

Minutes
Town of Farmington, CT
Racial Equality Taskforce
Online Webinar
December 22, 2020
6:30 P.M.

Attendees

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

Staff

Nancy Parent
Kory Vincent
Anna Savastano

A. Call to Order.

Chris Cloud called the meeting to order at 6:35 PM

B. Public Comment.

None.

C. Reading of the Minutes.

1) **To approve the attached November 19, 2020 minutes.**

Upon a motion made and seconded (Capodiferro/Beckert) the minutes were unanimously approved with the correction that Tanner Muszynski.

D. Approve Action Plan on goals and timeline.

Upon a motion made and seconded (Beckert/Higgins) the Taskforce unanimously voted to approve the updated Action Plan (Attachment 1).

E. Next Steps

1) **Present Action Plan to the Town Council**

The Taskforce will present the Action Plan to the Town Council at the January 12, 2020 Town Council Meeting. Nancy Parent will begin creating the presentation and it will be presented by Chris Cloud along with Yahmina Penn and any other members who wish to present. The Town Council will have to vote to accept the Action Plan.

2) **Development of Implementation Plan (Cost Estimation, Labor/Time Estimates etc.)**

After the Town Council votes to accept the recommendations, the Taskforce will have to prioritize the recommendations and give that report back to the Town Council.

3) **Implementation (Taking Action: forming sub-committees, holding community forums etc.)**

The group discussed the length of time that it's taking to create the Action Plan.

Although the Action Plan is important, there are some items on the plan that can be started now. The Taskforce established a working group to begin working on Community Outreach. Jessica Harrison, Nieka Thompson, Nancy Parent and Anna Savastano are in the working group.

F. To schedule the next meeting. (Please bring your calendar.)

The next meeting is scheduled for December 30, 2020 at 6:30 PM over Zoom.

G. Public Comment.

None.

H. Adjournment.

Upon a motion made and seconded (Giannaros/Harrison) the meeting adjourned at 8:54 P.M.

cc: Committee Members
Paula Ray, Town Clerk

ACTION PLAN

GOAL 1	CURRENT STATUS	ACTION STEP
<p>To hold meetings with residents to identify issues in the community that have led to unequal treatment based on race and to engage residents through holding community forums, dialogue groups, and training workshops on implicit bias; to develop a campaign to increase public awareness of these issues.</p>	<p>Gather information regarding current issues and town statistics.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To work with the Social Services Department to promote the Color of Justice program and other initiatives that promote awareness to diversity. 2. To form a subcommittee to create a website and/or mailings that highlights the work done on the Racial Equality Taskforce and throughout Town and to provide online resources for residents to learn about racial equity issues. 3. To create a "Social Media Etiquette" campaign to promote responsible social media use. 4. To create a subcommittee to organize and host multiple facilitated focus groups (open to all residents) to participate in learning, sharing, and education about race and diversity matters. 5. To create a working group to host a community march and/or community activity ("family day") 5. To recommend that the Town Council commits or reprioritizes funds (if needed) to assist in the above action steps. 6. To recommend a campaign to increase participation on Town Boards & Commissions from minority groups.
<p>By 05/01/21</p>		

GOAL 2	CURRENT STATUS	ACTION STEP
<p>To analyze the current Town services in collaboration with the Town Manager to increase transparency, to address racial inequality and to develop initiatives and measurable goals.</p>	<p>Town Manager's Office will give a presentation to the taskforce.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To recommend to the Town Council that the add a strategic plan goal in regard to zero tolerance for racism in Farmington. 2. Additionally, to recommend that the Town Manager add appropriate action steps to Department Head goals. 3. To form a subcommittee to provide a list to the Town Manager on recommended programs and services for racial bias training for employees and increasing efforts to diversify recruitment. 4. To recommend that the Town hire an Equity and Inclusion Consultant.

		5. To recommend that the Town Council commits funds (if needed) to assist the Town Manager in the above action steps.
	Complete: 10/4/20	

GOAL 3	CURRENT STATUS	ACTION STEP
To collaborate with and support the Farmington Valley Health District in their mission to incorporate and adopt principles of social justice into everyday public health practice.	Farmington Valley Health Department will give a presentation to the taskforce. Complete: 9/23/20	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To review and to provide feedback of the Farmington Health District's declaration that racism and oppression is a public health crisis. 2. To recommend to the Town Council that they declare Racism and Health Disparities as a Public Health Crisis 3. To support the Advisory Board of the Public Health District

