

## Cedar Falls Racial Equity Task Force Meeting

Wednesday, June 9, 2021 – 4:00-5:30 PM

Cedar Falls City Hall via Video Conference

*To protect against the spread of COVID-19, this meeting was held via video conference.*

**Task Force Members Present:** Frank Darrah (Task Force Chair); Kelly Dunn (Task Force Vice Chair); Melissa Heston; Andy Pattee; Felicia Smith-Nalls; Lisa Sesterhenn; Will Frost; LaTanya Graves; Wilfred “Mickye” Johnson; Paul Lee

**Facilitators:** Omar Padilla; Aimee Viniard-Weideman

**City Staff/Elected Officials Present:** Craig Berte; Kevin Rogers; Jennifer Rodenbeck; Toni Babcock; Katie Terhune

**Members of the Public Present:** Amie Rivers (Courier); Andrea Geary; Joyce Levingston; Don (last name unknown); Paul (last name unknown); Renee (last name unknown)

**Absent:** none

1. Call to Order:  
Chairperson Darrah called the meeting to order at 4:02 PM. Babcock states there is no public forum for this meeting.
2. Roll Call/Attendance:  
Chair Darrah requests Task Force members and City staff members introduce themselves and their position / role in the community and how it relates to the Task Force.
3. Agenda Changes:  
There were no agenda changes.
4. Approval of 05-26-21 Minutes:  
Task Force Member Johnson moved the minutes be approved; seconded by Task Force Member Lee; approved unanimously.
5. Introduction of Facilitators and Review of Facilitation Proposal  
Chair Darrah stated the City Council approved the Facilitator Contract on June 7, 2021. City Liaison Babcock stated that the Iowa State University Extension proposal allows the Task Force to make decisions along the way; the proposal is open-ended, which allows the Task Force to own what the agreement looks like. Facilitator Viniard-Weideman introduced herself and spoke about the facilitation process, stating that they were facilitators, not consultants, and their job is to assist in the process, not the content. Facilitator Padilla introduced himself.
6. Facilitator Led Discussion – SWOT analysis and Input Survey  
Facilitator Viniard-Weideman stated the facilitators want to build on previous discussions, not duplicate them. They reviewed the previous meetings’ minutes and put notes together. She shared a document on screen with the Task Force. She acknowledged the flow of conversation and stated she used the minutes to try to interpret the questions and topics the Task Force was considering. She states the Task Force clearly looked at the Charge, the Purpose Statement, the scope of work and focus areas, and the scope of the final product and proposal. She shared notes from the minutes including general comments and specific ideas and requests as well as conversation around topic areas and training, and the need for conversations. There is consistent recognition that this is deep, long, lifetime, systemic work. It is noted by Task Force members that there are no quick fixes and the Task Force doesn’t want to pretend that there are, but the Task Force also wants to make some actionable recommendations so there can be movement. She commented on the Task Force’s requests for

data, and that it was not clear yet what data the Task Force needs to review. She stated that she looked to see if the Task Force had made any decisions or come to any consensus yet, but did not see that reflected in the minutes. There was a question around the list of focus areas brainstormed by the Executive Committee and saw some recommendations: 1) that the Task Force would address all the proposed focus areas and have a work session for each one including data and possibly guests and give recommendations on each one; 2) that the Task Force would narrow the focus to two or three areas and go deeper with recommendations; and 3) that the Task Force would narrow focus within each proposed area, because each area is so broad.

