

Cedar Falls Racial Equity Task Force Meeting

Wednesday, June 23, 2021 – 4:00-5:30 PM

Cedar Falls Public Safety in person and via Video Conference

To protect against the spread of COVID-19, this meeting was also offered 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; Paul Lee; Eashaan Vajpeyi

Facilitators: Omar Padilla; Aimee Viniard-Weideman

City Staff/Elected Officials Present: Craig Berte; Jennifer Rodenbeck; Toni Babcock; Katie Terhune; Ron Gaines; Mayor Rob Green

Absent: Kevin Rogers; Wilfred “Mickye” Johnson

Members of the public were also present both in person and via video conference.

1. Call to Order:

Chair Darrah called the meeting to order at 4:05 PM.

2. Roll Call/Attendance:

Chair Darrah requested 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. Review Task Force Membership

Chair Darrah stated the Task Force is still missing one member from the original twelve; he asked if the Task Force wants to add an additional member and if so are there recommendations? Task Force members discussed what voices might be missing and if there were other ways to hear them, such as subcommittees and input sessions. Chair Darrah requested a consensus to move ahead with no additional members; Chair Darrah sees a consensus.

4. Approval of 06-07-21 Minutes:

Task Force Member Dunn moved the minutes be approved; seconded by Task Force Member Lee; approved unanimously.

5. Agenda Review:

Facilitator Viniard-Weideman spoke about what agenda items will look like in practice, and that the goal is to focus, and have progress and movement. She questioned if the Task Force members saw anything missing from this meeting’s agenda. There were no additional comments.

6-8. Survey Overview – Facilitator-Led Discussion & Decisions – Consideration of Action Items

Facilitator Padilla asked for members’ reactions, thoughts, and if items are missing or were misread from the survey response summary. Task Force Member Pattee spoke about the focus area of Education and expressed interest in the community education aspect as well as traditional school focus; he agrees subcommittees will be

beneficial, as well as community collaboration. Vice Chair Dunn agreed and stated the Task Force can tackle the top three areas, and the results will trickle down to other areas.

Facilitator Viniard-Weideman spoke to Survey Question 8 regarding who is missing from the Task Force. She stated it had been addressed earlier and there were no additional comments.

Facilitator Viniard-Weideman spoke to Survey Question 10 regarding making decisions as a Task Force. She clarified “consensus” as general agreement and indicated a visual method of doing so. Facilitator Viniard-Weideman requested consensus to use this method; she sees consensus.

Facilitator Viniard-Weideman spoke to Survey Question 11 regarding ground rules of the Task Force and commitments to the members. Vice Chair Dunn encouraged all voices to be shared; Task Force Member Heston encouraged self-regulation – everyone speaks, but is respectful of others’ time. Task Force Member Sesterhenn agreed the Task Force should assume positive intent; it’s a hard topic, members should be free to express themselves, and be shown a little grace for misspeaking and allow corrections as needed. Facilitator Padilla asked if the group could add be honest with each other, and if a member is not clear about something, asking and trusting the positive intent; Task Force Member Heston agreed and requested feedback. Task Force Member Frost agreed, having controversial discussions with civility; Task Force Member Smith-Nalls reflected on the need to remember the conversation is around policy, institution, etc. and isn’t a personal attack. Facilitator Padilla agreed that would lay the foundation for how the task force talks together.

Facilitator Viniard-Weideman spoke again to Survey Question 10 regarding making decisions as a task force, specifically when Task Force members are missing. Task Force Member Lee requested the minutes, even a draft copy, be available within 24 hours for members for review. City Liaison Babcock requested 3 business days. Facilitator Viniard-Weideman stated her understanding that if a member was absent, they are responsible for reading minutes to prepare. Facilitator Padilla requested to clarify if the Task Force would vote with missing members. Task Force Member Lee stated yes, trust in the group. Task Force Member Frost requested a tentative list of items to be voted on for the agenda. Facilitator Viniard-Weideman requested consensus to vote and move forward when quorum exists but Task Force member(s) is/are missing; she sees consensus.

Facilitator Padilla spoke to Survey Questions 2 and 3 regarding areas of focus. Previously proposed areas of focus include: Healthcare; Public Safety; Transportation; Business and Employment; Housing; and Education. Task Force Member Lee stated focus on Public Safety, Housing, and Education will touch the entire community. He questioned if there are things within City operations that could be [changed] more immediately. He cited an example of City policy change regarding lodging a complaint against Public Safety to make a small but perceptible change while still tackling big things. He suggested the Task Force focus not only on the external effect on the community but also the internal operations. Task Force Member Smith-Nalls recommended looking at Human Resources, processes, and cultural competency training [within the City operations]. Chair Darrah agrees the City should be a role model, an example of what the Task Force is doing. Task Force Member Sesterhenn questioned if the scope should be the organization of the City; this may change the focus areas. Task Force Member Heston stated there are many things the City manages that they create policies for; she challenges focusing on Education, specifically K-12, which is outside the City’s management and may not be the best use of the Task Force’s time. Task Force Member Pattee stated collaboration between the City and the schools would be good. Task Force Member Frost stated there is a visionary portion and a tactical portion; for the tactical portion the focus is on things that can be done within the City; the visionary portion is looking ahead at a greater community vision, past this Task Force, to give a road map. Task Force Member Sesterhenn states the vision will recommend next steps. Chair Darrah states the Task Force would benefit by having Education as a focus. Facilitator Viniard-Weideman asked if broad visioning should be a future agenda item; she sees consensus. She asked the Task Force to think about the recommendations six meetings from now: is the group making recommendations to the schools; to the City? Vice Chair Dunn stated education isn’t just the school system, it’s also educating the community. She requested the community become involved sooner rather than later; it might be during these meetings or during subcommittee meetings, etc.