GOAL 4	CURRENT STATUS	ACTION STEP
To support the Board of Education in their efforts to ensure anti-racism, social justice and equity within the PreK-12 school system in collaboration with the Superintendent of Schools.	Board of Education will give a presentation to the taskforce.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To recommend that the Town Council request that the Board of Education include their equity plan articulated in the FPS School and Program Development Plans and Results and Outcomes Report in the annual report submitted to the Town Council. This annual submission by the Board of Education will be included in the Town's Strategic Plan and will include updates on the plan on a yearly basis. The plan should include, but is not limited to, the recruitment strategies in regard to a diverse workplace. 2. To recommend that the Town Council request that the Board of Education form an Equity Inclusion Committee specifically for Board of Education issues that is facilitated through the Farmington Public Schools. It is further recommended that the Town Council recommend that the Board of Education's Taskforce include at least two members from the existing Town Council Taskforce, two members of the Board of Education and one Town Council member, as well as community members and School staff. <p>It is recommended that the work of the Board of Education Equity and Inclusion Committee consider the following topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory Teacher diversity training from an outside consultant

- Ongoing review of the curriculum (PreK-12) by the Equity and Inclusion Coordinator in partnership with curriculum writers and the Curriculum Coordinating Committee to guarantee a diverse curriculum that represents all students
- Annual Summer Programming (Possible AP Readiness Session in August of each year) for students across grade levels
- To develop strategies to address the achievement gap
- To review teacher handbooks
- To review the Code of Conduct and ensure zero tolerance of racism is consistently enforced
- To ensure that all contracted employees are held to the same standards to ensure zero tolerance of racism is consistently enforced
- To analyze and develop action steps to address the disproportionality in the disciplinary data
- To recommend more diverse materials and activities
- Teacher recruitment and possible search committees
- To create a sense of welcome for different cultures and ethnicities through creative programs and initiatives
- To recommend that the committee re-examines calling the newly established “Day Off” Indigenous Peoples’ Day on the school calendar
- Increased communication and transparency to parents and the community

3. To recommend that the Town Council requests that the Equity and Inclusion Coordinator and Assistant Superintendent meet with the Town’s Racial Equality Taskforce and act as a liaison between the Town’s Taskforce and the Board of Education’s Equity and Inclusion Committee as needed.

Complete:
10/21/20

GOAL 5	CURRENT STATUS	ACTION STEP
<p>To analyze current procedures and policies of the police department in collaboration with the Chief of Police, including use of force; to increase transparency to address racial inequality and to develop initiatives and measurable goals in collaboration with the Chief of Police.</p>	<p>Police Chief Paul Melanson gave a presentation to the taskforce about current policies and initiatives.</p>	<p>1. to arrange for a small working group to review Police Accountability Bill to further understand the language and impact of the bill that the Police Chief Association/Legislature is still reviewing</p>

2. To actively recruit a more diverse staff for the police force – (See Town Manager Goal 2) by creating a working group to make recommendations on how best to recruit diverse candidates.

3. To recommend to the Town Council that a goal be added to the Strategic Plan to provide Implicit Bias Training for the Westfarms Mall Business Owners (and other members of the Business Consortium) based on youth arrest statistics from the mall.

4. To arrange for a small working group to review the quality of the diversity training programming and to make any necessary recommendations regarding the frequency and depth of the training.

5. To foster the continued collaboration between Social Services and the Police Department with vulnerable residents and explore opportunities to formalize that relationship in accordance with the police accountability bill.

6. To recommend a working group to partner with the Community Policing Unit to increase programming and positive interaction with Black youth and to educate the community on bias against Black youth.

7. To investigate the possibility of forming an **Advisory Citizen Review Board**.

8. To recommend that the Town Council commits or reprioritizes funds (if needed) to assist in the above action steps.

**Complete:
08/26/20**

GOAL 6	CURRENT STATUS	ACTION STEP
<p>To encourage a diverse workforce by providing education and training to local businesses in the areas of racial inequalities; and to research possible incentives to increase the number of Black owned businesses in collaboration with the Economic Development Director.</p>	<p>Economic Development Director Rose Ponte will give a presentation to the taskforce.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To create a focus group of Black business owners in Farmington and the surrounding areas to better understand the experiences of operating a business in Farmington compared to Towns in the surrounding areas. 2. To research resources, including HEDCO Inc. and SBA and DECD, that the Town can provide to Black and Brown business owners. 3. To identify banks and lenders that are minority focused that can be a resource to Black entrepreneurs. 4. To actively pursue economic incentives to promote procurement opportunities for Black and Brown owned businesses. 5. EDC to host a meeting to discuss implicit bias in business interactions with minority customers, employees and coworkers. 6. To initiate a campaign to encourage the Farmington business community to adopt best practices in minority recruiting, hiring and retention as well as holding focus groups with successful businesses and neighboring communities who have more diverse populations. 7. To recommend that the Town Council commits or reprioritizes funds (if needed) to assist in the above action steps.
	<p>Complete: 10/4/20</p>	