CITY OF BELLEVUE

BELLEVUE DIVERSITY ADVISORY NETWORK

MEETING MINUTES

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| January 31, 2017 | Bellevue City Hall  |
| 6:00 p.m.  | Room 1E-112  |

MEMBERS PRESENT: Beabe Akpojovwo, Linda Whitehead, Anthony Austin, Mareth Flores, Eloisa Tran, Jennifer Karls, Justin Daigneault, Andrew Kelly, Tom Brewer, Aleksandra Poesukova, Haruka Kojima, Alaric Bien, Jingdong Yu, Margie Ye, Chinar Bopshetty, Aisha Kabani, Rita Badh, Mohamed Bakr

MEMBERS ABSENT: Paulo Perez, Maria Batayola

STAFF PRESENT: Mark Manuel, Brad Miyake, Major Carl Kleimecht

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

 a. Roll Call

 b. Adoption of the Agenda

 c. Adoption of the Minutes

 d. Review Gracious Space/Exercise

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Mark Manuel.

Mr. Manuel introduced Alice Fong, a long-time volunteer with the city. Ms. Fong thanked the members for choosing to serve on the Diversity Advisory Network. She said she works for United Way of King County which recently launched its tax campaign. In 2016, United Way brought in $29.1 million for families to help lift them out of poverty, which is one of the focus areas in which the organization invests. Free tax help is offered for people who make less than $64,000 per year. The program is one element of the work to help end poverty. Sometimes all people need is an extra paycheck, or a tax refund, to help keep them in their homes. The tax volunteers are well trained and offer high-quality services. Along with the tax preparation services, clients are also offered information regarding other programs for which they may qualify, including utilities, food and financial assistance, as well as healthcare.

Mr. Manuel noted that all members were present with the exception of Jingdong Yu, who arrived at 6:14 p.m.; Justin Daigneault, who arrived at 6:22 p.m.; Beabe Akpojovwo, who arrived at 6:42 p.m.; and Paulo Perez and Maria Batayola, both of whom were unable to attend.

City Manager Brad Miyake took a moment to thank the members for volunteering their time to serve on the Diversity Advisory Network. He said it was his intention to sit in on the meetings as often as possible.

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Ms. Flores. The motion was seconded by Ms. Kabani and the motion carried unanimously.

A motion to approve the minutes of the November 29, 2016, meeting as submitted was made by Mr. Brewer. The motion was seconded by Anthony Austin and the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Manuel provided the members a handout at the top of which were five “I am” statements and which had on the bottom had a number of the cultural identifiers that were highlighted during the cultural identifier exercise at the first Diversity Advisory Network meeting. The members were asked to create self-identifying poems using the statements and the identifiers. The members then broke into groups of three to read the poems and to ask clarifying questions. Once back together, several of the poems were read aloud to the full group.

Mr. Manuel explained that going forward as the group members get to know each other better, everyone will be able to pull off of each other’s strengths, will be better able to understand where people are coming from, and will work together to build a sense of resiliency. He said those participating in the Leadership Eastside program have learned that there is a productive zone of disequilibrium. That means group members must feel comfortable enough to challenge each other without taking things personally, in order to end up with a better product. The meetings will offer the opportunity for the members to experience and practice cross-cultural engagement.

2. SPECIAL PRESENTATION: BELLEVUE POLICE DEPARTMENT

 a. Major Carl Kleinecht and Mark Stockdale

 b. BPD Advisory Committees

 c. Update/Q&A

Maj. Kleinecht said the City Manager made a very good choice in choosing the police chief. He said in his 26 years with the Bellevue Police Department, the focus has always been on practicing humanitarian law enforcement. He noted that he began his career in law enforcement in a city and an agency that was doing everything wrong, and said he has never regretted moving to Bellevue.

Over the last five years, police departments across the nation have received some very bad attention, much of which was well deserved. Even in Bellevue, there were a few who did not think the rules and policies applied to them. Chief Mylett came on board at a time when the structure of middle level and lower managers and supervisors had all obtained their ranks for the right reasons. Chief Mylett quickly began implementing a series of programs that included the establishment of advisory councils to address underrepresented populations and to help clarify what the department was doing right and what it was doing wrong. Five advisory teams have been formed: Latino, Muslim, LGBTQI, Asian/Pacific Islander, and interfaith.

