

Nov 18, 2020

WHCA Meeting 2 Minutes
Special meeting

2020 DEC 1 11:43

Role Call:

Present: Last, Perno, Flemmig, Hoskie, Patterson, Hamilton, McGee, Bane, Johnston
Absent: Rossi

Introduction of members

Reading of quotes (Morrison, Kendi, ?)

Public Session:

Samantha DeGennaro 97 Holcombe street
Hispanic, Arab Speaking community, need for language resources (intimidated by public speaking) we need to find ways to include them

2020 DEC 1 11:43
TOWN OF WEST HAVEN

Mission Statement: tabled, Chair McGee asks us to reiterate why we are here.

Liz: we came together under premise that racism exists. Calls for 4 norms for talking about race: stay engaged, expect discomfort, share your truth, expect and accept non-closure.

Mike: wants collaboration, wants writers to take the feedback suggestions and wants positive environment to work on this, we are saying that BoE has a racist curriculum. Wants diverse curriculum. Wants wording to bring people together. Discussed resolution language: Citizen vs resident, agrees that cancer should be added to public health portion

McGee: agrees with create vs ensure, likes change of citizen to resident, wants to include cancer, all resolutions researched are aggressive. Racism is an institution...by not talking about these things we are supporting racist curriculum. We need to create a curriculum that is representative. Outside of February Black History Month. Exclusionary hiring. Cites Boe Teacher demographics: 1 Asian, 16 Latino, 17 African American, 526 White teachers. Cites numbers for City employees: 4 Asian, 11 Latino, 22 African American, 311 white. Racially diverse town, teaching force and work force do not reflect that. Disappointing, frustrating. We are here bc we care about our community.

Perno: Against 'exclusionary practices', WHPD hiring practices not exclusionary. Blind application process. wants that language out because of minority recruitment work WHPD has done.

McGee: exclusion refers to specific system

Bridgette: supports the resolution in general but finds language divisive. She called BoE, Fire Dept, was told Allingtown had no black men pass the test. We have to fix that. Minority recruitment. How are they defining that statement. Perception is key. Write something that people of West Haven can read and understand. Called Neil. Equal opportunity employment

effort, diversity work has been done. Writing a whole new practice to try to recruit. They advertise in places that help them recruit minorities. Do we know how many applicants apply and are rejected?. Sounds like we are accusing departments. Shared resolution with those she trusts: prosecutor, teacher, sons who objected to the language.

Brandon: Never met a racist that said they are racist. Never met anyone who said they disagree with diversity. Yet, problems persist. Racism automatic emotional response, despite diversity, the problem remains. Racism is a problem but I am not responsible for it. Racism needs to be actively called out. Persisted. Language sounds accusatory because it has to be. Data has been stated. We don't have the representation. Inequities have sustained. How are we going to fix it? How are we giving people something to point to? Union contract: 11 admin should be of color. We don't have one. We know Chasms exist. We need to call them out explicitly. Historical reality of 400 years that has subjugated black people. If we can't be anti-racist, why are we here? Mentions the diversity liaison hire at high school. Novel effort. Not enough for the entire system. Huge minority groups in WH. Can't be job of one person. What support is being provided. Sites disproportionate disciplinary rates data by race. Diversity is comfortable. We are here because there is a problem. Collaborative.....community needs to be challenged. Mitigate for historical reality. Hence a pointed resolution.

Liz: appreciate need to make doc palatable for buy-in. Insulting to say WH residents won't be able to read/accept this. What would happen if we were not defensive, but rather asked: what can I do? Anti-racist curriculum is pedagogical. A push towards change. Not an insult to WH BoE. It is happening elsewhere. Other resolutions are pointed. This is hard to talk about. Policies vs people. Addresses Perno's aforementioned policies. Perhaps those policies could help other depts. Need more diverse teacher force. Research shows students do better with representative teachers. Wishes her kids had teachers that look like them. Thinks resolution should be collaborative. Writers should consider the audience, but certain words need to remain.