Facilitator Viniard-Weideman asked the Task Force the scope of the recommendations to be made. Task Force Member Heston stated needing City policies; policies direct City Council and City staff and implementation; they would include Public Safety, Housing, and Business/Development/Economy; she suggested the Task Force needs to recommend amendments/new policies. Task Force Member Lee asked what the Task Force can do in 6 meetings plus subcommittee meetings; the focus may be to gather data and state why this work is important for Cedar Falls and future group(s) will work from that. Task Force Member Smith-Nalls requested an assessment as a tangible to guide next steps; she stated the vision is based on the assessment and will steer future conversations and recommendations.

Facilitator Viniard-Weideman clarified next steps discussed as: visioning; before the visioning, determining “where we are”; the assessment as a deliverable/tangible; why [this work] matters; other tangible pieces that arise through the process. She asked for agreement. Chair Dunn clarified the order as 1) determining “where we are”, the assessment, and why it’s important; 2) visioning; and 3) things that arise through the process. Task Force Member Sesterhenn asked if the assessment will lead to tangible City recommendations, is the assessment just on the City? Chair Dunn recommended the assessment be available for anyone. Facilitator Viniard-Weideman requested the Task Force focus on the assessment: what data is wanted; does it already exist and where? Task Force Member Smith-Nalls recommended starting with the school’s demographic/ethnic data as it is more current than Census data and utilizing it to move outward. She recommended acquiring Public Safety data as well as City data (IE, anything sent in for Federal funding). Task Force Member Lee asked if appropriate City staff can be available for specific discussions.

Facilitator Viniard-Weideman recommended mapping out the next couple of meetings. City Administrator Gaines stated that City Liaison Babcock has added data/information received already to the Task Force’s shared Google drive. He stated he will coordinate with City staff as appropriate for meeting content. Facilitator Viniard-Weideman asked if the Task Force can divide into work groups. Task Force Member Pattee stated he is ready to present the education data piece; he requested clarification of trends the Task Force is looking for. Task Force Member Sesterhenn expressed concern that the Task Force has not yet answered the central question of its scope; does the Task Force want to be writing objectives for the school system as well as the City. Facilitator Viniard-Weideman requested consensus that the first deliverable is painting the picture: data, meaning making, the assessment and making the case about why this matters in/to Cedar Falls and states she saw the group come to agreement around that; also within that context, identifying tangible things that can be done by the City as a concrete deliverable in that report. Task Force Member Sesterhenn questioned why look at schools if the Task Force is making recommendations to the City. Task Force Member Heston responded the schools have the most immediate demographic data for what the city/community looks like (IE: free and reduced lunch, housing, Section 8, etc.); do the policies in place affect these demographics and how? Facilitator Viniard-Weideman stated the Task Force needs to “get in it” [the data] and work in it to go to visioning, what matters and why, and emergent recommendations to the City as a starting framework; does the Task Force agree? Vice Chair Dunn asked for clarification on the word “City” as meaning “City Staff” as opposed to the Cedar Falls community; recommendations are being made to the City which will likewise affect the community. Chair Darrah stated that what the Task Force ends up with will be just the beginning and can include recommendations for a new task force(s). Facilitator Viniard-Weideman asked for agreement that the recommendation for continuing or making new task force(s) be added; she received consensus. Task Force Member Smith-Nalls stated she sees the Task Force’s work as “preparing the soil”. She states it’s going to take hard work and require nurturing; it will take time and the commitment and agreement to get dirty.

Facilitator Viniard-Weideman stated her understanding of the work of the group for this meeting as: 1) this is just the beginning, we are preparing the soil, not harvesting; 2) stage setting and framing for the report; 3) digging into the community and data which may require adjustment; 4) deliverables: painting the picture in a way it hasn’t been before, meaning making and visioning; 5) tangible pieces and bigger “next steps” for recommendations.

Facilitator Viniard-Weideman spoke about subcommittees for the three focus areas and requested a lead for each and members for each; no subcommittee will have a quorum of the Task Force. Task Force Member Pattee

will head education, Police Chief Berte will head Public Safety, and Director of Community Development Sheetz will head housing. Additional City staff will be available as needed or requested for subcommittee meetings.

9. Next Meeting Date:

The next meeting of the Cedar Falls Racial Equity Task Force will be Wednesday, July 14, 2021 from 4:00 – 5:30 PM. City Liaison Babcock stated if the Governor’s proclamation expires, meetings after June 30th will require an in-person quorum and meetings will continue to be held in person at Public Safety. Task Force Member Frost asked if the Zoom option would continue to be made available and if an in-person quorum existed would video conference votes count. Liaison Babcock stated yes, video conference votes would count.

10. Adjournment:

Chair Darrah accepted a motion to adjourn. Task Force Member Lee moved; Vice Chair Dunn seconded. Motion carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 5:39 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Katie Terhune, Administrative Assistant