

MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TASK FORCE, IN REGULAR MEETING OF MONDAY, JUNE 6, 2022 AT 5:30 PM, SOUTHEAST REGIONAL LIBRARY, SHAKESPEARE ROOM, 775 N. GREEFIELD ROAD, GILBERT, ARIZONA

MEMBERS PRESENT: Iya Affo, Chris Curley, Katie Hackett, Amy Holstein, Alexandra Rodriguez, Javier Rodriguez, Sean Warren, and Heather Watts

MEMBERS ABSENT: Christine Sabel; Suzanne Lunt, Alternate; Bus Obayomi, Alternate

STAFF PRESENT: Council Liaison Kathy Tilque, Staff Liaison/Community Resources Manager Melanie Dykstra, Volunteer and Community Resources Program Supervisor Jennifer Lauria, Assistant Town Manager Leah Rhineheimer, Assistant Town Manager Dawn Prince, Assistant to the Town Manager Allyna Bay, and Assistant Fire Chief Rob Duggan, Fire Battalion Chief Mark Justus

GUESTS PRESENT: Dawn (DM) Gilbert, CEO and Co-Founder of The Diversity Advisors

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Hackett called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Vice Chair Warren led the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Staff Liaison Dykstra called roll and declared a quorum present.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Chair Hackett welcomed everyone and asked those present who were not members of the Task Force to introduce themselves. Those in the audience introduced themselves.

TASK FORCE MEMBER WARM UP – ENERGY CHECK-IN AND WEEKLY HIGHLIGHT

Member Curley led a warmup exercise and explained the process and purpose. Each member shared their energy level, if they were comfortable or uncomfortable in that energy level, and a highlight from the past month.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITIZENS

Vice Chair Warren led the Communications from Citizens portion of the agenda.

There were no comments.

AGENDA ITEMS

1. Consider approval of the minutes of the May 2, 2022 meeting

A MOTION was made by Vice Chair Warren, seconded by Member Affo, to approve the minutes of the May 2, 2022 meeting. Motion carried 8-0.

2. Community Inclusivity Needs Assessment Presentation, Workshop, and Dialogue

Assistant Town Manager Leah Rhineheimer began with a recap of the past Community Engagement Task Force (CETF) meetings. She highlighted the primary purpose of the past meetings, including: Meeting 1, getting to know about the CETF members' individual strengths, natural talents of peers, and how those could be combined to best impact the group; Meeting 2, the many communication and leadership styles to best communicate with one another; Meeting 3, the importance of civility and strategies to navigate tough conversations and engage with the community; and Meeting 4, which focused on understanding "Hidden Gilbert" and the needs of the community via the 2019 Community Needs Assessment. She discussed where the group would be headed in the next meeting with the focus on inclusivity and the future meeting to focus on understanding homelessness. She noted, in the future, the Task Force may consider what would making a difference look like and where to start, as well as leveraging individual strengths and interests for maximum impact, but said it was up to the Task Force to formulate what was coming.

She stated the current meeting would focus on the catalyst for the 2021 Inclusivity Needs Assessment, including a high-level overview of the assessment, identifying strengths, gaps, and recommendations, as well as a brief touchpoint of opportunities. She said in the 2019 Needs Assessment, Recommendation No. 11

highlighted how the Town could be more supportive of building a sense of community and welcoming for residents of diverse backgrounds, and to specifically develop programs and enhance experiences of culturally diverse individuals, immigrant, and refugees. She said in 2021 the Town requested to have a deeper dive into Recommendation No. 11, which after doing research and framework, resulted in the start of the CETF. She defined inclusivity as, “The capacity to include people of various backgrounds to make a whole stronger than its individual parts.” She said the task was approached using the term *unitive thinking* and defined it as, “...identifying unifying commonalities and bridging divides...” as a foundation for the assessment.

Assistant Town Manager Rhineheimer said before going into the data and findings, she would like the CETF members to name some emotions that they felt after reading the assessment.

Vice Chair Warren stated he had some challenges and things to work through, and there was discussion regarding the candid feedback that was received.