Lee: Applauds McGee, thankless task for no money...seeking positive resolution. Question of motivation. Says he is part of city hiring. Cites Perno's recruitment. Shares 1947 Jackie Robinson analogy, wants diverse workforce, we may be leaving qualified players/human resources on the bench. Does not want doc to be a feel good document. Psychiatric Dsm included to be declared mental disorder. Goal oriented resolution. Mentions his perspective as white male, doesn't want to discuss hiring practices with POC if there hasn't been a diverse process. Resolution should be positive: We need more diversity because.....not saying we are racist. I want to be viewed as someone who is not racist. Effect change. We don't want to leave anybody on the bench because that would make WH a better place; everyone can feel good about that. Perhaps include annual reports re:hiring, etc. How did you get the word out? We want to feel good. Public health, public safety, park and rec, public work. Use reports to start asking the important questions. Effectuate change. We want people like me, when we face you, to feel good. Boe: we are clearly leaving valuable resources on the bench. Are we documenting processes? I want resolution to affect how we deliver resources.

McGee: Desire was to be collaborative. Desire was to work together. My work in ensemble and community engagement lends to that. This was a task people ran from. Try understand rather than defensiveness. Some who reached out asked questions in desire to move forward. But Silence from those I serve with. Knows there is an idea that she is holding on to the doc, rather than hanging on to the idea. Thanks Johnston for help.

Mike: resolution is important. Thank you for putting it forward. Looked at others city resolutions, they are similar. But....we have to have those conversations after passing the resolution. Everyone needs to be comfortable. We need to be able to get departments in the room to work with us. Some language might discourage that. Res must say we have a problem. How do we fix it? Bring departments together. What can we do better? Don't want to put a doc out that is accusatory. Let's ask the questions rather than accusing. Suggests search Committees. Likes Hamden resolution bc it is not accusatory. Let's pass resolution then pull groups in to have tough conversations.

Perno: suggestion for resolution: make it positive. Change the language. WHPD tries to recruit but not competitive without pension. Inclusion is selling point...what PD can offer new hires. Inclusion vs exclusion. Used to have 500 applicants, down to 200. No pension, low pay. Police occupation not most popular in current protest climate. Change focus of resolution to be on what we want, not what we have done wrong. WHPD Welcomes diversity of applicants. Has had conversations about how to do things better. You'll get a more positive reaction with positivity.

Liz: how to move forward. Would it help to ID all language that makes res not pass in committee? Worried about time.

Brandon: Discussion is necessary. Wants to hear all proposed suggestions/changes.

Bane: The leverage is love and vision, but needs diagnostic. Which is uncomfortable. Diagnostic and love. Doctor metaphor. Enjoyed the dialogue. Problem/solution. We can work through this. Resolution must have diagnosis and inspiring language. They believe WH can rise to this. Attentiveness and engagement. Applauds writers, committee, public members watching. Visionary language could call the city to persevere.

Interruptions from public....McGee states out of order. Suggests audience members email her ideas since she missed public session opportunity. McGee suggests honoring Brandon's request to hear all suggestions from committee,

Suggestions heard:

Mike: Problem with Exclusion, if anti-racist curriculum exists, I am ok, but suggested diverse.

Liz: basic difference from diverse to anti-racist curriculum is celebratory vs activism. Anti-biased curriculum moves beyond race. Liz's suggestions: climate change/pollution, cancer and air quality. Wants buy in. Not attacking BoE. Shining light on problems. Wants more diverse faculty.

Willing to work on document. Doesn't want to remove words: race, racist, anti-racist. Doesn't object to removing word exclusionary.

