CITY OF BELLEVUE

BELLEVUE DIVERSITY ADVISORY NETWORK

MEETING MINUTES

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| May 30, 2017 | Bellevue City Hall |
| 6:00 p.m. | Room 1E-112 |

MEMBERS PRESENT: Linda Whitehead, Anthony Austin, Paulo Perez, Edilberto Flores, Mareth Flores, Eloisa Tran, Jennifer Karls, Andrew Kelly, Aleksandra Poseukova, Haruka Kojima, Alaric Bien, Jingdong Yu, Margie Ye, Chinar Bopshetty, Rita Badh, Maria Batayola, Mohamed Bakr

MEMBERS ABSENT: Beabe Akpojovwo, Justin Daigneault, Tom Brewer, Aisha Kabani

STAFF PRESENT: Mark Manuel

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:10 p.m. by Chair Austin.

A. Roll Call

Upon the call of the roll, all members were present with the exception of Rita Badh, who arrived at 6:25 p.m. and Beabe Akpojovwo, Justin Daigneault, Tom Brewer and Aisha Kabani.

Chair Austin welcomed Maria Batayola back to the Network. Ms. Batayola said she moved to Bellevue to get married having worked for the city of Seattle. She said some 30 years of her career was spent focused on equity programs and human resources. She said she has an art background and has one grown child.

B. Adoption of the Agenda

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

C. Adoption of the Minutes: April 25, 2017

Mr. Bien called attention to the fifth paragraph on page 6 of the minutes and asked to have it revised to read “Mr. Bien said it was his understanding that since the Network is not a board or commission, the Open Public Meetings Act would apply. Mr. Manuel said he followed up with the City Manager’s office and learned that because the Network is only an advisory body, it is not held to the same standard as a board or commission. The meeting minutes will be part of the official record.”

Mr. Bakr referred to the sixty paragraph on page 5 and noted that the reference he made to candy in his culture referred to love without benefits.

A motion to approve the minutes as amended was made by Mr. Yu. The motion was seconded by Mr. Kelly and the motion carried without dissent; Ms. Batayola abstained from voting.

2. SPECIAL PRESENTATION: Elaine Acacia, Diversity and Inclusion Administrator

A. Diversity Liaisons

B. Diversity Assessment

Mark Manuel, Diversity Outreach and Engagement Administrator, explained that Elaine Acacia does all of the internal work relative to diversity at the city. Her work has included laying down the foundations for having diversity liaisons in each city department. He said as the Network moves toward firming up its role in the community, it will be very important to understand the work done internally at City Hall.

Ms. Acacio said her focus is on organizational development and moving the needle on the recommendations of the Bellevue diversity advantage plan. She said she has been working with the various departments, sharing with them information tailored to the work they do. Collectively, the information applies citywide.

Ms. Acacio said her family immigrated to the United States from the Philippines when she was seven years old, making English her second language. She said on arrival in the county her English skills consisted of being able to say “yes,” “no” and “I do not understand.” She said over the years she had learned other languages, but along the way has lost her first language. Learning that she was different was a very poignant part of her childhood, and it was triggered by seeing one of her teachers conducting a home visit. Many years later she discovered that her teacher had recommended to her parents that they stop speaking Tagalong in the home. The event serves as a reminder of the sacrifices made by her parents on her behalf. She said she was the first person in her family to graduate from college and dug deeply into learning different languages, which in turn led to being able to see different ways of being. Her career path carried into doing a lot of travel internationally working in the area of international development where she learned the importance of being able to work with local individuals to bring about change rather than having service providers and/or missionaries come in to do the development work.

Ms. Acacio said relationships are absolutely essential for moving conversations along. She said her perspective on the organizational end is that she can do good work, as can Mr. Manuel, but what will matter is what will be left after both are gone. The sustainability factor lies with the advocates and champions in each department that will lead to structural and organizational changes. She said she hoped to drive throughout the organization changes to the ways in which business is done in terms of providing services to residents and in terms of how the staff treat one another.

Ms. Acacio said the fact that she spent her formative years in Latin America has crafted her understanding of grassroots movements. She said if she wanted to drive anything by working with a single person, that certainly could be done, but the effects would not necessarily be long lasting. On the other hand, while it is slower to bring many people on board, the impacts will be deeper and will last longer. One focus will be on being literate with regard to the diversity guiding principles and what accessibility really means. There is a need to understand the urgent needs of the community, but there is also a need to align them with the urgent needs of the organization.