Member Affo stated she went from feeling frustrated to being able to identify with what was being said, then came back around to some level of hope. She said she believed ignorance was the cause of some of what she and her family experienced, not hate, just ignorance and lack of experience.

Member J. Rodriguez stated he focused on education on awareness, which he believed was the center focus.

Assistant Town Manager Rhineheimer discussed the data and findings, stating 90% of respondents spoke of Gilbert’s strengths which included neighbors helping neighbors, Town leaders helping community members, Public Safety staff being responsive, an experienced Police force, and a vibrant Chamber of Commerce. A slide was shown that listed many of Gilbert’s overall strengths which also included being family oriented, a love of Gilbert, and being safe and quiet.

Assistant Town Manager Rhineheimer asked the group to identify any strengths that were not reported or why they moved to Gilbert and what drew them there.

Member Holstein stated she had lived in Gilbert twice in her life and she noticed a sense of community in Gilbert and that people generally seemed happier.

Member A. Rodriguez stated she moved back to Gilbert because it was homey and clean.

Assistant Town Manager Rhineheimer stated that 94.26% of respondents agreed that inclusivity needs should be addressed for the community to maintain its sense of welcome and friendliness. She discussed inclusivity needs and provided examples, then discussed the need to build trustworthy relationships. She discussed the need for a welcoming community for all, adding the majority expressed the approval of an approachable, less conflictual strategy to pursue integration and mitigate social challenges that exist in the community. She discussed diversity of representation and shared a quote for a respondent regarding Town visuals and social media. She discussed the need for transportation, affordable housing and the need for actionable, transparent, and accountable inclusivity and disability goals that were measurable in a significant way and aimed to achieve something real. She discussed the priority to focus on the youth and spoke of a community member who addressed the Task Force regarding social issues in schools, noting teen suicide, social exclusion, and bullying.

Assistant Town Manager Rhineheimer highlighted Gilbert's Disability Strengths and Needs, noting that disabilities may not always be visible and noted the three main categories of physical, cognitive, sensory. She discussed the importance of supportive resources for families and caretakers, community gatherings for everyone to convene, and to support businesses that hire those with disabilities. She noted disability needs such as public awareness and exposure and the suggestions for a disability fair, access, public healthcare, and being a disability-friendly community.

Assistant Town Manager Rhineheimer stated Page 56 of the report would start addressing potential action items, adding the report included six primary entities who could provide solutions, two additional entities as supportive, and asked the Task Force what was missing in terms of key stakeholders, partners, and advocacy groups that could help with solutions.

Member Affo stated her job was to work with Arizona Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Consortium and to manage a grant that had to do with teaching in schools and in the community about trauma and being trauma-informed. She said there was free training for all of the different sectors that would be valuable on how to interact with others and create awareness.

Councilmember Tilque commented on expanding on the value of first responders and the Fire Department.

Member J. Rodriguez discussed working with school boards and school districts.

Member A. Rodriguez asked if mental health non-profits should be included and listed some examples. Assistant Town Manager Rhineheimer said they were all-inclusive with the term “non-profit” and Staff Liaison Dykstra discussed the scope of non-profits as well.

Member J. Rodriguez mentioned organizations such as The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Empact, and Community Bridges, asking if they were included. Staff Liaison Dykstra commented that she did not believe they were named specifically in the report.

Councilmember Tilque asked if Member A. Rodriguez worked for a business or a non-profit. There was discussion on expanding it beyond nonprofits to organizations that worked in specific areas.

Member J. Rodriguez discussed autism and aligning those disabilities within the Information Technology (IT) field. Assistant Town Manager Rhineheimer agreed, then discussed the Town’s efforts to become autism-certified and Gilbert’s role in autism awareness and training.