Chief Mylett directed that it would not be enough to simply establish a Muslim advisory council, that officers also needed to go into the masjid for prayers. Maj. Kleinecht said he took the time to study up on what he could expect when attending prayers. The new relationship has not been without its obstacles, but the conversations have covered topics ranging from immigration policies to the limits of federal authority relative to police departments. He said on election night the Muslim council met, and as the returns came in and the direction became clear, there was fear in the eyes of the members, the tone of the meeting changed, and the conversation turned to what became the Muslim safety forum that was held in Council Chambers on December 13 where the focus was on crime prevention, personal awareness, when to call 9-1-1, the city’s policies on immigration and hate crimes, followed by questions from the audience. The same event was later held at the Muslim Association of Puget Sound in Redmond which was attended by the police chiefs from Bellevue, Redmond, Mercer Island, Kirkland, Sammamish and Issaquah. All who attended and participated felt that the level of anxiety had been lowered.

Only three days after the safety forum, the masjid in Bellevue was torched. Maj. Kleinecht said it was good that the offender was caught at the scene, and it was good that the work of the police was bolstered by the fact that the Muslim community already knew him and the police chief and had an established relationship. Over the course of the first 24 hours, it was amazing to see the outpouring of support that culminated in a community meeting at Sammamish High School. The 450-seat theater was filled to overflowing.

Maj. Kleinecht said there are some 85 folks who meet as part of the Muslim advisory council, which meets every two to three months. He said his fellow majors in the department are each working with an advisory council to broaden their personal growth. Other advisory councils are being contemplated, including an academic council involving high school and Bellevue College students, an East European council, and others. It will not be possible to have advisory councils for all of the cultural groups living in Bellevue, but every effort will continue to be put into bringing people together.

Having a strong relationship with the police department is critical to the fabric of keeping the peace. Three years ago President Obama appointed a blue ribbon panel to look at policing in America. The group came up with six pillars of credible and legitimate law enforcement practices, the first of which was having a good relationship with the community that is sincere and which is built up over time with an equal portion of trust going both ways. The same sort of a panel was commissioned in 2003 by President Bush and their findings were very nearly the same.

Ms. Akpojovwo said it was her understanding that the person who burned the mosque in Bellevue was not going to be charged with a hate crime. Maj. Kleinecht said in order for the hate crimes prosecutor from the King County Prosecutor’s Office to reach the conclusion that the act was a hate crime, it was necessary to demonstrate that the perpetrator had communicated his specific hatred. The person who was taken into custody was homeless and as such did not have a house that could be searched. He did not have a computer that could be forensically examined to see if anything of a hate nature had been posted anywhere, and at the scene the only thing the person said when captured was that he had set the fire and that he wanted an attorney. The absence of specific and substantial communication of hatred specifically against the Muslim religion has not been immediately apparent. A final determination of whether or not to file hate crime charges against the individually has not been fully ruled out, but neither has it been ruled in.

Maj. Kleinecht said the fire department arrived within six minutes of the alarm, four minutes after the police arrived at the scene. They applied foam to the fire to quell the accelerant that had been used, and their good work saved a lot of important things from the mosque, including the computer infrastructure that ran the security cameras.

Mr. Bien asked what the community can do to help prevent similar incidents in the future. Maj. Kleinecht said the Unitarian church at Factoria Boulevard and SE 36th Street has for the past year and a half been holding silent vigils on Sunday mornings in support of Black Lives Matter. In May an unknown while male driving a pickup truck threw a cardboard sign on which was written reprehensible things; he was yelling obscenities as well and the group was concerned that they were about to be assaulted. Even so, no one called 9-1-1 until a day later, and the officer who took the report dropped the ball by not recognizing its importance. The group has since been asked to have someone at each gathering operating a video camera. The best thing to do when incidents happen is always to call 9-1-1 and not assume that someone else will make the call. Paying attention to details such as license plates and vehicle color and type, as well as the description of persons involved, is also critical. Those who see situations that are getting out of control should immediately call 9-1-1 and should focus on being a good witness rather than trying to break it up.