There are various high-level citywide initiatives under way. They include training, hiring, the multicultural center, and the work of the Diversity Advisory Network. A project with the finance department to develop a procurement diversity and inclusion plan is in the works.

Ms. Acacio said because the scope of the work on diversity is so wide, it will not be possible for it all to get done through the work of just two full-time employees. The One City approach that the city utilizes involves shared leadership with representation from each of the fourteen different departments. Over the past year, the departmental team has been focused on defining their roles and the ways to bring about accountability. Throughout the coming year, the focus will be on creating departmental strategic work plans that will coincide with the five guiding principles of A-E-I-O-U, which stands for access, equity, inclusion, opportunity, and understanding cultural competence.

One of the mandates is that within five years, all will have taken cultural competence training, a nine-hour course that will be offered to the city’s boards and commissions. All participants take a pre-training and post-training survey. The diversity liaisons follow up with tracking what was learned and how the information is translated into implementation ideas.

A big game-change for the internal organization will be the city’s hiring practices and efforts to retain staff. There is more training on implicit bias for all hiring managers and interview panels, and there is tracking of the process in terms of aggregating gender and race. HR has been giving a presentation to the leadership team on a quarterly basis about where the candidate pool is, how the filtering process is working, and who is getting hired. Hiring managers, of course, want to hire the best candidates, but that is not always mutually exclusive to diversity. The reports the departments get are specific to positions.

Ms. Whitehead asked what major differences have occurred in the two years the initiative has been in place. Ms. Acacio said the initiative was launched in 2015 and the process of drafting the strategies began that same year. However, the rollout of the strategies did not occur until the fall of 2016. There has been less than a year of training and tracking. Ms. Whitehead asked at what point the city will be intentional about assuring diversity in hiring, and who will be the person responsible. She said she participated in Bellevue Essentials and every person she encountered in a major leadership role was a person of color. Ms. Acacio allowed that there has been little change in the ways in which people are getting hired. She said she is in the process of creating a scorecard for the City Manager. It will include a tracking mechanism for the hiring in each department as well as a performance evaluation for each director. One big change lies in the fact that the city has developed a process in which the hiring managers and review teams see only numbers as a way of taking away prejudices from the hiring process. If a couple of years out the tracking shows hiring numbers that are not changing, even if the pool of applicants is diverse, it will be a clear indicator of a need for new processes, or that implicit bias is continuing to be a factor.

Ms. Bopshetty pointed out the need to scope the job descriptions themselves to avoid attracting or detracting certain kinds of applicants, and to be very particular about the final list of candidates, especially for senior positions. Ms. Acacia said the hiring manual includes information about how to write a job description that can speak to various levels. The descriptions for some city jobs were in fact written 20 years ago and should be reviewed and revised.

Ms. Batayola stressed the need to fulfill the legal requirements around tracking race and gender. However, at some point the city will need to articulate what its hiring goals are relative to diversity and based on the legal affirmative action requirements. The diversity piece will actually be an equity analysis within the hiring process. Ms. Acacio said there is a real desire to be able to tell the whole story. In addition to recruitment, she said she is working with IT and other departments to compile age and other soft-disclosed diversity and social identifiers. The tracking involves gathering data at the time of hiring, while employees are in the system, and as they exit the system, in part to see who the city is and is not able to retain.

Ms. Acacio said a third member of the team is yet to be hired, so things such as ADA self evaluation and transition planning, as well as Title VI issues, are ongoing but are occurring outside of the team. In terms of language access, which is one component of Title VI, the team is looking at what the current resources are and making sure they are used. Prior to the team coming on board, only a couple of departments had access to the language line service; that barrier has been lowered by making sure all departments citywide have access to it. Residents need to know the service is available, but staff needs to use it. Where it is used, tracking allows for determining the most commonly used languages, the length of each contact, and which departments are using the service the most.

The team is also working in partnership with the finance department on procurement and contracting. The city has various ways in which it spends money, and the tracking being done is very specific to professional services. Bellevue’s numbers are better than other cities, but with the initiative the procurement processes will run in parallel with the diversity hiring initiative.

Ms. Acacio said the city has certain data capabilities that need to be communicated to outreach folks. For instance, the city can use its GIS capabilities to look within neighborhoods to identify the top languages spoken in each. That can be useful in developing community programs and conducting general outreach activities. The data is drawn from census and other sources and the drive is to make the information widely available.