Facilitator Viniard-Weideman opened the floor for discussion and asked how this captures the previous meetings. Vice Chair Dunn and Task Force Member Johnson agreed nothing was missing and it captured the discussion. Task Force Member Sesterhenn commented the progression seems to be lost; in the beginning there were lots of questions and then different areas in terms of gathering data and where we looked. She questioned if more weight should be paid to where the Task Force left the last meeting and if the Task Force came to some form of consensus as to where the group is at. She wondered if the Task Force left the last meeting at a more narrow focus and assessment of City policies and departments but stated there was not consensus. Task Force Member Johnson agreed. He stated that it was discussed narrowing the focus to two or three items instead of the whole list, but not decided. He stated it was discussed going for “low-hanging fruit” versus looking at having a greater impact, and it was not agreed upon. Chair Darrah spoke to low-hanging fruit versus bigger issues also; he stated that the City is where a lot of immediate changes can be made to demonstrate to the community that the City is taking this seriously, and also [the Task Force can] identify the weighty issues that are going to take years to undo. It’s a balance between what can be done easily and quickly and identifying ongoing things that are going to require a group like this to continue to meet for years to come; now comes sifting through and prioritizing. Task Force Member Smith-Nalls commented she is big on understanding the issues. She stated she has looked at Cedar Falls city data including geographic and demographic. She stated the Task Force needs to understand the problems before looking at the solutions so pieces aren’t missing. She stated that the Task Force should look at other cities’ equity plans and stated she had contacted some of them and asked what information they were looking for; before you can look at the fruit on the tree one needs to understand what the tree is. She stated Affirmative Action / EEO (Equal Employment Opportunity) plans should be available in proposed focus areas. She stated that data will guide what’s important. She addressed working on facts versus feelings. Task Force Member Johnson agreed with statements on data. He commented on reviewing policies to determine where the City is now, where it wants to go, and how to get there; the Task Force needs the data to make that happen. Task Force Member Smith-Nalls commented specifically towards Orchard Hill School and the data that shows a population that is more diverse than the City. She questions what they do to make the ethnic students they have feel a part of the community; what support they have for students that require extra support or if they identify that as a need. She commented that majority groups often undervalue the need for community of minority groups and they may need support in different ways. She commented that sometimes the equity conversation gets lost in the justice conversation; everyone getting the same is not always equity, equity is everyone getting what they need. She agreed with Task Force Member Johnson that the data will lead the Task Force to identify the low-hanging fruit and the far-off fruit. She states she thinks it is important for the Task Force, as it’s being watched by Cedar Falls residents, to educate the community [about DEI] at the City, State, and National levels; to brand the committee as an educational opportunity. Task Force Member Graves stated it is important to include the perspectives, experiences, and stories of Black families who live in Cedar Falls. Task Force Member Pattee agreed that the notes encapsulated the previous meetings. He agreed with comments about looking at the data with regard to the schools.

Facilitator Viniard-Weideman stated she has recommendations for next steps but questioned what the Task Force considers next steps. She opened the floor for discussion. Vice Chair Dunn commented on Task Force Member Johnson’s recommendation to narrow focus to three areas: Education, Housing, and Policing; she stated other subjects could be considered later. She also stated that the Task Force needs to know where they’re at and she doesn’t think they do yet. Facilitator Viniard-Weideman stated the Facilitators recommend the Task Force come to consensus on the scope of the work within the broader Task Force Charge. The next recommendation, which needs to occur first, was clarifying how the Task Force is making decisions by

identifying the decision point and how the Task Force will make decisions: majority, roll call vote, etc. She stated the Task Force needs to determine what happens if members are unavailable when a decision is made: are the members then expected to support the decision or will it be revisited? She stated the next meeting will be a facilitated meeting focusing on those recommendations and finding a place to start. She stated she hears there is a need for an initial data review that's not necessarily a deep dive but that could then help inform some next steps and next decisions. Data review and analysis should be built into the whole process; she stated a need for people who know how to read, review, evaluate, and assess the data. She commented that the Task Force wants to bring people in to present and share, and questioned timing. She mentioned the October deadline and questioned how many sessions are left; how much work can the Task Force put towards this project; how much data can the Task Force get access to and how long will that take to get it; what resources does the Task Force need to do a review of the data? The Task Force can move to a map and some clarity – what can the Task Force do and do well in that time frame?