Maj. Kleinecht distributed copies of the Bellevue Police Department policy on immigration status. He noted that the policy was initiated more than eight years ago under Chief Linda Pillo. It has been very good over the past two months to be able to tell people the policy is not something that was only recently created. The policy states that it is the policy of the department for all officers to advise foreign national suspects of their right to communicate with their consular officers when arrested or detained. It also says officers shall not inquire about immigration status during police contacts with suspects, witnesses, or victims, and that if a suspect is arrested or detained and the officer believes the subject is a foreign national, the officer must follow the federal Consular notification policy.

Continuing, Maj. Kleinecht said under the policy, officers may also contact Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) regarding a person who has been arrested and that the officer believes is undocumented. Officers may take into custody any persons ICE or other federal authorities identify as a criminal suspect if the federal authority authorizes detention directly into a federal detention facility. ICE issues several types of detainers for foreign nationals. Officers may accept and act upon only criminal immigration detainers issued by ICE. Officers may not detain, accept, or act upon civil immigration detainers issued by ICE.

Officers may not detain a person solely to verify a federal civil warrant. Officers may not take persons with Federal civil warrants into custody solely because of the civil warrant. If an officer conducts a traffic stop and when the name is run a civil warrant pops up to contact the local ICE division, officers cannot continue the traffic stop for any longer than it takes the write a ticket or issue a warning. Officers cannot take persons with federal civil warrants into custody solely because of the civil warrant.

Maj. Kleinecht explained that under the federal 287(g) program, local police officers can be given federal authority to act as ICE agents. It has been found that when that occurs, the officers tend to profile people. As things stand in Bellevue, the Chief would not engage with the 287(g) program. However, at some future time a Chief might be hired who would. Fortunately, under Washington state law, before a political subdivision can enter into an Memorandum of Understanding with federal authorities, it must be vetted and adopted by the governing body, which would be the mayor’s office or the city council. It would require a change in the United States Constitution for the President to mandate the 287(g) program and summarily draft all police officers to serve as ICE agents. While at one time such a turn would have seemed unthinkable, that may no longer be the case.

According to the annual report of the Office of the Inspector General, there were 63 political subdivisions across the United States that adopted the 287(g) task force officer program in 2016. The majority of the subdivisions were in Arizona, and there were none in Washington or Oregon. However, as of late in January, the number of jurisdictions involved had dwindled to less than 20, primarily owing to the unintended consequences, not the least of which is bad policing.

Mr. Yu said he assumed that because the 287(g) program has been used in other states, people believe it applies to Washington state as well. It would be good to educate the public with regard to the steps involved in actually adopting the program locally. Mr. Manuel said Bellevue has been working closely with the various established advisory groups to determine the appropriate methods for getting the message out. It is no longer possible to rely on the traditional means, especially where people feel they need to go underground for one reason or another. The city is relying on the fact that it has built strong relationships. Things are moving quickly, however, and the city wants to avoid giving premature information or over-promising, but it recognizes the importance of getting information out in a timely manner.

Mr. Bien noted from the policy that officers may in fact contact ICE. Maj. Kleinecht said the policy allows the department to make the contact. Under the scenario where probable cause is found to arrest a person for something like shoplifting, it would be permissible for an officer to put in a call to ICE. He noted that during his tenure with the city he has never made a call to ICE, but allowed that it cannot be guaranteed that the city’s current practice of not making the call will be the practice in the future. Talks are under way to determine if the policy as written is sufficient or if it needs to be tightened up. The Latino advisory council members have expressed concerns about those who might be out walking the dog without proof of citizenship getting get caught up in a traffic stop or something and be shunted off to a detention facility until they can prove they are United States citizens. The angst is messing up people’s lives, and the department is looking to craft a message to post on the police website that will provide some reassurance.

Mr. Manuel agreed that some clarification would be in order. He said he had heard that where a suspect has been involved in a violent crime, a call to ICE might occur. Maj. Kleinecht said the Chief has stated publicly that violent criminals have no place in the community regardless of their documented or undocumented status, and that in such cases a call to ICE will be made. What he was leaning on, however, was the fact that calling ICE is not the customary practice.