Ms. Acacio said before the team was put in place, the large management team was queried and from that work areas in need of revision were made clear. Every department is involved in the process of actively determining how to embed in policy the five guiding principles regarding recruitment and on-boarding, training, programs and services, communication and outreach. Once all 14 departments complete their individual plans, an attempt will be made to synthesize the work to determine what each department is doing relative to each category, and what strategies and tactics will be needed.

Ms. Bopshetty asked if recommendations will be made for inclusion across all of the plans. Ms. Acacio said in 2016 the diversity liaisons did a very high level organizational assessment and inventory. Their report included a number of recommendations. The current iteration of work will rely on those recommendations in going forward.

Mr. Bien asked what steps have had to be taken to get people on board with the new approach. Ms. Acacio said pushback against any type of diversity initiative can be expected in any organization. Leadership is clearly on board, but there has been some resistance on the part of middle managers. They are the ones that need to understand it the most given that they will be the ones tasked with getting everyone on board.

Mr. Manuel said the departmental diversity liaisons are scheduled to meet with the Diversity Advisory Network at an upcoming meeting.

3. RAPID FIRE EXERCISE

For the ice breaker, a beach ball was tossed around the room and the person who caught the ball had to answer the question printed on the side of the ball facing them.

Ms. Flores caught the ball and answered a question about her best outdoor travel experience. She said she loves to camp during the summer months.

Mr. Kelly caught the ball and answered a question about who he would like to meet if he could meet anyone. He said he would like to meet state legislators from his district and have an honest conversation with them.

Ms. Tran caught the ball and answered a question about her fondest memory from last weekend. She said she worked all weekend but found time to cook carne asada.

Ms. Batayola caught the ball and answered a question about her fondest memory from last weekend. She said she went kayaking at the Nisqually Nationally Wildlife Refuge.

Ms. Whitehead caught the ball and answered a question about who she would like to meet if she could meet any person. She said she would like to meet Barak Obama.

Mr. Yu caught the ball and answered a question about his best outdoor experience. He said four years ago he took his whole family to Cancun, Mexico, where on the last day of the vacation his son and daughter suggested they would rather stay in Mexico while he and his wife returned home.

Ms. Ye caught the ball and answered a question about who she would like to meet if she could meet anyone. She said she would like to meet Nicola Tesla.

Mr. Flores caught the ball and answered a question about his fondest memory from last weekend. He said he went camping and had a great time without knowing where he was exactly.

Mr. Bakr caught the ball and answered a question about who he would like to meet if he could meet anyone. He said he would want to meet the prophet Mohammad.

Ms. Bopshetty caught the ball and followed the direction to take something from her purse or pocket and share a story about it. She pulled out a book titled *The Gifts of Imperfection* that she purchased for her perfectionist 17 year old daughter who is very hard on herself when she does not do as well as she wants to. She said she since realized she needs the book herself.

Ms. Kojima caught the ball and answered a question about her best outdoor experience. She said about four years ago she and her family went on a cruise to Italy and Spain.

Ms. Badh caught the ball and followed the direction to take something from her purse or pocket and share a story about it. She chose pencil and said it was her favorite and just the right color.

Chair Austin caught the ball and answered a question about what superpower he would like to have. He said he would like to be able to fly to get from one place to another much quicker.

Mr. Bien caught the ball and answered a question about who he would like to meet if he could meet anyone. He said there is a story in his family than an ancestor many years ago had red hair, a big beard and green eyes. He said many have said he does not look particularly Chinese and would like to go back and meet the ancestor with red hair to find out what his story was.

Ms. Karls caught the ball and answered a question about what superpower she would like to have. She said she would like to be able to teleport across time and space.

Mr. Manuel caught the ball and answered a question about his fondest memory from last weekend. He said he and his family were at the beach where it was sunny.

Ms. Poesukova caught the ball and answered a question about the greatest throw she had ever seen. She presented to the group one of her climbing water bottles that had been dropped from 700 meters and received hardly a scratch.

4. SUBCOMMITTEE WORK

Mr. Manuel said he and Chair Austin and Ms. Badh have been putting a lot of thought into what the Network’s process and model should be. While things are still at a preliminary stage, he shared with the members a written synopsis of what things could look like. He called attention first to the A-E-I-O-U guiding principles and noted that the work the Network is planning to do in the community will need to parallel the principles. Some clarity of purpose is needed so every member of the Network can answer questions about what the Network does.