Trenee: Encouraged by discussion. Supports language of anti-racist because it shows stance against racism. Feels personal to have that word rejected. Neutrality is a stance that does nothing. Shares story about being teaching artist to illustrate how anti-racist teaching can work with small kids. WH education could do more to encourage students to read multicultural lit. Past and future are important. Analogy/History of A-A not swimming, etc. Urban leagues to teach swimming. First need to identify the problem. Open to changing language.

Robbin: flexible. Unity and community. Change without the taking away integrity. This document is the teeth. Document cannot be untruthful. This hurts. This is a painful conversation for those experiencing racism and those who are asking if they're racist. We have to be comfortable with being uncomfortable. I sat with 2 white males. They wanted to understand more. They said Thank-you for talking to us. Glad West Haven is doing something. We need to keep growing. City has to be open to everybody. Diversity makes America great.

Brandon: perspective on comments. Negativity. Accusatory. Structural problem. We are here within it. Specify anti racist, otherwise complicit. We know the facts exist. We have to be specific. Recommend regarding exclusionary phrase: to mitigate for exclusion. Prevent exclusion. Anti-racist isn't diversity. Diversity is already the goal. No need to list the facts of inequity. They are here. You can't just say it is negative to say anti-racist. We have to be specific. Integrity of doc must remain. Action items are the goals. Already listed. We want to be anti-racist because structurally WH is no different than any other place in this nation.

Bridgette: not defensive, but passionate. Resolution out 2 months ago. Held back feedback because she'd see it again at City Council. On this committee we can disagree. Difference of opinion does not mean lack of support for resolution. Wants to have dialogue. Read multiple resolutions. Huge fan of Hamden resolution and New Britain. Doesn't have a problem with the term anti-racist. Believes the way it is written, the term is not understandable. No intention to insult anybody. Not defensive, but passionate. Mentions having kids of color and having been in relationships with men of color. Has Friends and family. Hears their stories. Mentions daughter's experience in stores being different from her peers. Shares that after George Floyd lost his cried on the phone with Hamilton. Sees and believes racism is a public health crisis. Writing it differently so that the public understands and knows. Suggests "Historically accurate curriculum that includes multiple perspectives for gender, race and culture" Suggests work cited page, Where does your data come from? Revealing sources would make it more credible. Believes people may not understand it. Not about insulting, it's about putting out something that everyone can read.

Fleming: not against the words. Present more positively. We will get more people on board.

Perno: oppose exclusionary policies. He will focus on 2nd page items 1-6. Doc can be read and interpreted many different ways. But he is focused on action items.

Brandon: keep integrity of the document. Data is credible. Proposed: mitigate for the perception of exclusion that could be indicated by the disparities that exist.

Pastor Bane: glossary of common definitions. Palatable and understandable. Residents: we need your trust. We need to build and protect that trust. The more we can make this inviting the better. Offending the mind exposes the heart. Define the word anti-racist in the context.

Robbin: what's next? Are we ready to go on? Revise. Recs considered. Back to committee. Next meeting. When will it go to the council?

Lee: we have to meet to vote.

Brandon: challenge the majority to influence change for minority. How can the minority be promoted?

Decided upon Special meeting. Wednesday 7:00 12/2 129 Bullhill lane (large white building)

McGee:

Sub-committees Assigned:

Education: Liz, Brandon, Trenee

Civil Service: Liz, Carl, Robbin

Community Engagement: Bane, Bridgette, Perno, Brandon

Rule and regulation: Trenee, Mike, Robbin

Closing remarks

Liz: thanks. I know this is hard.

Mike: I want this committee to be successful

Brandon: thank-you. Everybody here because of the reality of history. Not about animosity. We need to listen to the perspective. Adjusting realities.

Robbin: I feel good. West Haven is moving forward. Thank everybody.

Trenee: WH potential, I am grateful for the conversation. Challenging and expansive. Youth focused and youth centered.

Motion to Adjourn: Mike, seconded by Perno

Adjourned: 9:14

Email. Mike Dimassa: special meeting. Email date and space. Gateway Christain Fellowship.

