- Understanding why other groups don't have access and implementing change
- Sometimes just creating the position makes change
- Bistra asked how we attract more diverse participation in our committee
 - Mr. Diagne asked how our membership came to be and Danica shared that it was an application and appointing process
 - Maine is 97% white and if you spread information through mainstream channels will result in applicants that reflect that
 - Extra efforts are necessary to access those who are marginalized -> grass roots approach: facebook groups, their physical community
 - More effort to retain and empower participation
 - Those who are already empowered are those who respond to a call for action such as this

- Bias response protocol- things that don't rise to the level of crime or harassment
 - Takes a restorative justice approach- no one is disposable and everyone makes mistakes, opportunities for learning and growth, no one gets put down and no one gets canceled.
- Liam asked about whether the committee members could be involved in the hiring process of a D.E.I. coordinator
- Best practice for hiring diverse candidates
 - Implicit bias training
 - Hide names of candidates and only look at credentials or just being aware of the possibility of bias because of people's names
 - Bistra made a point about the inequitable practice of crossing out those
 - Not given proper resources to maintain their role and it was not well thought out- too much resistance and not enough support contribute to high burn out rates
 - names and therefore covering their stories and other assets
 - Using a set of objective criteria related to education and experience etc.
 - More than 1 person vetting candidates
 - Ensuring no one asks "illegal" questions asking
 - Evaluation process for refugees and immigrants credentials from home countries etc.
- Kirwan Institute Implicit Bias training modules-general but very applicable
 - <https://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/implicit-bias-training>
- External Audit through inclusion Maine-how successful was it?
 - Sometimes audits are used to derail the actual process of making change
 - Provides a snapshot of what is going on right now in context
 - The population of Biddeford is staying steady and the population of wealthy out of state residents are moving in
- Sun down towns
 - It is not an accident that Maine is so white-specific barriers to prevent movement of black people up to Maine after slavery
- Racism: most people think a white person treating a person of color badly but it is actually a system of advantage based on race. You do not have to do anything as a white person to participate in the racist system. Being good or bad is irrelevant, it is about understanding marginalization and oppression
 - The city of So.Po. has proclaimed racism as a public health crisis -> has Biddeford?
 - What is different about So.Po. & Portland vs. Biddeford that makes it more open?
- Mr. Diagne shared a 3 circle approach to DEI work-those who are on board and doing the work, those who are on board but need more to really get involved, and those who are not on board and might be opposed to that.
- **Equity is never done and there is always going to be a gap-all we can do is work to reduce it.**

- Importance of self-care while doing this work- you can't pour from an empty cup
- The measure of a healthy organization is who is getting burnt out- those who are working for DEI or are opposed to it
- Andrew brought up information gathering about what sort of issues people are experiencing so that we can bring it to light
 - Community leaders- small/grassroots organizations

Next Meeting: Monday April 3rd at 5:30pm

Motion by Sydney , seconded by Irene , to adjourn meeting at 7:03PM. Motion passed unanimously.