

City of Hamilton Diversity and Inclusion Commission 2016 Annual Report

May 25, 2016

Address to City Council

Members of City Council,

As the first year of the Diversity and Inclusion Commission closes, it is my privilege to report on the work of the commission outlining accomplishments over the past year as well as the outlook for the years to come. The duty of this commission is an important part of our city's future in making our city a model in many ways. The work this commission is accomplishing will help make the City of Hamilton a model of what community means and how a community exists with each citizen having the opportunity to be engaged and to be an active member of our city. This is not simply the work of this commission, but also the great efforts and successes of the city administration, community organizations, and the many citizens who have and will continue to work to make Hamilton a destination city and a model of economic and civil prosperity.

This report from the Diversity and Inclusion Commission outlines the work of the commission over the past year, provides an ambitious projected timeline of work to be accomplished over the next year, and describes the short term plan for the next two years.

It has been a privilege for me to work with the members of this commission over the past year. I look forward to the coming year as one that will be marked with continued progress and success.

Mark F. Mercer, Chairperson

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2015 Accomplishments

Formation of the Commission

City Council formed the Diversity and Inclusion Commission in January of 2015. Selection of members was made and the first meeting was held on March 31. The commission was comprised of members selected by city council and the city manager with the confidence to undertake the important task assigned to them, and the resources requested to make that work possible were provided.

Doctor Ron Jackson facilitated organizational, team building, and planning exercises at the first meeting. That served to welcome and orient the newly formed commission. That first commission meeting was the first time many of the members had met each other.

Development of the Planning Document and Initial Subcommittees

During 2015 the commission met frequently and formed several initial subcommittees. The work was focused on identifying the areas in which the City of Hamilton had opportunity for improvement in its community (external) and workforce (internal) environments. With the support of City Council and the city administration the commission was enabled to explore contributing factors and perceptions relative to barriers to diversity and inclusion. The insights and perspectives of both the city employee component as well as the council appointed citizen component of the commission were tremendous benefits in identifying those perceptions. The expertise and commitment of the several ex-officio members and commission secretaries have been a great resource in organization, communication, and providing resources to the commission. Those resources have served to focus the discussion and planning based on facts and accurate information.

The discussion was complex and smaller focused groups were beneficial in studying separate issues and making recommendations for action. There were three subcommittees formed to address different areas which were identified by commission members. The EMBARK subcommittee was formed to provide a home for an existing initiative conceived several years ago in the employee Innovation Challenge. This subcommittee focused on a pilot program for providing high school students an opportunity to experience the employment opportunities and the work environment toward which they would be heading over the next year. The opportunity for diversity in recruiting any interested student from a partner school was the intent of the program as well as providing the student with a meaningful experience. As the potential for EMBARK to become more than a high school internship program was realized, the utility department looked at the program and was able to evaluate some work to be done. The Pole Inventory and Replacement Program was included in this effort and a partnership with Butler County Board of Developmental Disabilities was formed to employment opportunities for three persons with developmental disabilities to contribute to that work in a meaningful way. City Council and several city departments worked together to accomplish this goal. Information Technology, Utility Department, and Public Works were all engaged in these programs.

In working to find the most inclusive group of applicants for the work of this subcommittee several outstanding community contacts and resources were identified. Those partnerships and others that complement them will enable the commission to move forward with connecting underrepresented members of our community to become engaged and to contribute in a way that is rewarding and beneficial. This subcommittee has expanded beyond its original vision and has become the Community Engagement and Community Partnership subcommittee in its larger role.

The Ordinance Review subcommittee was formed with the purpose of considering any local ordinances or practices which limit diversity and inclusion in the population. While the city and its several boards and commissions have specific missions to accomplish, the issue of diversity and inclusion may be unintentionally overlooked. Specifically, zoning ordinances which restrict the location of homes for consumers of mental health services was identified as a barrier to citizens with specific needs being able to live in any area of town and for care providers to do so in the best setting for their clients. The subcommittee recommended and the commission acknowledged that the best way to assure that there is awareness of inadvertent and unintentional effects of ordinances was to recommend annual diversity and inclusion training for employees and appointed board and commission members and that City Council also consider these effects when presented with any proposed ordinances.

The third and final subcommittee was formed to discuss the issue of employment and employee development and advancement with the city. The Employment and Promotional Opportunities subcommittee was by far the most attended and discussed topic. Two distinctly different components included the external opportunity to make the workforce diverse and inclusive by some recognized measure and the internal measure of fair promotional and development opportunity while developing a diverse supervisory and management component of the workforce. These certainly have not been light topics. The citizen members, city employee members, and ex-officio members all contributed greatly to this discussion. Civil Service and Personnel Director Nadine Hill has provided resources and statistics related to previous and current employee demographics as well as historic promotional rates and positions of underrepresented groups in our employee pool. Consideration was given to the current and past city minority employment component, the US census data relative to demographics, and the city's Affirmative Action Plan. There is no simple answer to resolve this quickly and easily. The effort to recruit and to identify recruitment strategies is a major barrier. Some prerequisites to employment are existing barriers, particularly in the fire division, though changing them may have little effect on diversity without significant cost and a robust recruitment plan. In other areas, recognized prerequisites have been considered and alternatives enacted including commercial drivers license requirements for the utility department when hiring in the most recent apprentice lineman position.

