

MINUTES FROM SPECIAL MEETING

Commission on Racial Justice and Equity

Thursday October 14, 2021

7:00pm

Held Via Zoom

Meeting began at 7:00pm. In attendance were Alina Bricklin-Goldstein, Deb Carroll, Barret Katuna, Tracy-Ann Johnson, Amo-Mensah Amofa, Sue Oppenheimer, Dave Peniston, Lillian Tanski, Jen Wang,

No Public Comment

DC: Mike will give us their final report by end of next week, including interview with big 4. Wait until we get that report and release that to the public instead of what we presented at the community conversation.

DP: wouldn't have a problem putting handout, and say there will be a more extensive full report. So public don't think "oh what are they holding."

AB: question about the data and how we're presenting it? Is this the end of our formal data collection? When we interviewed the two research firms, was under the impression we would have other modes of collecting data. Resolution: should primarily be data from the BIPOC population.

DC we've said this is scope, we haven't hit a lot of those points yet. We have a Jan deadline for our recommendations to Council. Have a report from Great Blue - survey, big 4, community conversations, and then there's our report and recommendations that basically speaks to that information and speaks to Council (two diff pieces in there). What else we need to ask of Great Blue, what responsibilities we can tackle.

AB: we were talking about phone, etc... Spanish... I had understood that that was part of the sell b/c we'd need to reach out to some communities where ESL. Jan is v soon

DC: We went into those interviews w/o a structured plan of our own. It may be that we've run out the meter in time with GB with what we've currently paid them. If we come up with list of remaining asks, candid with them, is this sth based on initial convos, our work has taken much longer, do we need to seek additional funding, what's our best approach at this point?

AB: How many of those residents of BIPOC community actually answered? Just don't know we have enough.

% of respondents who are BIPOC is higher than % of population.

Mike will record the presentation again.

Should have a formal apology from us posted - obviously technical difficulties happen, we were all likewise disappointed. As the town entity in charge, would be important for us to do that.

LT: Check with Mike about listening sessions, include notecards/addendum as part of our recommendations - if they don't make it into a formal GB market report.

Recs: it's still a work in progress for us to reach out to residents who are BIPOC.

AA: Following initial data, brought up certain info retained myself, and stuff Mike brought. Bring it into conversation with friends who are of diverse backgrounds and some who aren't. Honing in on some key takeaways: I wasn't able to give them the hard facts, but it did stir up genuine conversation as to their perception. I was taken aback when initial when people said this isn't a representation of Glastonbury. Will that initial data be accessible to people? But it did generate genuine convo. Have input from people who weren't able to take the survey but have input.

DP: had one gentleman who was critical of our results when he saw the different groups, questioned the validity of our info b/c it's all liberal. I know we have a diverse group. When I saw some of the groups I released it too, TALK, MLK. Were there groups that were of conservative groups that

LT: don't know that there are formal groups per se that are considered conservative. But did a lot of personal outreach with conservative people. A lot of people who declined to list their race were conservative voices. Know a lot of people who were like that person - that this doesn't represent. One of the findings we could use is what does equity mean? Overwhelmingly about being treated opportunity, treated fairly. Our language about making sure community worked for everyone.

TJ: can't help but reflect on a certain BOE meeting, same people - battling CRT. Knew from day 1 that this is a bipartisan group. Why is it always that when we talk about change, it's a liberal issue.

LT: T-A points to a tremendous space of conversation. There are certain people who will never be convinced. We were formed in a completely nonpartisan fashion. We do have Republican members. There are a lot of Conservative people who share our concern that we should learn our history, equal opportunity and that's not happening. So we should be doing active work in our community. If we want to communicate with more conservative people - that Tracy-Ann's point is a great starting point. We know that you want equal opportunity for people too.

DC: we as a Commission defy the idea that conversations on race are just in the liberal wheelhouse.
Council meetings: we disagree on a billion other things, but this is something we're both really on board with.
Maybe that's how we bring in the middle.

BK: we should acknowledge from the start our limitations.

Feedback from members on logistics of Community Conversation (what worked, what needs to change for next CC)

BK: it was important to have intros to who we were earlier. At that point Mike had already started. Engaging with people in the room. That was the first time we were all together.

LT: Understand why we didn't do it in first meeting, if we can lead with distributing something that has our contact info right on there, so we're giving the hello/ask right off the top. Biggest goal we still need to find a way to hit: need to have some sort of conversations where we've done targeted outreach to the communities that are typically under-represented in town meetings. And engage in outreach to bring into the conversation to share those experiences. TALK event we co-hosted v powerful.

AB: we called our first meeting a community conversation, but there wasn't conversation.

DC: either we change the rules, or we don't call it a community conversation. If we're going to call it that, how do we make a conversation in a room that has 50 people in it?

SO: echoing what Alina said. Feel we didn't have a convo. Felt very frustrated that we weren't able to respond to things that were said. When it was said 849 people - wanted to say we all went out of our way to get people to take the survey, but we were up against some roadblocks. Really think next meeting needs to have questions asked of people.

DC: physical setup is something we should think about. This is a real learning curve for all of us. Figuring out what this could and should look like going forward.

JW:

We did say this was meant to be presentation of data. Going forward: general conversations - define goal and then BIPOC conversations:

Reciprocity - what are we giving back to people for putting them in this vulnerable position?

AB:

Timeline should be high on our agenda to figure out. Work backward from it.

