

MINUTES

MOUNTLAKE TERRACE DIVERSITY EQUITY AND INCLUSION COMMISSION MEETING

June 16, 2021
7:00 p.m.

Remote Meeting Via
Telephone and Teleconference

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

Chair Richards (Via Teleconference)
Vice Chair Deen (Via Teleconference)
Commissioner Doyle (Via Teleconference)
Commissioner Guillen (Via Teleconference)
Commissioner Meier (Via Teleconference)
Commissioner Paige Jr. (Via Teleconference)

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT

Commissioner Hale (Excused)

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT

Scott Hugill, City Manager (Via Teleconference)
Steve Woodard, City Council Liaison (Via Teleconference)

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

Attendance Roll Call

City Manager Scott Hugill took roll via teleconference.

MOTION

Commissioner Meier Move to excuse Commissioner Hale.
Commissioner Guillen

Motion carried 6-0.

Land Acknowledgement

Chair Richards read the land acknowledgement statement into the record.

The Commission held a moment of silence in acknowledgment of the bodies of young indigenous students found in British Columbia from Canada's residential schooling system, which had historically separated indigenous children from their families and sent them to church- and government-operated boarding schools across the country to abandon their native learning.

Approval of March 17, 2021 Meeting Minutes

The March 17, 2021 minutes are approved 5-0, with one abstention (Vice Chair Deen had not had time to read the minutes.)

Public Comments

There were no comments.

Guest Speaker Angie Peters

Ms. Peters is a teacher at Mountlake Terrace Elementary, and shared her perspective of being gay in Mountlake Terrace.

Ms. Peters came out at 18, and knew she wanted to be a teacher, but didn't know how to be gay, a wife, teacher, mother and it took time to learn how to be that person. When teaching, students asked about her orientation, and she asked the principal for guidance on how to speak with students about it. The principal told her to be who she is: riding a motorcycle, having tattoos and being a good teacher. In this way, she has been able to be the role model she did not have growing up, learning 'how to be gay' representation matters so that students can see themselves in someone else.

Ms. Peters has continued to live her life as a role model, with pictures of her family at work like anyone else. Mountlake Terrace Elementary has leadership that supports representation, pushing limits like hosting a "Black Lives Matter" vigil in 2020, which was well attended, and Pride Week this year. The principal has responded to negative emails on these topics by explaining we support people as they are, teaching empathy and kindness, and providing the language to help kids find who they are. Leadership and support from the School District Board has also been key, as with the Board not backing down from support of LGBTQ+ rights, even when criticized.

Ms. Peters stays in touch with parent groups at Terrace Park and Cedar Way where she previously taught, so the parents can reach out to her for perspective, which is always to be positive and supportive with kids.

Conversations now are working through support for transgender students, with teachers and counselors working through how to support the student. At a minimum, providing language and access that Ms. Peters did not have when she was younger.

Commissioner Meier asked what Ms. Peters would like to see in Mountlake Terrace, and she responded that she loved living in Mountlake Terrace, and despite now in Lynnwood still considers Mountlake Terrace home. Ms. Peters is proud of what Mountlake Terrace Elementary and the community have done, and working to continue growing.

Vice Chair Deen asked about pandemic limitations allowing time for planning next year, and how we celebrate pride in a way that is meaningful rather than simply adopting the rainbow flag. Commissioner Meier commented that adopting the rainbow is temporary, while speaking out and acting in a way that supports the LGBTQ+ community is ongoing.

Ms. Peters observed that continuing the work and conversation means going beyond a single event or month (such as a "Black Lives Matter" event or "Pride" month) and continuing throughout the year. While today Pride Month is a celebration, it was initially a way to bring awareness to issues such as same-sex marriage now being allowed.

Vice Chair Deen commented on the need for a plan for 11-12 months to show support year-round, helping people come together to support, so that even those who don't agree can show empathy.

Commissioner Paige asked about Ms. Peters comment on "teaching the language," more specifically who is the "we" - the school, parents, or the broader group? Ms. Peters explained the 'we' is staff at the school. She gave the example that last year, the Pride celebration was done by a parent, whereas this year it was done by students who provided information to teachers to educate students. Ms. Peters commented that it was amazing to watch staff learn from what students provided.

Commissioner Paige commented when he is asked what he wants, he is 'event/special day/celebrated out.' What he wants is for this to be an everyday lifestyle, and gave the example of Memorial Day: when he is asked if he is going to go visit those who have passed away on Memorial Day, he notes that he thinks of them every day. How do we change the environment so we do not have to celebrate Pride Month because it's not different from the every day?

Ms. Peters shared recently that walking with a coworker through a school hallway decorated with LGBTQ+ information on the walls, she never would have imagined it; her coworker commented that sixth graders don't see it as 'special' because it's more the norm they see today.

Vice Chair Deen asked how much of the celebrations being had are grounded in history (e.g. Stonewall). Ms. Peters explained there was a series of lessons: the history, transgender, family structure, etc. As with the focus on police today, students understand the level of injustice with police involvement at Stonewall.

Commissioner Meier and Vice Chair Deen suggested posting links to children's books on the Commission's webpage regarding LGBTQ+.

Ms. Peters commented that if she'd been told 24 years ago this would be how it is today, she wouldn't have believed it.

Commissioners shared their appreciate for Ms. Peters' time and information.

Vision & Goals

Chair Richards explained that together with Vice Chair Deen she had suggested Commissioners take a few moments to write down their DEI goals - winnowed down to one - for objective, short-term or long-term, action steps.

