

Minutes
Town of Farmington, CT
Racial Equality Taskforce
Town Hall - Council Chambers/Online Webinar
September 23, 2020
7:00 P.M.

Attendees

Joseph Capodiferro
Edward Giannaros
Kay Higgins
Sarah Smith
Yahmina Penn
Nieka Thompson
Jeremy McLaurin
Chris Cloud
Jessica Harrison
Tanner Musznski
Bill Beckert

Staff

Nancy Parent
Kory Vincent
Anna Savastano

A. Call to Order.

Nancy Parent called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM.

B. Public Comment.

None.

C. A Presentation by the Director of Public Health, Farmington Valley Health District.

Jennifer Kertanis gave a presentation to the Taskforce regarding Public Health. Jennifer began her presentation with a brief update on COVID-19 in Farmington Valley. She shared that Public Health is not about individual choices and health education. Most people know about the ways to be healthy, but they do not live in proper conditions that allow them to achieve their optimal health.

She shared that policies, practices, and procedures frame what our society looks like. These policies have been shaped (inadvertently or purposely) in such a way that they are racist or bias. One example is investing in suburban areas and disinvesting in urban areas. People of color are disproportionately affected.

Jennifer also explained what the Farmington Valley Health District has done in terms of public health. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Health District had partnered with the Towns to create a Community Health Assessment. She plans on returning to that project as soon as possible. Her staff also goes through a training called "The Roots of Health Inequity."

After Jennifer's presentation, the taskforce members had the opportunity to ask questions to the Director. Nancy Parent asked Jennifer about the process of declaring racism a Public Health Emergency. Jennifer said she supported the Town making that declaration because it brings more awareness to the issue.

Edward Giannaros thanked Jennifer and asked what changes she has seen other towns in the Farmington Valley make to address these issues that Farmington may be able to use as a model? Jennifer explained that, in her opinion, Farmington is ahead of the other Valley towns in identifying a taskforce and beginning to address racism as an issue. Simsbury is starting to as well. Other towns are implementing quality of life conditions to support public health, but have not framed their efforts in the context of identifying the policies that may be negatively effecting certain group and analyzing these policies to recognize potential biases.

C.J. Thomas asked if there were specific things the taskforce should be looking into from a health point of view on the issue of race. Specifically, any types of metrics that the Town can apply. Jennifer answered that metrics are tough because issues are really different community to community. The Health District needs to work directly with communities to identify issues, but there are tools that can be used to determine if new policies will inadvertently affect certain groups.

Anna Savastano asked if other Towns use "The Roots of Health Inequity" to educate their staff, Jennifer said that they did not, but she thought it would be a useful staff training.

Nancy thanked Jennifer for speaking with the group and told her that if the Health District comes across an area where they need the taskforce's support, not to hesitate to contact us.

D. Update and discussion on goals and timeline.

The group had a discussion on the goals and immediate action steps. They continued working on creating an Action Plan with a timeline. This document is a working document that will be updated regularly until its submission to the Town Council.

The Committee also discussed adding an additional public comment to the end of the meeting agenda to allow for residents to comment in response to what was discussed in the meeting.

Kay Higgins suggested the group begin working on a plan to address social media concerns. The group discussed the potential of creating a Public Service Announcement (PSA) to educate citizens on being culturally sensitive online.

Lastly, the group continued their discussion on the Board of Education and began formulating questions to send to the Superintendent prior to her presentation in October.

E. **Adjournment.**

Upon a motion made and seconded (Beckert/McLaurin) the meeting adjourned at 7:56pm.

Respectfully Submitted,



Anna Savastano
Management Analyst
Clerk

DRAFT