Vulnerable convos: if we come to them instead of making them come to us. Eg someone hosting in their home, places of worship, etc.

DC: if we're looking to have further conversation and gather data. Lillian and I can put together a bullet list of 'this is what that looks like'. Lillian and I talked about this on Oct 26 - last one before election. Were going to ask if Council would leave us on the Commission no matter outcome of election, until we made our report. And can we have more time to make our report b/c we have some more work to do.

LT: I would like us to meet the deadline with something. Would like us to discuss: what recommendations can we clearly see from the data we have right now. We can say to Council, our work is not done, and recommendations include ways in which it's incomplete and what still needs to be done. Would it be appropriate for us to say please keep us on at least in short term. if we push it out, loses sense of urgency of sth being recommended and Council doing something. But also be prepared, say this needs to go further than this.

JW: agree with presenting Council with something in Jan. But going forward very uncertain... existential question.

DP: we said we didn't want a discussion b/c we wanted Mike to do his presentation and have short Q&A. But what I'm really worried about: when we first started, I was so excited and the art contest was kick-ass, when we hired Mike and saw survey - this giving us legitimacy. Worried that when you guys go to Town Council, well why should we agree... want to get some interest going. That middle group. Get the public back - they're thinking this Commission can really do some. If we polled a bunch of people - a lot of people are like "what are they doing/ accomplishing?" For this next discussion we need to hit it out of the park. Think we can do it. They initially were, but now they have a lot of questions, want to see results, what's our game plan. We need to have a good second discussion. If no, won't get the support of Council. How do we... do we do a presentation at Welles Village, do we reach out to the REAL Glastonbury

DC: great point about generating interest.

DP: will there be another conversation before year-end?

DC: Before year-end, yes. Before election, no. Pandemic did slow us down.

Debrief on index cards/comments/conversations from CC

Lillian has a bias to it: the Detroit community did wrong... when saw diff in results: cultural events. Could be put immediately before Council re: cultural events.

Deb runs a middle school book club, a parent is a professor at Yale who studies ethnicity, race, and migration. She reached out - Vietnamese American, this is the work that she does - trying to find ways to have community conversations. She said, people don't want to show up if they think they're going to be lectured to, if they want to share sth nice and feed them.

AB: Lillian that point about the cultural events (slide 27) is one thing I noted. white > bipoc in ALL answers to that question EXCEPT cultural events. something to focus in on.

Discussion on scope/goals of remaining work>resolution

DC: What is our road ahead, benchmarks. A list of what we need to do:

- Convos with members of our BIPOC community

JW: Data on racial disparities eg in school disciplinary measures, arrests, hiring/retention,

DC: I think what will end up happening with crafting a recommendation to council: working groups. Who is making asks of what groups in our community. That will inform our agenda.

DP: if another discussion before year-end, that's going to come up real fast. Next meeting: need to figure out dates/timeline - what format? Focus on results, themes from survey, ?

DC: what I saw in index card responses, folks who came to me, etc. Sounds like next convo needs to be one that's smaller in scale and much more open in format. Instead of "here's our data, what do you think?" - ask more in format of housing authority conversation - we want to hear your experiences, here's the mic.

Discussion on game plan for report to Town Council>milestone schedule

We don't know, but need to report sth to them in Jan. LT and DC at next Council meeting will give them an update and let the Council know we'll have a prelim report in Jan, would like to remain on Commission regardless of outcome, and would like more time to report to you for the following reasons.

Would like someone to give us a draft schedule. When do we need to have a working group for particular areas of our report/recs. Map out for us what our timeline is?

Barret+Jen -- WGs, when CC, action timeline. Small group meetings to get a starter for 10.

Next meeting dates: Nov 4 and 18.

Next steps: what RJEC can/could become

LT and DC met with Town Manager on Monday, talked about what RJEC could be after we make a report.

Acc to resolution, there's no charge for the Commission after that point. 2 primary roads:

1. Active Commission in town - pro: have town support. Brand of legitimacy that you may or may not think is important. Tech / meeting support, town funding if approved by Council. Need to demonstrate to TC that this is sth that has legs.
2. One of recs: to continue like the MLK initiative - independent body that gives us more flexibility in terms
3. of operation, the kinds of meetings you hold, tech details - posting meeting agendas etc.

There are pros/cons to both. Not wedded.

LT: whatever form the Commission takes going forward, we think it would be wise to somewhat divest it from direct Council influence. Having any elected officials rep: be an ex-officio manner rather than in leadership. Commission that has its own voice separate from elected bodies, even if it works in concert with.

DC: we both believe in this work, and have gotten feedback and criticism about us co-chaired by members of TC. Positives, but certainly puts parameters. What is each of our role, what positions? Personally would like to have someone say they'll take minutes.

Collaborations: individual, organizations, grants

A lot of convo, partnership, speakers, grants. Lillian: met with parent of one of kids, she brought to my attention a couple orgs she works with that offers grants to municipalities and private orgs to put together the kind of work that we're doing, offer a kind of sustaining model for that. If we work with the Town as a formal Commission, the town takes care of grants. If we're more like MLK initiative, we do the grant work.

JW: on last two agenda points: both big questions and maybe a little premature to answer. Need to define our charter, which has evolved from time or resolution. We also have mission statement. Grantwriting / going independent is a big deal - there are other groups in community like MLK, TALK SJC that can play a role.

DC: yes and Council will change in 3 weeks. ...

Meeting adjourned at 8:45pm