The mission of the Network is to increase the city’s ability for outreach and communication, engagement, and culturally responsible government. The city has a number of initiatives that are continually looking for feedback from the community, and they consistently come back saying the city falls short on the diversity end of things. At the same time, some groups under the broad definition of diversity get overlooked, including those with disabilities and members of the LBGTQ community, when engaging in outreach opportunities. All of the city initiatives require a different level of engagement. For example, the Human Services Commission may come to the Network seeking input on how to tap into a particular community. The Neighborhood area planners may come seeking support for a process that will take three years. The multicultural center may want to identify opportunities to talk about art and the needs of the community around art and/or cultural preservation. Each instance presents an opportunity, though not always with the same ask. Each of those organizations have already in some fashion or another asked when the Network will be ready to help them. There is a clear need to pilot a couple of small projects first as a way of refining the process before fully opening up for business. Groups will need to understand the Network’s process as well as the Network’s limitations.

Mr. Manuel proposed tackling three or so projects in the coming year, working directly with the departmental liaisons and those running the search, and in the process create together an outreach strategy. A database the city can rely on will be built in the process, and every project will add to it. After several projects, the result will hopefully be a fairly robust system.

Ms. Batayola said she assumed that the outreach with the departments will be happening at the same time. She said the ultimate potential is to be able to offer a systemic recommendation. She said there is a process she uses in deconstructing community outreach and engagement systems. She said she looks first at the cycle of the work and looking at each portion with an eye on what it would look like if it included inclusive multicultural components. Doing things in that way will yield a larger sense of what everyone should be doing. She shared an example of working with Seattle on hazardous waste material outreach. She said it was realized that to build capacity in the city it would be necessary to go to the communities. The traditional approach of giving grants by ethnicity was creating a competitive environment, which is the opposite of community building. The focus was changed to areas rather than ethnicity, and the process involved engaging in cross-cultural competency. If used, the process could yield a better understanding and a larger dialog with the people who are doing the work.

Ms. Bopshetty said she did not consider herself capable of representing any of the groups. Making assumptions otherwise would be dangerous.

Mr. Bien said the thought that came immediately to his mind was that three projects in a single year would mean a lot of work. As it is, the Network is hardly able to make it through a single meeting on time. He agreed the deconstruction process might make more sense.

Ms. Badh said the challenge lies in the enormity of what the Network will be undertaking. It will need to be done in a methodical and balanced way.

Ms. Batayola suggested that the intent is not to be methodical but rather to be intentional about the inclusion aspects.

Answering a question asked by Ms. Flores, Mr. Manuel said the mission of the Network is to provide support and advice on ways to improve the city’s ability to communicate, collaborate and better serve Bellevue’s diverse community.

Chair Austin said things got complicated in considering the Network process and trying to develop the whole thing at once. A process is needed for how to tackle issues and how to assess requests as they come forward. The Network members will serve as advisors for Bellevue’s diverse community, but a communication strategy will need to be identified. A subcommittee is tasked with looking at strategy relative to definitions, which may be different for every project. Information will flow out to the community in various means, and information that comes back to the Network will need to be reviewed and quantified before pushing it up to city leaders. It will be necessary for the Network to identify how its members can all be talking about the same things using the same process.

Mr. Manuel asked Ms. Batayola if she was suggesting looking back and doing a current assessment of what is rather than moving forward immediately with the process. Ms. Batayola said it is a collaborative with the people doing the work. The Network should characterize the process and recognize that each organizational entity in the city has a fairly standardized way of doing business, which is not always in line with the fact that people of color cultures are mostly relational. With that in mind, the Network should go through each stage with an eye on what the process would look like if it were relational and relevant to people of color. There are a lot of old definitions on the difference between outreach and engagement, because there is a shift in power. That may be something the Network will want to recommend. Any deconstruction should occur at the macro level looking at the life of the change in structure and the individual actors to be trained.

Ms. Badh said one question is whether or not they will be willing to take that kind of feedback and if they will even want that kind of perspective from the Network. Ms. Batayola suggested it will not be about them accepting feedback from the Network, rather it will be about the Network being clear about its role. The Network will ultimately want to make general recommendations about how to have internal consistency on how to provide technical assistance on specific projects.

