

MINUTES
WORK SESSION OF THE TASK FORCE ON RACE AND CULTURE
 Deborah Beggs Moncrief Garden Center, Oak Hall
 3220 Botanic Garden Boulevard, Fort Worth, Texas 76107
 Monday, September 25, 2017, 9:00 a.m.

Call to Order

Rosa Navejar, Presiding Chair of the Race and Culture Task Force, called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

In attendance:

Task Force Members
Bloom, Rabbi Andrew – Co Chair
Boswell, Charles
Dansby, Walter
Frias, Miriam
Goldberg, Bob
Harper, Yolanda
Kirkland, Bishop Mark
Mao, Rattana
Martinez, Arturo
Martinez, Roxanne
Mossige, Dr. Terri
Navejar, Rosa –Presiding Co Chair
Sanders, Bob Ray – Co Chair
Sherrod, Katie
Stimpson, Ty
Trevino, Jennifer
Vasquez, Monica
Woody, Rev. Tim

City Staff
Brown, Laetitia – Senior Assistant City Attorney
Costa, Fernando – Assistant City Manager
Gutt, Michelle – Communications and Public Engagement Director
Villegas, Veronica – Human Relations Program Coordinator
Washington, Valerie – Assistant City Manager
Consultants
Wasserman, Aliza – Sr. Associate for Race, Equity and Leadership (REAL) Program, National League of Cities (NLC)
Tucker, Estrus –Independent Consultant

Absent:

Task Force Members
Biggins, Lillie – Co Chair
Fernandez, Robert I.
Malek, Nima
McDonald, Judy
Session, Cory

OPENING REMARKS

Bob Ray Sanders commented that he’s looking forward to learning more about the task force members. He hopes the task force members are telling the community, when approached, that at this time they are not sure what they will present to the council; however, the task force is hoping to have something to present by August, 2018.

Rabbi Andrew Bloom shared a quick story about Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks. He quoted Audrey Hepburn saying "There is no such thing as impossible. As a matter of fact, there is no word such as impossible. Rather it's I'm possible." He thanked task force members for helping Fort Worth move forward.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Minutes from the August 28, 2017, Task Force meeting were approved.

AGENDA ITEMS

Briefing on Community Conversations

Fernando Costa reported that there are a total of sixteen (16) partnerships to date. The partnerships are groups of organizations that have agreed to host a community conversation. Catherine Huckaby from Michelle Gutt's staff will begin meeting with the organizations to discuss the arrangements, dates, times and locations for the community conversations. Each partnership will identify 20-30 individuals from diverse backgrounds to participate in the community conversation. Staff is working on drafting a one page memorandum of understanding (MOU) among the different organizations and the City of Fort Worth. The community conversations will begin as soon as the participants are identified and contacted. On Friday, September 29th, Estrus Tucker will conduct an orientation session for the facilitators of the community conversations.

Mr. Tucker added that several individuals responded and volunteered to facilitate a community conversation. Host organizations were also invited to suggest facilitators from their organizations or community. The list of facilitators consists of twenty (20) individuals to date. Mr. Tucker noted that the list is considered a pool of facilitators because the dates of the community conversations are unknown. As the dates are identified by the host organizations, the facilitators will be matched. Mr. Tucker emphasized that the intent of the facilitator is not to provide information but to create the space for each participant's voice to be heard. He also mentioned that Ms. Gutt is designing a participant questionnaire form that will capture the demographic information.

Ms. Gutt mentioned that the participant questionnaire will be available online and in hardcopy format. When host organizations are inviting individuals to participate, they will send them the questionnaire. Questionnaires will also be accepted from individuals interested in participating. Those questionnaires will be collected and used to fill available spaces at community conversations.

Mr. Costa continued with the update – there will be a series of three (3) two (2) hour community conversations on topics related to race and culture.

The first of the conversations will focus on our common values/goals –

- What we love the most about Fort Worth
- What makes this community our home

The second conversation may be more challenging where the focus will be on impediments to achieving common goals –

- What is not working well in Fort Worth
- Where do we need to concentrate efforts to improve race relations in the community
- How do we promote greater awareness of people from different cultures

The third conversation will be more action oriented –

- What does each of us have to do to overcome those impediments and create a better community

Briefing on Conversations among City Officials

Mr. Costa presented the meeting schedule for the conversations among City officials. NLC will be assisting with the conversations. Mr. Costa introduced Aliza Wasserman from NLC's Washington, D.C. office. City officials were classified into three (3) categories: 1) Mayor, City Council, City Manager, other appointed officials, City Attorney, City Secretary, City Auditor and ACM's, 2) Department Heads and 3) Assistant Directors. Each group will have a series of the three (3) conversations on similar topics focusing on the context of City government.