Revision of the Planning Document and Subcommittees

Having determined that some of the needs the commission had identified were being proactively addressed by the city administration, the subcommittees were reorganized to be efficient and to reduce duplication of work. Those subcommittees described, with their work in following sections, include the Internal Retention, Recruitment, and Promotion subcommittee, the Citizen Engagement and Community Partnerships subcommittee, and the Marketing and Communications subcommittee.

The work that the commission had identified was assigned to the appropriate subcommittee for efficiency. Each commission member is part of at least one subcommittee, and several are working on two or all three.

2016 Subcommittees and Work Plan

Internal Retention, Recruitment and Promotion

The IRRP subcommittee is focused internally on making recommendations that affect diversity and inclusion relative to employee development and promotion as well as externally on diversity and inclusion in recruitment. Some of the duties the commission had identified have been discussed and are being pursued by Human Resources Director Tim Werdman. Working with city departments to identify and explore needs and opportunities, the first goal for this subcommittee is to identify perceived barriers to diversity and inclusion within the city's hiring process. Director Werdman is working with the commission to prepare and distribute an internal survey to solicit input from each employee anonymously. The survey will rely on employees to identify their roles so that the perspectives of entry level employees, supervisors, and administrators are each considered. In order to reach the citizens of Hamilton and to gain the outside perspective, as survey will be prepared for distribution in utility bill mailings. This will allow a random sampling of the population to determine the perception of citizens in barriers to diversity and inclusion. The commission will evaluate the responses and share them to develop recommendations for improvement.

Citizen Engagement and Community Partnerships

As the commission's second year begins, the EMBARK program has had one pilot program including four students from Badin High School who participated in the fall of 2015. Several challenges to the format were identified and have been considered. Conducting the program during the school year resulted in scheduling conflicts and challenging time demands for the students. The program was also challenged with its status as a volunteer program given the time commitment of the students. Restructuring this program based on the feedback of the participants, the city is proceeding with a second high school internship program partnering with Hamilton High School and the NAACP Hamilton-Fairfield- West Chester chapter. As the

program moves forward, the commission will explore partnership opportunities to connect interns and local employers, where possible. The city administration has worked to provide funding and legal expertise in resolving challenges to this program quickly.

As one step to engage our diverse community, the commission will undertake steps to promote a culture of diversity in employment and hiring practices and to recognize efforts toward those goals. While this is in its earliest stage, the commission will set criteria to recognize city employees, community members, and local businesses and organizations which demonstrate tangible efforts at achieving diversity and inclusion.

The Diversity and Inclusion Commission is working with the Finance Department and Purchasing Division. In an effort to expand the opportunity for minority contractors and vendors, we have discussed finding the best recommendations for a fair and effective process to offer a competitive advantage to minority businesses. This will expand on the current purchasing practice of providing preferential status for businesses which call Hamilton their home. Several models exist including a percentage of contracts set aside for minority businesses, as used by the state.

Marketing and Communications

The Marketing and Communications subcommittee is focused on understanding how the employee group and community perceive diversity and inclusion. In conjunction with the survey focused internally through the Internal Retention, Recruitment and Promotion subcommittee an external survey will be conducted and analyzed to find out what perceived external barriers exist. This will provide input to civil Service and Personnel as well as Human Resources for decision making in removing those barriers and conducting effective recruitment strategies.

The commission has connected with several local organizations which focus on preparing people for employment by providing job skills, access to email, and basic qualifications for employment. With this partner network, the commission will work to engage minority communities which are underrepresented in our workforce.

The city of Ottawa has published a Diversity Lens which identifies not only diversity by race or gender, but by cultural and a variety of other characteristics. In reaching out to them, they are open to sharing that format which also provides guidance relative to diversity for the city employee based on job function such as communications, customer service, and supervision or management. Over the next year the commission will adapt a Diversity Lens to serve these purposes in Hamilton.

Recommendations to City Council

During its first year, the Diversity and Inclusion Commission has considered several recommendations to make for the City Council to consider. It speaks well for the city administration that as these recommendations were discussed and developed over the past year, many of them were acted upon by the city administration. Those recommendations which have already been put into effect are included in the short list below. It is also important to note that the ex-officio members appointed by the city administration have been actively engaged in the work of the commission and have contributed to this process. The perspective and experience offered by each has been invaluable.

1. Amend the Values Statement of the City of Hamilton to include valuing diversity and inclusion in the workplace and in providing equitable treatment for all customers.
2. Create and implement a Diversity and Inclusion training plan and schedule annually recurring training for city employees beginning in 2016. This training should be provided not only to city employees, but also to those who volunteer to serve on the city's several boards and commissions. Dr. Ron Jackson provided the training in 2014 and served to facilitate the initial meetings of this commission. Dr. Jackson should be considered when selecting the provider for this continuing training as well as other local resources.
3. Standardize the application and selection process for all boards and commissions of the City of Hamilton in order to provide an opportunity for diversity in applicants to be considered by July 1, 2016.
4. Provide a basic command Spanish program and for city employees to assist with providing better service to our diverse community by January 1, 2017. In speaking with Director Werdmann this is already being addressed within the Human Resources Department.
5. Implement a classification and compensation study applicable to all classifications by December 31, 2016.
6. Implement a standardized employee performance evaluation system by December 31, 2016.