Ms. Ye stressed the importance of categorizing all the different programs and functions. Eventually the Network will get really good at it, but in the beginning help will be needed in understanding what each department does and will need.

Ms. Batayola said the gift of that approach is that the departments would do the work. Mr. Manuel agreed but said the Network will have to do work as well. Until the Network begins talking and working with the constituents, it should avoid trying to rely on past experiences. The model involves the constituents learning at the same time the Network is learning. It is a joint process for a number of reasons. The Network has to be tight about how it presents itself as a city entity or as representatives of the city. Additionally, the Network should not seek to set up a system the constituents will be totally dependent on; the intent has never been for the departments to inform the Network about what needs to happen and then sit back and let the Network do all the work. The idea is to work hand in hand toward better understanding the city’s needs, requirements and assets. There are, of course capacity issues to keep in mind.

Ms. Batayola said outreach and engagement will be a process in itself. The Network and the various departments will need to become aware of their own assumptions and which of them will best serve the goals of Bellevue. The first step should be to be clear regarding processes and the Network’s cross-cultural gift to the overall process. Mr. Manuel said once the Network identifies its process, it will be necessary to determine how to relay it clearly to the various departments and entities.

Mr. Yu suggested identifying one or two projects to work on. He said by engaging in the actual work, the process elements will become clear.

Mr. Kelly agreed and said there likely will be common themes identified. It will be interesting going forward to see how what is taken in will be outlined and what will be turned around and given back.

Mr. Manuel commented that while the terminology may differ, at the heart of it all is what is being done currently by the departments, how can it be done better, and how the Network can help the departments make it better. There has been some thinking done already by the individual departments, the results of which are evident in the departmental assessments that were done in 2016, the executive summary of which will be provided to the Network members.

Ms. Poesukova said the relationship between the Network and the departments and the community should be mutually beneficial. She said she works within a very particular community

Ms. Tran proposed focusing on a single area and planning and designing an approach. If successful, the process could be repeated by focusing on the next area.

Ms. Ye said the danger of moving forward without a full understanding of the department programs and processes is that the much of the time could be wasted. Processes can get very detailed, and the more detailed they are, the more danger there is resulting from being locked in to a process and not being able to get out. Additionally, the Network process may not mesh with the departments processes, and that could create conflicts. The Network should seek to understand the department processes and their shortcomings when it comes to diversity, and identify the areas to address with support.

Mr. Manuel allowed that there will be some messiness that will need to happen. He said if the Network wants to end up with its fingerprints on the processes, it will need to put them there by working with the departments directly on strategies.

Ms. Karls agreed the Network should seek to identify and analyze the status quo while working toward a model that will work for everyone.

Mr. Manuel said the model on the table was intended to serve as a way to start the conversation. The question is whether or not there are other ways of looking at it. Deconstructing the current processes would be one approach. The best outcome will be achieved by allowing all Network members to have input into what the process should look like. At some point, there will need to be agreement on what the Network has bought into.

Ms. Whitehead said she undertook a similar process when she was an administrator for the Lake Washington School District. She said the first thing that had to be identified was the desired outcome. Once the outcome was clear, the group worked backwards to identify the process needed to achieve the outcome. It will not be possible to say if a process is working or not until the desired outcome is known.

Mr. Flores said Youth Eastside Services works with promotores in the community, and one of the outcomes has been how to do outreach to the Latino community. He said there are various existing organizations within the community that understand the different needs in the Latino community. He said YES went to them and provided them with tools and support on the hope that they in turn would do outreach to their own groups and communities. The promotores did the work of reaching out to the community, and the second stage involved gathering that information and hosting a meeting aimed at building relationships. Since that time effort has been continually put into continuing the engagement.

Chair Austin recapped that the leadership team did not look at what is driving the process. He said the focus was not on specific outcomes but rather a process that will work with any of the groups. He said he wanted to see the Network work on creating a process that can be applied to various projects.

Mr. Manuel allowed that the conversation was a difficult one given the multiple perspectives brought to the table by the Network members. The work is about to begin.

5. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Manuel informed the members about the *Under Our Skin* event on May 31. He said more than 120 people have signed up to participate. The event will begin with an information session, then the attendees will divide into small groups. Network members will roam the room seeking to get conversations started, or to get conversations calmed down where necessary.

6. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn was made by Ms. Flores. The motion was seconded by Ms. Badh and the motion carried unanimously.

Chair Austin adjourned the meeting at 8:11 p.m.