Ms. Badh asked if the other Eastside cities are aligned with the policies and practices of Bellevue. Maj. Kleinecht said in many aspects Bellevue is ahead of the curve. Some Eastside jurisdictions have not had policies regarding immigration at all, and some of those have looked to see what Bellevue has. The Eastside cities that have had policies have looked recently at tightening them up.

Mr. Bien pointed out that no Eastside police department has communicated their stance as clearly as Bellevue has.

Ms. Badh said it cannot be assumed that the approach in Bellevue is the approach being used by all Eastside communities. Maj. Kleinecht noted that James Whitfield was able to pull the Eastside police chiefs together to discuss community outreach. At the meeting, alliances began to build.

Mr. Bien said he had attended that meeting and afterwards spoke with the Redmond police chief about why that city had not come up with a statement. Her response was to decline to develop a statement until all cities in King County do so. In the meantime, people are fearful.

Mr. Miyake said he was at the scene of the fire very early in the morning and met with community leaders at a local Starbucks. He said it was a joy to see the community pull together in the face of such an unfortunate circumstance. A lot got organized in a fairly short time, including the forum which was organized by Mr. Manuel, Mr. Bakr, Maj. Kleinecht, the police and fire chiefs, a lot of city staff and the Bellevue School District.

Mr. Bakr said the said the building was destroyed to the point where it will need to be torn down and completely rebuilt, a process that will take between two and three years. In the meantime the Muslim community has been invited to pray next door at the Mormon church. Fundraising activities are under way for the rebuilding process.

3. OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENGAGEMENT

 a. Review Calendar of Events and Requested Roll for BDAN Members

 b. Sign-in Sheets

Mr. Manuel handed out a list of upcoming events, including opportunities for the Diversity Advisory Network to engage with community members. He highlighted the Cultural Conversation event scheduled for February 1; the Women and Diversity Public Safety and STEM Career Fair, scheduled for February 6 at City Hall; and the annual Neighborhood Leadership Gathering, with the theme of Changing Community, Changing Landscape, scheduled for February 28. Mr. Manuel recommended selecting five Diversity Advisory Network members to serve as panelists.

Mr. Manuel explained that a new class called Volunteer Bridge is currently being piloted. The focus is on newcomers to Bellevue and on getting them civically engaged and engaged in volunteerism. The five-course class will talk about the obstacles to volunteerisms, demystifying the application process, recognizing and having them do their own personal inventory around what they are passionate about, and understanding and learning about community needs by meeting with community providers.

Additionally, the city’s neighborhood department, in collaboration with the King County Library System, will be hosting a three-part series, beginning on March 29 with a focus on civil disagreement. The other two parts of the series will focus on exploring cross-cultural communications, and what it means when talking about race. In order to meet with success, it will be necessary to have really good people at the table, those who are familiar with how to engage in good dialog. The Eastside Racial Leadership Coalition has been asked to participate, but additional folks from the Diversity Advisory Network should participate as well.

Ms. Badh asked about the Eastside Racial Leadership Coalition training and was informed by Mr. Manuel that it is not excessively long. He stressed the need to have the table facilitators adequately prepared, which is why the training opportunities will be provided.

4. BELLEVUE DIVERSITY ADVISORY NETWORK

 a. Review

 – 2-3 Year Terms

 – Chair and Vice-Chair Selection

Mr. Manuel noted that a few of the members had indicated an interest in serving a two-year term on the Diversity Advisory Network; all of the others expressed an interest in a three-year term. He said he wanted to be very clear about who would be cycling off after the first two years.

Mr. Manuel shared with the group copies of the materials submitted by those willing to serve in leadership positions. He said he would also provide the members electronically the additional materials that had been submitted in advance of getting a chair and vice-chair onboard by the next meeting.

5. SPECIAL REPORT

 a. Standing Committee Reports

 i. Outreach and Communications

 ii. Engagement

 iii. Culturally Responsive Government

Speaking for the Outreach and Communications subcommittee, Ms. Badh said the questions addressed included “What are you trying to change?” and “What issues are you trying to resolve?” Mr. Flores highlighted the need to search for an understanding of diverse communities of color and other marginalized groups. Ms. Poesukova pointed out the need to change the character of the group, while Mr. Daigneault commented on the need to expand beyond isolated groups while moving to a model of support between groups.