Laetitia Brown, Sr. Assistant City Attorney, noted that if a quorum of task force members attended any of the upcoming conversations among City officials a statement must be added to the posted agenda. She stressed that if task force members attend, they cannot participate in the discussions. In addition, staff suggested for task force members not to attend the department head and/or assistant director's meetings because the meetings will not be posted. However, if task force members believe there will be a quorum at those two meetings, they must inform staff so meeting agendas can be posted. Mr. Costa added that Mr. Tucker does not like a lot of people observing the conversations, and wants people in attendance to participate. Therefore, he discouraged task force members from attending conversations among City officials. Ms. Navejar added that the task force will receive the information from all of the meetings.

One task force member commented that if the councilmembers are allowed to attend the task force meetings then she only saw it fit for the task force members to attend the council's conversations among City officials. Other task force members strongly disagreed with encouraging the City Council or the Mayor to attend their meetings or the town hall meeting. Ms. Navejar noted that she has spoken to the Mayor about not attending the task force meetings. She stated the Mayor agreed to speak with the councilmembers but also noted that if they do attend they will be there to observe and do not want to be acknowledged. Rabbi Bloom added that they can only ask the council to refrain from attending the meetings.

Discussion of Arrangements for October 2 Town Hall Meeting

The town hall meeting will be streamed lived at fortworthtexas.gov. Residents can submit comments and questions to onefortworth@gmail.com. Mr. Tucker stressed that the focus of the town hall is not an engagement, a discussion or a Q and A session. It will be listening and creating a safe space that diverse neighbors can come and give their voice. There will be a framing question "What is the most important issue that you would like for the Task Force on Race and Culture to address?" The intent is to stay focused on the framing question and not on complaints. Residents will have two (2) minutes to speak. Task Force members will be in a visible place. He also thanked the task force on their feedback about the presence of council so the co-chairs can take those comments into consideration. The town hall is scheduled from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. Ms. Gutt distributed information that had all of the avenues used to promote the town hall. She asked for feedback on other avenues that could be used. The microphones will be placed at an angle so the speakers can address the task force members and the audience. Ms. Gutt added that speakers will have to sign up to speak at the town hall meeting. Online registration was not allowed. This will give equal access for individuals to sign up to speak. Doors will open an hour prior to the start of the town hall meeting.

Concerns were brought forward regarding the limited number of people being allowed to speak at the town hall meeting due to time constraints. Several suggestions were made regarding the concerns –

- Have a timeframe available of when the next town hall meeting would be scheduled.

- Encourage individuals that did not have the opportunity to speak to participate in the community conversations.

Ms. Gutt noted that forms will also be available at the town hall meeting for individuals interested in participating in the community conversations.

(15 minute break)

Small Group Discussions, Part I

Engagement Practices that Advance our Mission and Vision

Mr. Tucker introduced Aliza Wasserman, Sr. Associate for the Race, Equity and Leadership (REAL) Program of the National League of Cities (NLC). Ms. Wasserman introduced herself and provided a few words about her background.

Mr. Tucker asked the task force members to provide one word that describes a place where they go to feel present, feel whole, relaxed, welcomed, hospitable spaces. Words provided by task force members included: church, garden, beach, home, gym, and park.

Mr. Tucker asked the task force members to think of a place and time when they were with other people and felt engaged where they could speak their truth. He then asked them to provide one word to describe the space they felt present, welcomed, engaged and speak their minds. Words provided included: trust, confident, honesty, support, unity, acceptance, love, safe, non-judgmental, and friends.

Mr. Tucker asked task force members to stand if the following statements resonated or challenged them:

- “we speak our truth in ways that respect other people’s truth”
- “we commit to no fixing, advising, saving or correcting”
- “we suspend our judgments and identify our assumptions”
- “we ask honest, open questions to hear each other into speech”
- “we turn to wonder when the going gets rough”

The task force members then took 10 minutes to reflect on two framing questions –

- a. Think of a time in your life when your experience with a person of a different race or culture was positive, affirming, or inspiring. What were the details? What did you learn?
- b. Think of a time in your life when your experience with a person of a different race or culture was insulting, disrespectful, or infuriating. What were the details? What did you learn?