Assistant Town Manager Rhineheimer highlighted the following guidelines for opportunities: Guideline 1, promote community actions aimed at kindness, welcoming, and inclusivity with a unitive approach divorced from politics and differing ideologies; and Guideline 2, create an implementation plan for each action taken showing accountability, clear definitions of success, and transparency. She highlighted the overall opportunities which were grouped into 12 main categories which included shared goals, housing, training, diverse representation, and outreach and discussed the format and stakeholders. She highlighted the Task Force members homework was to review Part 5 of the report, and to add to the list of ideas to identify items that could be brought forward to move the needle.

Chair Hackett introduced Dawn “DM” Gilbert, Principal and Founder of Diversity Advisors, and read her bio.

Dawn Gilbert shared her appreciation of Town staff and to the Task Force members for allowing Diversity Advisors to share information with the CETF and presented on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging. She offered a disclaimer that their workshops were typically not less than 90 minutes. She said Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I) discussions were not easy and could be uncomfortable, but were necessary. She stated Arizona House Bill (HB) 2906 protected Arizonians against divisive and aggressive lessons by prohibiting government employees from undergoing training that presented any form of

blame or judgement on the basis of race, ethnicity, or sex; she added if anyone felt they were heading in a direction that did not support the language in HB2906 to please respectfully let her know.

Dawn Gilbert discussed the Diversity Advisors mission and experience, using a quote from Senator John McCain that discussed shared values and vision. She shared a video called “A World Without Barriers” from Samsung about being hearing impaired. Assistant Town Manager Rhineheimer shared her feelings about the video, noting how different and difficult life would be to be hearing-impaired and what it would mean to be integrated into society. DM Gilbert shared how experiences were not all the same for everyone when they are impaired and not everyone had the same experiences in general, noting it was important to acknowledge how vastly experiences differ.

Vice Chair Warren stated he felt hurt for the person in the video to go back into the world where people would not see him like that.

Dawn Gilbert stated what was not measured did not matter, and she highlighted the goals and objectives which included common DE&I terms and definitions, fostering inclusivity, recognizing blind spots, how to overcome bias, and e-learning. She shared two of the Task Force’s objectives of suggesting programs and activities designed to support unitive thinking and foster cultural awareness and acceptance and promoting the attributes of Gilbert that create a kind and welcoming community for all who visit or live in Gilbert. She shared some examples with bias and showed a video called “Inclusion Starts with I” from Accenture and asked how it made other feels to talk about race and color. She said being inclusive was an individual choice and inclusion started with “I”. She asked the members how the video made them feel.

Chair Hackett stated it was eye opening and she could relate to some of the things shared, but she also saw others’ struggles, then noted we are all human.

Member Watts stated we are all more productive when everyone felt accepted.

Dawn Gilbert stated diversity came in many forms, without thinking of it as black and white, that we are more than our experiences, names, etc., that we are a whole person. She said to think about DE&I was as engaging with people in the community and treat each other with respect and dignity. She discussed everyone being on the same page and playing field, then discussed some of the terms. She asked the members to write down their own personal definition of diversity, inclusion and belonging, then she asked them to compare their definitions with the ones on the slide.

Member Watts shared that diversity was people of different ethnicities, sexual orientation, genders, etc.

Member Curley shared his definition as inclusion and taking those individuals of different backgrounds and experiences and making them a group.

Member Affo discussed belonging as everyone having a seat and voice at the table.

Dawn Gilbert reviewed the other key terms and definitions and shared one of her own experiences. She discussed the Chatham house rules of what happens in a meeting stays in a meeting. She also discussed the concept of Pigmentocracy, describing it as the closer you are to white the more accepted you are into that community. She highlighted the difference between equality and equity with a bike example on the slide show. She said equity recognized the differences and accommodated for it, but equality was that we all have the same thing – everyone has a bike, but can they all use it or use it the same way. She then discussed biases and stereotypes, noting we all have unconscious biases and make judgements on preference rather than facts. She discussed unconscious and implicit biases, stating they were different terms for the same thing. She then asked the group to share biases.