Ms. Badh said the group sought to answer the question “What information do you need in order to understand the current landscape?” Ms. Flores said there is a need to identify community leaders and organizers from different underrepresented communities. Ms. Poesukova commented on the need to understand the core values and believes of specific groups, and Ms. Badh noted the need to identify the communities with which the city has not already connected. Mr. Daigneault said information is needed with regard to which groups are already utilizing city resources, and what the downfalls are of either under- or over-utilizing those resources. Ms. Badh said demographic information is needed with regard to groups that use city services.

Ms. Flores added that the subcommittee also identified a handful of objectives. One was to show diversity economically and socially by creating a series of articles of interest featuring non-profits and the personal experiences of folks within the community. Ms. Poesukova said the subcommittee also recognized the need to be forums and the like should be facilitated in community places, such as malls, schools and places of worship, as well as in government institutions.

Ms. Kabani said the group acknowledged that there are in everyone behaviors that need to be changed as they relate to unfamiliar groups. Knowing that is needed is half the battle. The group concluded it will need more time to strategize how to accomplish the task. Mr. Flores commented that it may not be a change in behavior that is needed so much as an enhancing of behavior toward unknown groups.

Mr. Bien commented that while the Outreach and Communications subcommittee is focused on changing behaviors toward marginalized groups, the Engagement subcommittee is focused on changing the behavior of the marginalized groups. Both need to happen, but the approaches taken will differ.

Mr. Manuel provided the members with copies of information that was made available to the City Council when the diversity advantage plan was presented to them. He said the document outlined actions previously taken. He also noted that each city department has completed individual diversity assessments, and that information will also be of interest to the Diversity Advisory Network.

Ms. Badh asked what training the city provides relative to cultural competence. Mr. Manuel said there is a goal in place to get all staff through foundations training. The scope and sequencing of the training will be reviewed to make sure it is relevant, because once the foundations training is completed, the work is specific to the various departments. Other opportunities just coming into play for the staff include internal discussions around such varied topics of what will happen next post-election, how to process what happened at the nightclub in Florida, and how to have difficult conversations. He said he would keep the Diversity Advisory Network informed as to what happens internally.

Ms. Kabani pointed out that the nation was recently witness to one of the largest marches in history. Everywhere there are people who seek to gather peacefully. She asked what the city is doing to keep the gatherings peaceful, or to get people together to discuss the issues. Mr. Manuel said the role of the city is to be on top of what is happening and to be prepared ahead of protests or marches. Mr. Miyake noted that things that happen very quickly as issues arise. There have not been large protests in Bellevue, but that is not to say there will never be any. There is a great deal of uncertainty in terms of what is coming out of the federal government, and Bellevue is doing all it can to be informed.

Ms. Flores said to a large degree the members still lack the knowledge to ask the right questions. She asked why the subcommittees were being asked to come up with specifics so early in the process. Mr. Manuel explained that in working with groups in the past he has found that where specific information is provided up front, the work of the group becomes focused on and directed to that information. He said it was his desire to see the Diversity Advisory Network look at the issues with a clean slate and develop ideas that have not previously been considered. There will certainly be an evolution in the conversation and the products going forward. In the end, the group should feel comfortable that the issues addressed are indeed the issues.

Ms. Poesukova commented that in the community there may be some who are not supportive of the new administration but also not supportive of the marches and protests. One of the things the city can do is provide accurate information with regard to changes that are actually going on and what their effect might be. Mr. Manuel allowed that all manner of information and misinformation is readily available on the internet, and people will seek out the information that reinforces what they believe and become more deeply entrenched.

6. NEW BUSINESS

 a. Video Project

Mr. Manuel said an All Hands meeting will be held soon, which involves everyone who works for the city. Diversity will be highlighted in a short video that. A few minutes were taken to film the members dancing for the video.

7. ANNOUNCEMENTS

 a. Handouts

 b. Member Announcements

8. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:19 p.m.