Facilitator Viniard-Weideman recommended a survey to be completed by Task Force members; she wanted every Task Force member to have the opportunity to respond to the questions, although she stated they may choose not to. She discussed the following key questions that would be included: charge and focus; focus areas; data and resources including partners, outside reports, and speakers; community engagement; who or what is missing from the Task Force; the decision making process; knowing timeline(s)/deadline(s) and processes for each area for recommendations. The survey will give each member a chance to be reflective and share their thoughts. She stated that the data from the surveys will be compiled to determine common themes and patterns as well as discrepancies to determine the scope and processes and create the basis of the next work session. She opened the floor for discussion about the survey. Task Force Member Johnson states it would be very beneficial. Task Force Member Heston states that she believes process is critical to reach the end product. She commented that voting is efficient but can silence people whereas genuine discussion can create a consensus. Chair Darrah commented he wants to end with a product that shows the City that the Task Force got a lot done but acknowledged it's better to do one thing well than not complete multiple things; he expressed worry that the public perception will be that the Task Force didn't get anything done. He expressed support of the survey. Task Force Member Heston commented on Task Force engagement with the community; having really clear ways of [community engagement] that the Task Force members are comfortable with is essential; if the community doesn't trust the Task Force and the process they won't trust the recommendations. Task Force Member Frost agreed. He stated that other groups have made decisions without knowing what the community actually wants and needs. He stated that [utilizing community engagement] will lead to more meaningful change; deeper, lasting effects; and benefit the City of Cedar Falls and the entire Cedar Valley. Vice Chair Dunn mentioned comments by Task Force Member Smith-Nalls about how simple and important community is and agreed. It is important to engage the community and have a place for everyone to come together and hear each other speak.

Facilitator Viniard-Weideman asked for additional comments regarding the next meeting being a work session based on the compilation of survey responses to determine next steps and plan for meetings ahead before calling for a vote. Task Force Member Sesterhenn requested clarification regarding the process; will that be part of the survey and the next meeting's discussion? Facilitator Viniard-Weideman responded yes. Task Force Member Sesterhenn questioned if after the next meeting the group would have scope and an outline through October and what the deliverable would be in October – would it have goals and timeframes? Facilitator Viniard-Weideman responded that the level of decision-making will depend on the Task Force's engagement; there won't be a full plan but decisions would be made around the pieces to make the plan. Facilitator Padilla states that given past experience with the process, and the difficulty of the subject matter, the Task Force will definitely not have a timeline between the next meeting and October 1<sup>st</sup>. The next meeting will be to come to a consensus on the "what" and make some decisions on the "how" which will give information for the next meeting but won't give a timeline from now until October. Task Force Member Johnson states his understanding that the next meeting is to help build structure to move forward and keep the Task Force on point as well as the decision-making process. Facilitator Viniard-Weideman stated they would put the survey in a Google form and distribute to the Task Force members and requested return by the end of day on Tuesday (June 15).

Task Force Member Johnson addressed agenda item 6a (SWOT analysis); Facilitator Viniard-Weideman stated that it is still too early for this piece.

7. Consideration of Action Items  
There was no consideration of action items.
  
8. Next Meeting Date and Discussion of Governor's Proclamation on Public Meeting Protocol:  
City Liaison Babcock stated the next meeting of the Cedar Falls Racial Equity Task Force will be Wednesday, June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2021 from 4:00 – 5:30 PM via videoconference and in person. She stated if the Governor's proclamation expires, meetings after June 30<sup>th</sup> will require an in-person quorum and she is working on a space to meet. Finance and Business Operations (FBO) Director Rodenbeck stated it would be helpful to know how many members plan to attend in person to determine where best to meet. Task Force members can e-mail City Liaison Babcock their intention or reply in the survey being sent by the facilitators.
  
9. Adjournment:  
Chair Darrah accepted a motion to adjourn. Vice Chair Dunn moved; Task Force Member Johnson seconded. Motion carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 5:18 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Katie Terhune, Administrative Assistant