12/2 CAWH Special Meeting

Call to order: 7:06

Roll call: Trenee McGee, Robbin Hamilton, Bridgette Hoskie, Paston Bane, Joe Perno, Carl Felmmig, Mike Last, Brandon Patterson, Liz Johnston

Absent Mayor Rossi

Pledge

Approval of minutes: McGee changes New Haven to West Haven. Hamilton asks to add date

Public Session:

K Tucker 156 Peabody St

Thanks CAWH and all the hard work. Hard conversation. Covid death rates are disproportionate. Not Perfect, but hard work that needs to be done

Monica Cloud

Recalls 11/18/2020 meeting

No one can tell a person who is black how to feel as a black person

Language meant to wake people up

Stop taking things personal

Repeats the norms

Unity is the key, but can't exist without change

Recites BoE and City employees stats

WH Firehouse applications/test not passed as display/justification for language

Lawsuits against BoE

Racism is not fluffy convenient or comfortable

Need resolution to make changes for people who have suffered

I experience it all the time here in WH

Sam DeGenarro 97 Holcoim street

Reflected on her talk at last meeting

Diversity training is white people's work; it is up to us

I applaud the work that has been done already--mostly by people of color

Action not words

Share as white person in WHBoE k-12

People are not bad--it is about systems

Example: mom able to bring forgotten homework to school, Italian last name as advantage. Not personal. Not about bad people. It is about systems. Put in the work so that this is not just a piece of paper.

24:2 11 8-111007

Steve Mullins 22 Oak Road

Thanks for the work--not getting paid. Volunteer work.

Sent mayor a letter after last meeting. Got no reply. Concern: lack of diversity on the board. 4 City council women, 2 police, etc. BoE: so many issues about BoE, but no members on this committee. No one from public health. Health department should be involved. No republicans. Ask mayor to add people. (Public health, BoE, Political diversity)

Michelle Grant 168 Tuthill street

Left last meeting frustrated, didn't know public session was only for beginning WHPS student. Curriculum is racist. History of the city. WHPD: no people of color can pass the test. Mowed down people in protest. Killing of Muhbaraak. History of West Haven needs to be addressed. Black and brown students labeled as SPED to receive funds. Experienced meeting as a parent and has been ridiculed. Spoken to disrespectfully. Deep rooted issues concern how kids are treated. Not enough teachers of color. Superintendent has turned the other cheek on kids who are having problems. Need more inclusive town.

Kara Patterson 66 Chestnut (read by Johnston)

Shares experiences about being Black student in WHPS and now as one of few Black teachers in WHPS. Shares several anecdotes (see recording)

Edward Macmillan 43 Dalton St

Issue is not only health care issues, rather: Education, transportation, finance are all parts of resolution. Res represents ppl not at the table. Not only about people but structures.

Public session closed at 7:38

McGee: Public Health Dept in CT has been a strong resource. Names CT towns that have similar resolutions. Doctor who has done research on breast cancer...created a doc/resolution. Language in this document doesn't diminish the work that has been done, but language needs to match the severity of the disease (or in our case issues). Uses that as resource/inspiration for our thinking

Johnston: shares anti-racist graphic about zones (stages of the work and where ppl might be) as a tool for personal reflection. This conversation is hard because of varied experiences. Fear zone (see tape for details), learning zone (see tape for details), growth zone (see tape for details) says work is continuous.

McGee: Resolution open for discussion

M Last: Appreciates changes. Language changes are action-related. Hopefully this goes to city council after tonight. This doc with revisions: defines racism and its effects. Has strong action items. Those will be most challenging. Will take a lot of meeting from all groups: youth, clergy, PD, BoE, etc. Tough work is coming down the road.

Bane: in my reading, I want to understand the definition of anti racism and why it changed. Thinking about the word power. Needs better and more equitable experiences.