Member J. Rodriguez stated the best Mexican food was at his mom's house. He said a conscious bias he had was towards military families because he had served in the military and had an affinity toward those who had also served

Member A. Rodriguez stated she had a bias toward people who were religious, thinking they were closed minded and judgmental. Dawn Gilbert asked her about her experience and gave her some scenarios to think about, then included Vice Chair Warren in the exercise. The group discussed cultural bias and privilege, then participated in dialogue about privilege; Dawn Gilbert shared that everyone had privilege automatically, it was an "invisible package". She said what mattered was how we use our privilege.

Dawn Gilbert shared the video "What Diversity and Inclusion is Really About" by Simon Sinek. There was discussion on the shared vision and mission of fostering inclusivity and attributes of inclusivity. She showed a brief excerpt of a video "Blind Spots: Challenge Assumptions" by PWC. She noted everyone had blind spots but said there was an opportunity to grow. There was discussion on overcoming biases which included expanding your network, committing to learning, being self-aware, listening without judgement, and challenging your own

beliefs. There was video shared on Just Belonging by the Diversity Advisors. She asked the Task Force members for their thoughts on the videos and if they had experienced biases.

Chair Hackett stated in a corporate setting she felt respected but said she was treated differently when people see her African American husband, adding her children were treated differently as well.

Dawn Gilbert shared one of her own personal experience with discrimination at a hotel and how minorities were charged more. She noted in that scenario the hotel acknowledged they were wrong and corrected the problem. She said to be mindful that members of the community may have had experiences with bias that have shaped their perspective. She shared a quote, “You’ve never looked eyes with someone who is not worthy of freedom, liberty, connection and belonging.”

Dawn Gilbert thanked the group, shared some additional resources with and spoke of their e-learning navigation program, stating there was a 60-day trial of their e-learning portal for all CETF members which would be shared by email.

FUTURE MEETINGS

Councilmember Tilque explained the purpose of this item.

COMMUNICATIONS

Report from Council Liaison on current events.

Council Liaison Tilque discussed how people could conserve more water, noting that 80% of water use was in landscaping. She said the best thing that could be done was to make sure there were no irrigation leaks, choose water-conservative plants, and noted the Town had resources to help. She also discussed the use of a smart controller.

Member J. Rodriguez noted there were also many resources online through SRPnet.com.

Council Liaison Tilque noted that the Ocotillo Bridge designs were available online for residents to vote on. She noted that the Council was approving the Town’s budget at the end of June noted that it included 24 positions to the Police Department, 2 new victim advocates, and 6 staff on the Crime Team and Special Victims Unit. She discussed the Transportation Master Plan and the July 4th Event at Gilbert Regional Park which would feature a Tom Petty Tribute Band and Bon Jovi

Tribute Band. She noted that staff had reached out Brenda Sullivan, a citizen who spoke at the previous meeting, and with the Gilbert schools regarding the issue.

Report from Staff Liaisons on task force assignments and current events.

Staff Liaison Dykstra announced that the next assignment would be to review the assessment of Gilbert homelessness and at-risk individuals. She said she would be emailing out that information. She also announced that on September 8, 2022, there would be the Regional Dinner for Human Relations Commissions and noted the next Task Force meeting would be on August 1, 2022.

Assistant Town Manager Rhineheimer reminded the Task Force to review Part 5 of the inclusivity study as the group would work to begin steps for action.

Councilmember Tilque recommended prioritizing recommendations.

Member J. Rodriguez asked if the Town had guidelines on Subcommittees to start brainstorming what that would look like. Councilmember Tilque noted they were working on it but asked the members to please think about ideas.

There was discussion on subcommittees, personal focus areas, critical areas, and prioritization. Staff Liaison Dykstra noted the topic would be discussed further in September.

Member J. Rodriguez asked if there was a place where the Task Force could go to see all of the gathered information, like a portal. Assistant Town Manager Rhineheimer stated they would discuss how to move forward in September.

Report from Task Force Members on current events.

Member J. Rodriguez stated he would send information on wheelchair games.

ADJOURN

Chair Hackett adjourned the meeting at 7:50 p.m.

ATTEST:

Katie Hackett, Chair

Melanie Dykstra, Staff Liaison