The task force members gathered into small groups to discuss the two (2) framing questions. Each group had 15 minute discussions.

Lunch Briefings

Briefing on The Other Fort Worth

Charles Boswell briefed the task force members on a presentation titled “The Other Fort Worth.” The purpose of the presentation was to review minority race/ethnicity data and to review neighborhood profile areas compared

to the city as a whole. Mr. Boswell asked the task force members if they would be interested in a presentation on redistricting. The task force members agreed.

Briefing on Coleman and 3-E Reports about Fort Worth Police Department and Race Relations

Valerie Washington, Assistant City Manager, briefed the task force members on the context of the 3-E (Equity, Equality, Everyone) and Coleman Report. Ms. Washington proposed to return and discuss in detail the 3-E Report with Chief Fitzgerald, and the four (4) authors of the report (Dr. Michael Bell, Bishop Billy George, Pastor Robert L. Sample, and Reverend Kyev Tatum). The task force members agreed.

Rabbi Bloom read breaking news regarding Senate Bill 4 (SB4). Ms. Brown noted that she would read the recent opinion and would update the task force shortly.

During the update several requests for information and/or speakers to appear before the task force were made. Mr. Costa summarized the requests and asked for the task force to select 3 or 4 topics that are most important for them to discuss at future meetings.

1. Briefing on Austin’s citizen driven redistricting process
2. Invite Chief Fitzgerald and four (4) ministers who served on the Coalition to brief the task force on the 3E Report and the recommendations
3. Ask Chief Fitzgerald to speak about the implications of SB4 as upheld by the Court of Appeals
4. Briefing on the National Initiative – partnership between the City and US Department of Justice (DOJ)
5. Briefing on the Diversity Task Force pertaining to LGBTQ
6. Briefing on the City’s Affirmative Action Practices and track record of hiring minorities and women for positions in different classifications
7. Information on minority contracting – MWBE (Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprises)
8. Information on FWISD’s Race and Equity Committee
9. Information on the Diversity and Inclusion Committee
10. FWPD briefing – Law Enforcement related issues (possibly October 16th meeting)
11. FWPD briefing – Employment related issues (possibly November 20th meeting)
12. Information on the Human Relations Commission

(Break)

Small Group Discussion, Part II

Lay-it-on-the-Line Exercise

Mr. Tucker asked task force members to write additional feedback, questions, ideas or insights on the two (2) lunch briefings.

Ms. Wasserman directed the Lay-it-on-the-Line exercise. She read three (3) statements.

1. Hiring and promotion decisions should be made solely on merit.
2. I believe inequities based on race and ethnicities are a major problem in Fort Worth.
3. I believe we can end inequities based on race and ethnicities.

After each statement task force members were directed to stand on an imaginary line based on whether they agreed, disagreed, were neutral or had mixed feelings. After taking their positions on the line, a few of the task force members were asked why they agreed or disagreed with the statement.

The task force members were asked to write additional feedback, questions, ideas, or insights on the lay-it-on-the-line exercise.

Mr. Tucker asked for volunteers to read the “Open Space of Democracy” and “The Dangers of a Single Story” handouts. Additional readers were each asked to read one (1) of the Five Habits of the Heart that Help Make Democracy Possible. Task force members were asked to notice which habit resonated or held tension for them.

Discussion Questions

The task force members were asked to reflect on two (2) framing questions.

- a. What are the most important resources in advancing racial equity?
- b. Identify some important resources for advancing it in the City of Fort Worth.

Task force members gathered into small groups to discuss the framing questions. Each group shared feedback on their small group conversations.

Closing Business

Future Meetings

Ms. Navejar reminded the task force about the town hall meeting on Monday, October 2nd, at 6:30 p.m. at First Presbyterian Church, 1000 Penn Street. She also noted all of the upcoming task force meetings and possibly scheduling a second town hall during the latter part of October or early part of November. A town hall will also be scheduled at the end of all of the community conversations. Staff is working on scheduling another full day or two half-day sessions for the task force to focus on the role and impact of a racial equity plan. The task force is looking forward to inviting all of the speakers identified earlier.

Closing Remarks

Ms. Navejar thanked the task force members for their engagement during the retreat and looked forward to seeing everyone on October 16th.

Mr. Sanders stated he believes that the task force is moving in the right direction.

Rabbi Bloom agreed with Mr. Sanders about the task force moving in the right direction.

Ms. Brown briefed the task force on the recent opinion in regards to Senate Bill 4.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at approximately 3:20 p.m.