- Chair Richards: Diverse hiring and diversity training. 2-3 year goal. Action steps include: looking at forms used, job advertisements, where advertising, policies that may reduce diversity (e.g. tattoos), how Human Resources can help, having a diverse hiring panel, equity task force in the organization, the onboarding process involving equity, consistent equity training. Tools would be diversity training tools (partnering with other cities), and time to make it happen.

- Commissioner Meier: Having a person whose job it is to do these things on a day-to-day basis, either a consultant or employee, who knows how to keep things moving. Getting a consultant in place, then working to make it a permanent position. All other ideas can be wrapped up under this.
- Commissioner Doyle: Agrees with Commissioner Meier's idea for a consultant, and while she has goals in her head, she but doesn't know how to get there to accomplish them. As with the Commission's plan, she needs to break ideas down into actionable steps in an environment she doesn't know (municipal government) to translate into action.
- Commissioner Paige: Conversations with other DEI coordinators has shown that the staff position came from showing what the organization needed. Therefore, a temporary consultant to identify the scope of what should be pursued, with a summary showing there is something bigger than the Commission. Other DEI coordinators began without input from a commission first, which was also difficult. So, a consultant to work with the Commission to direct and guide, leading to a report for the Council to consider in the work plan.
- Commissioner Guillen: As an immigrant, he thinks about challenges immigrants face, and he would like immigrants to see the Commission as a trusted source for help and information. Newcomers don't know who to trust, and down the road, it would be good to have citizenship events, legal clinics, etc.
- Vice Chair Deen: Wants to throw a party; four or five events a year where there is food, opportunities for small businesses to market themselves, with DEIC speaking or introducing themselves to the community, to help those who may not trust government see Commissioners as allies. New plaza and ball field to have people gather. Building a network of connection with food and music.
- Commissioner Paige commented that he would like to see the Mountlake Terrace police viewed by the community as accessible, inclusive and transparent. One step was getting the website easier to connect with to find information, along with FAQs from the Commission, and new pictures of a diverse department.
- Vice Chair Deen commented that the city website is complicated and difficult to navigate.

Chair Richards asked Commissioners to email their thoughts on vision and goals to be able to compile.

Chair Richards asked for Commissioners' ideas for the Consultant:

- Commissioner Paige: There is diversity in the community, but not equity and inclusion. Therefore, a consultant should help Commission get statistics to show the problem of equity – information on businesses, demographics, schools and medical care.
- Commissioner Meier: A plan of goals and work plan and assignments, history of Mountlake Terrace neighborhoods that may have had exclusionary policies.

- Vice Chair Deen: Someone who will not reinvent the wheel; they will have realistic timelines from the consultant's experience; objective information to measure progress toward goals.
- Chair Richards: Having a vision that is actionable through achievable steps.
- Commission Guillen: Have consultant show how to connect the dots of steps to arrive at goals; Reasonable timelines for achieving goals; reasonable expectations.

Building Roots

Chair Richards discussed murals on PUD boxes and private buildings, and asked Commissioners' thoughts. She also discussed a DEI graphic, with a city staff person generating options based on Commissioners' ideas. If Commissioners have ideas for words or graphics, share it. Also, partnering with Arts Commission on ideas for murals and graphics. Commissioners will send their top ideas.

Sub Committee Check-In: Education and Resources (Vice Chair Deen; Commissioner Guillen; and Commissioner Meier)

Chair Richards asked that committees select a specific day to check-in on work rather than exchanging emails.

Vice Chair Deen shared that the speaker at the last meeting sent a list of resources to post on the website, and asked how the DEI webpage be structured. Commissioner Meier suggested a structure of identities and culture, while Commissioner Paige agreed yet noted people may not explore what is happening with others because of a focus on specific areas.

Other ideas included a calendar of events, and categories of education, health and immigration.

Commissioner Paige suggested hearing from the School Superintendent as a guest speaker to discuss curriculum on history and helping Commission on how to hear from students on the questions on the DEIC submission form.

DEI Wins and Tributes

Vice Chair Deen discussed the change in this agenda title, providing not only wins, but also tributes: the mass grave found in British Columbia of indigenous children, and the ongoing killing in Palestine.

For wins, the Pulitzer recognition for the teenage girl who took video of George Floyd's murder; Minnesota passing a law to ban separating incarcerated mothers from their children; and a bakery in Texas faced with a canceled order following their choice to have rainbow cookies and then having the community step up to help; and support for a student sent home for wearing a skirt.

Commissioner Paige noted the focus of getting vaccines and related information to those who are underserved so they can make the choice.

Chair Richards noted Juneteenth being recognized by the state as a holiday, as well as businesses, and a posting on the city's Facebook page with information on Juneteenth celebrations.

City Council Liaison Report

Councilmember Woodard updated the Commission on Council action and discussions, including updates to the municipal code increasing the number of backyard chickens. City operations are moving into new City Hall on June 19. City will be receiving about \$6 million from the ARPA, and the community college is going from \$25,000 in emergency funding for students to \$200,000 for students in need.

Chair Richards asked about Juneteenth resolution, which Councilmember Woodard confirmed the Council adopted and mayors in the county will be reading those resolutions online.

Commissioners Corner

Commissioner Paige will be participating in an online Juneteenth program for his alma mater, participating from Interim City Hall on the panel.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:16 p.m.

These minutes were approved on August 18, 2021.