

Meeting of the Valparaiso Human Relations Council

4 April 2017

Present: John Seibert, Ric Frataccia, Cicely Powell, Marisa Johnson, Tatiana Cochran, Heath Carter, John Albers, Bill Lewis, Mike Brickner, Gene Tanner

Heath Carter, Chair, began the April meeting at 5:31pm. From now on, we will be meeting on the fourth Tuesday of every month. Minutes from both October 25th, 2016 meeting and January 17, 2017 presentation by Aida Ramirez were shared with the HRC members. Those meeting minutes were approved.

Welcome to Gene Tanner from the Valparaiso Nazarene Church - he is replacing Ivan Bodensteiner. Jacob Williams will be moving to Fort Wayne. Marisa Mendez-Johnson will be going to USC in fall and we will replace these two members.

Updates: Chief Brickner: VPD is looking to improve their hiring practices. Two officers are currently full-time assigned to the schools. One officer is at the high school, one officer floats around the elementary schools. Champion program - identifying young people in the schools, specifically minority students, police officers that would be mentors - they would be paid overtime to begin a process to get them interested and involved in law enforcement. This type of program has worked with increasing recruitment of female applicants. This is a long-term investment and not a quick fix. They are still doing job fairs and advertising and other things.

Items to begin to add to agenda: Heath would like to do presentations about the HRC Ordinance around the community. He would like us to get on the agenda a few different presentations to inform and do a Q & A. Cultural Arts Grant program - operationalizing this program. This will give funds to programs that need it. Check in with communities (POC, women, disabled citizens). Get in touch with community groups and listen to their concerns. We would like to hear from them to pass any concerns along to the Mayor and City Council.

Item 1: Community Relations Director Position. Heath explains the history of this position and re-introduces the Valpo Next Initiative and the subsequent work of the All-Together Valpo Committee (ATV). ATV strongly recommended the hiring of this person. Heath observes that the demographics are transitioning and changing in our community. This transition needs to be intentional - as the community changes - strengthening the ties that bind, for the good of everyone. We have had some difficult conversations in this very room. This investment would cultivate our social capital. Diversity should be celebrated, but as communities become more diverse, diversity can be tough on a community. It can decrease a sense of trust initially.

Putnam - E Pluribus Unum - reading about diversity and the effect in the short-term. In an ethnically diverse community, people fragment initially. In the long run, it strengthens and builds trust.

HRC Comments

- Mike Brickner - concerned about how the funds for this position would compete with all other city funds.
- John Albers - Notes that Columbus is a Cummins town. The family/corporation wanted to invest in racial justice and architecture among other things. We have a lot of work to do to build the social and economic capital.
- Tatiana Cochran - Aida Ramirez looked at the cost/benefit position. This investment would more than make up for the cost due to the impact this person would have on the community. A CRD position would be able to connect citizens and resources. This person would be able to help the citizens, protect the city, and provide more than just human rights/social justice.
- Bill Lewis - should we look at ways to provide funding this position? This isn't going to start as a 250K budget.
- John Siebert - Human Resources/Legal understand what value-added this would bring. Garner support

from those places to really show them how this person could benefit them.

Audience Comments

- Paul Schreiner - comment on the lack of diversity and lack of housing. John Albers says that he used analysis to discover that the outside of Columbus had more diversity.
- Dan Martin - Suggest that we need to remember that as tax implications of housing. If taxes rise, housing becomes less affordable.
- Robert Cotton - Tax is difficult challenge. We need to look at what resources we can use to ease the burden on people.
- Ivan Bodenstiener - Valpo gets serious about wanting to fix the issue. We need to make efforts to make it work. Referring to the Aurora project, we have not made movements toward improving housing. It doesn't cost anything to change the mentality.
- Elizabeth Lynn - We are different from Columbus, we have a very active, civically engaged town. How do we support as the city changes? It is important to note that we have many things that they do not.

Job Description

What would we want this person to do?

Some of the conversations might have been better had in the community. It may have helped to make the final conversation (at the City Council vote) to go smoother. This person would be a key liaison and leadership during difficult situations and conversations. This person could be an ambassador for Valparaiso. Ric Frataccia went to IUN to talk to potential teachers. The reluctance to work in Valpo was unexpected but it made a difference to talk to people and build that relationship. We have to get the word out that we are inclusive and welcoming.

Roxane Mendez-Johnson - who do you approach when there are issues (paused) Heath request that very specific questions about job specifics of this position this will be left for a later time due to the need to talk about the position recommendation itself.

Ric Frataccia - There is enough work for this job - not too much, not too little. This position should be a catalyst. People want change, but they don't have a vehicle to move in the direction. Increase the dialogue. People want to do it, and this person could be a catalyst for change. They would be helping businesses and organizations to come together. They need a vehicle. They need this to happen on a regular basis. If adults are not tolerating each other then kids are reacting the same way. In the Social Studies department, we are trying to get ahead of it. We are trying to bring kids together and talk. There needs to be a vehicle for change.

Should we have a study circle every Friday? How do these groups feel and how can they share? People need to be interested in the lives of other people.

Bill Lewis - I sense that position is an all or nothing (and it should not be). How can we start it out? Could it be attached to another department in order to let it grow?

Gene Tanner - it seems that the vision is very broad. Appreciates the catalyst comment, because he was thinking a "conduit". It is going to take some time because we are casting a vision.

Marisa Johnson - Is it possible for us to get the word out? Word of mouth and Internet - the City's website needs to be improved. Letting people know and getting them energized about the what is available.

John Albers - Thinks that this would be a "nice" to have. Until you have a place to go, you don't know what you are missing.

Housing has been historically will be the number one place where issues of diversity and inclusion will play out. We should discuss whether housing does belong here (within the purview of this position).

Greg Bagel Johnson - History of discrimination shows that housing is the place where it plays out. Question for the HRC: What are the pros and cons of different forms of positions?

Jane Schreiner - if anything is going to happen, someone has to be in charge of it. Even if they can't cover all the aspects of the job, the job needs to be there. It would be helpful if the person had an interest in Law.

Ivan Bodensteiner - The person should not report to the city administration, but to this board. We don't expect City Departments to raise their own funds. Maybe we should solicit funds from the

Melissa Washburn - Lived in Columbus. Those philanthropic organizations made choices. This description shouldn't be over-written, there should be some room. The right person will have their own ideas about implementation.

Dan Martin - In adopting the Ordinance, the Indiana Civil Rights legislation was not followed.

Bob Phelps - Comment about the requirement for the person to be a lawyer. In the notes on her talk, she says that she doesn't actually take any cases.

Heath wants to reiterate that we need to hear and engage with people of different backgrounds. Thanks to all community members that came.

7:01 PM