Johnston: revisions were a response to feedback. Language culled from resources.
Bane/McGee/Johnston further discussion on changes (see recording)

Bane: questions use of the word power. In faith context everyone has power (vs structural power). Discusses changing power to equal opportunity.

BPatterson addresses the word power. Applied to the person. Access to power whether through ed, access to city services. Systems, structures and powers. Apply the word power to individuals. Power in voting, health outcomes, etc. (see recording for more)

McGee: there has been an abuse of power. Gives examples of production/narrative for who has power. Financial power to produce. Speaking to isms...sexism, nepotism, etc. Things are never shared equitably. Power has been held by white individuals. Power is access to. Power to make decisions. City Council as an example of power. Access to opportunities. Representation for young people.

Bane: Context is helpful. Glossary could be a golden document for our city. Any word is open to interpretation. Removes guess work. Residents need clarity and hope. Movement forward is goal. Not comfortable.

Bane: suggests taking "changing" language out and suggests: "We commit to building healthy systems..." Build something better is more clear and defined. Are we changing one bad structure to another bad structure?

Patterson: disagrees with the language of that change. Discusses further (see recording)

Bane: the word power is a dangerous word. Oppressive. Asks for defining prosperity.

McGee: Shares stories about power. Power is not a bad thing. White people have never had to challenge equality. Glossary defined by who? Power is defined differently by all groups. Defining terms is for individuals who are not doing the work. Power as redistributing. Don't see it as a negative thing. (see recording for details)

Bane: are you talking about power or transforming the word change? (much more discussion; see recording)

Johnston: power as simple as having a voice. Example of students. Power needs to be there. Racism is a power structure. Therefore words needs to stay. Balance. Amplifying black and brown voices. Power is not negative. Does not like the idea of taking power out.

Hoskie: Pastor came up with 2 suggestions. Who decided it was a no? Are we voting on that change? Asks for clarification on method of voting and adopting changes.

Last: we are going through entire document. First page is definition. Second is action items. We may want to go through each item and then go back, but right now we are discussing.

McGee: We are going to vote at the end. We are discussing Bane's suggestions. decision to vote line by line.

Hoskie: when are we voting on the suggested changes line by line? Clarifies the need for motions on each item. Says we need to be clear on expectations.

Patterson: We need clarity on line by line?

McGee: decides to make changes line by line by voting

Patterson: power as current construct, white centralized power. Access to power redistributed is access to self empowerment. Changing to more equitable system is about power. (see recording for more)

Bane: Comfortable with use of the word power. Want to make sure that structures in our town give access to. Mindset. Doesn't believe any structure gives us power. That is given by Creator.

McGee: Even in spiritual spaces people abuse power. Slavery held via biblical principals. Power is influence. Leadership and oppression. People who are of faith based communities still suffer racism. Faith leaders. Spaces like these are affected by racism. No matter what spaces we are in, power is used and abused. Example of being followed in store. Faith doesn't help. (see recording for details). Distribute evenly so that others have access.

Johnston: Power needs to stay. Power can be as simple as having a voice that is heard

Bane: Motion to amend 2nd Whereas to: "Whereas, antiracism is the active process of identifying and eliminating racism by committing to building healthy systems, structures, attitudes and policies so that power is redistributed and shared equitably." Seconded by Hoskie and Hamilton.

Favor: Bane, Hoskie, Perno, Flemming, Last, Hamilton

Opposed: Johnston, Patterson, McGee

Motion carries

Patterson: since making changes, is there a problem with the word attitudes? Discussion between Bane/Patterson/McGee/Perno says you can build a healthy attitude, so the word works.

Hoskie: clarifies the need for following Roberts Rules. Method for discussion.

Johnston: do we need to vote line by line if there are not objections?

Hoskie: we need to continue as we started.

Next several whereas statements voted on favorably (see recording for specifics)

Hamilton asks if Brown is included in BIPOC? McGee confirms.

Hamilton: Change **It be** resolved to **Be it** resolved

Bane: Motion to add the word help to read We are not can not guarantee, we can help.

Patterson: do we need help before both words? Inspire and realize?

Bane takes back motion.

Johnston: Motion to change to "we are collectively committed to the following action that will help to both inspire and realize the full potential of BIPOC and every resident of the City of West Haven"

Hoskie makes motion to add Brown to Bipoc

Hoskie: motion to add Brown BIPOC-passes.

Discussion: Hamilton asks for definition

Johnston: Restates Acronym, sites NYTimes article, comes from our research

Patterson: Commonplace term. No qualm with adjusting to add Brown.

McGee reads from CBS news, inclusion of African diaspora. Afro-caribbean, etc.

For more discussion see recording

Motion carries

McGee reads Action items:

Action item 1

Bane: motion to rephrase sentence to start with positive. Makes it much more palatable.

Hoskie Seconds

Perno: why is there a plural municipalities?

Patterson: rereading the suggestion

Bane: by promoting antiracism.....we will prohibit. Wants to reverse the order. Rereads for Patterson's suggestion as well. Bane happy with either as long as they start with positive.

McGee says racism is a horrific thing. Says the words match the atrocities; we don't have to make it palatable to white people. No language to match the sins. There is no palatability with racism. Gives examples of racism experienced in West Haven.

Johnston: in an effort to make this hopeful/palatable there is a danger in minimizing the work.

Can't jump to promoting without doing the hard work of dismantling. Can't simplify the problem.

Cause and effect order to sentence. Asks for clarification on how to use the word municipalities.

Patterson: I think it needs to be changed to departments. Perno: did you mean public spaces?

(See recording for more discussion)

Last: what do we want to do? Action item 1: What and the how for action items has to be factual statement. What do we want to do. He thinks the current order is correct as is.

Bane: chicken and egg...which should come first

McGee: look further down for the real action

Brandon: By promoting anti...in classroom, and all public spaces, thereby creating an inclusive space.

(see recording for more discussion)

Patterson: motion to change language to "by promoting antiracism and prohibiting hostile, or abusive attitudes and discriminatory practices in the work environment, classrooms, municipal entities, and all public spaces, thereby creating an inclusive, welcoming, and safe environment for BIPOC.

Perno: are there structures?

McGee and Johnston explain the implicit or informal structures

Patterson: implicit and explicit structures (nepotism/BoE)

Perno: explains he was being literal

Hoskie: curious about why we didn't use Hamilton's suggestion about adding the word "establish) in item 6 in place of writing.

Johnston: curriculum redesigning starts with writing

Hoskie: sees process starting before writing

Brandon: suggest the word conceptualize. writing needs to stay (establish)

Hoskie: motion to replace the word write with establish. Is all curriculum written down?

Johnston: Curriculum redesign needs to start with writing. The document matters

McGee: Writing is the creative process

Johnston: needs to be written doc. Curriculum writing requires resources and should be prioritized. (See recording for further discussion)

Hoskie Motion to: Add establish ahead of writing

Motion passed unanimously

Last: submit revised doc to mayor and corp council

McGee: the way she was told to do it

Last: clarifies that this will not hold doc up from getting to CC

Closing Remarks

Patterson: thanks the public, stories are painful

Hamilton: Glossary for City Council

Bane: Coming to Gateway was first experience with real racial diversity. Book Club/Panel.

Stories of black men. Third Option church. Panel discussion with black men as service. Plugs his Sunday service.

Johnston: thanks all for hard work. Encourages suggested reading list.

McGee: Thanks public, collaboration, emails, etc. Emotionally taxing work. Highlight Brandon and Liz for hours of research, stats, and writing. Appreciative of that support. Thanks to all. Expresses hope that all are committed to the youth. Inspire all environments. Kids: Jewels and gems of the next generation. Thanks to pastor Bane for space.

Bane: motion to adjourn at 9:37