

Cedar Falls Racial Equity Task Force Meeting

Wednesday, September 29, 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; Felicia Smith-Nalls; Lisa Sesterhenn; Paul Lee; LaTanya Graves; Wilfred “Mickye” Johnson; Eashaan Vajpeyi

Facilitators: Aimee Vinaird-Weideman; Omar Padilla

City Staff/Elected Officials Present: Jennifer Rodenbeck; Katie Terhune; Ron Gaines; Kevin Rogers; Craig Berte; Bailey Schindel; Mayor Rob Green

Members of the public were also present via video conference.

Absent: Andy Pattee; Will Frost

1. Call to Order:

Chair Darrah called the meeting to order at 4:02 PM.

2. Roll Call/Attendance:

City Staff Terhune took roll call.

3. Agenda Review/Changes:

Chair Darrah and Facilitator Viniard-Weideman reviewed the meeting agenda; there were no changes.

4. Approval of 09-22-21 Minutes:

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

5. Review of Draft Report

Facilitator Viniard-Weideman referenced the draft report and focus questions the Task Force received by e-mail prior to this meeting for preparation and ensured everyone had their copy. She stated the goal is to reflect on the work of the Task Force up to this point, not adding new items or ideas, and to gain consensus. She stated the report writing committee consisted of Vice Chair Dunn, Task Force Members Lee and Sesterhenn, and herself.

Task Force Member Heston requested clarification and that the terms “structured and systemic racism” and “equity lens” be defined clearly in the report; she referenced lawmakers and legislation regarding the term “systemic racism”. She questioned the relevance of the age data; Task Force Member Johnson stated he finds the age data very relevant; Task Force Member Heston stated if it were newer, it might be more compelling. She referenced language things, specifically “humanizing folks accused” and should it be “suspected”.

Task Force Member Johnson questioned the racial background data language, specifically with regard to Hispanic, White, and White-Alone, non-Hispanic; several Task Force Members clarified that there can be Hispanics of different places of origin, some identify as white, and that there is a notation at the bottom of the chart.

Task Force Member Vajpeyi referenced the data under the heading of Racial Equity in Cedar Falls; he stated it is a lot of data and graphs; what reason is it front-loaded in the report and provided before the recommendations; he questioned if this will lose people. Task Force Member Lee stated the report work team felt it important to framework who the report is referencing; when one thinks of racial equity, not only does one think about it in Cedar Falls, but all our experiences, local, state, national; we wanted to put framework in place. Task Force Member Vajpeyi stated his recommendation would be to put fewer tables up front and more text up front; he stated some tables may be difficult to read. Facilitator Viniard-Weideman restated as consider what's needed to be in the front and what can be referred without blocking the main point; Task Force Member Vajpeyi agreed. Task Force Member Johnson referenced use of a chart after text as a pictorial; it gives a comparison; he referenced the chart on age, specifically the number of residents between 18 and 24, the most common age of university students and its effect on the data.

Task Force Member Vajpeyi asked who the target audience of the report is; this could affect the data presentation. Task Force Member Johnson stated the data presented opens discussion and shows the cause and effect relationship(s). Task Force Member Sesterhenn asked if there could be a paragraph summarizing some data, and the charts as attachments; she asked if some of the charts could be turned into easier-to-read bar graphs. Facilitator Padilla stated it's the Task Force's report, and data presentation can be altered as the Task Force requires; however, time is a factor. Task Force Member Lee stated it's something that could be done, but at some point the Task Force needs to accept that this is the way the data it has is presented, and that it is then up to Council to continue the work to dig deeper. Task Force Member Dunn stated she found the data easy to read and understand. Task Force Member Smith-Nalls echoed the question of who the target audience is; she stated there is a difference between reading the report and listening to presentation of it. Facilitator Viniard-Weideman stated the report is to the Mayor and City Council, and the recommendations include public engagement in the next step(s). Task Force Member Heston stated that the final document will be public record; the document is not just for Mayor and Council, it has to do its job with the public as a stand-alone document; she stated we buried the headline, putting the recommendations in the back; the public is going to need to be persuaded this is worth our time and effort. Task Force Member Lee stated that people who want to be engaged will take the time to read the recommendations even if they don't read the other parts; having the report in a format where the Task Force paints the picture then presents its findings; when it comes to Racial Equity in 2021 in Cedar Falls, the Task Force's task was to help the citizens walk through the process.

Facilitator Viniard-Weideman stated the report committee can make changes the Task Force requests but time is limited; she requested consensus from the group about data in the front of the report or the back with a show of hands for the front: Vice Chair Dunn and Task Force Members Lee, Heston, Johnson, Sesterhenn, and Smith-Nalls agree; Task Force Member Vajpeyi disagrees; data will stay in the front end of the report. She stated the report group's next tasks as making sure the picture is painted and not losing the audience.

Mayor Green questioned why recommendations are listed in two separate places in the document. Task Force Member Lee stated each subcommittee produced a similar document providing focus area recommendations and general recommendations; those pages represent each subcommittee's work, then they were combined into full Task Force recommendations. Facilitator Viniard-Weideman suggested making the subcommittee worksheets into appendices; Mayor Green agreed that would clarify.

Mayor Green expressed approval in inclusion of history of exclusive covenants because it's important to describe how we [the City] got to where we are today; Task Force Member Heston suggested in the historical covenant paragraph with some data as well as a reference where to find additional data in the report.

Business and Finance Operations (FBO) Director Rodenbeck referenced the age data charts; she expressed confusion with the different presentation of age ranges; she offered for City staff to help turn one into an easier-to-read format (and others as needed); Task Force member Johnson stated the age data, especially for traditional aged college students, is important because it affects other data; the Task Force does have data from UNI. Task Force Member Sesterhenn asked if there was estimated 2019 data based on 2010 data as 2010 is old but 2020 is not available yet. Task Force Member Heston noted that UNI enrollment is down significantly from 2010; Vice Chair Dunn stated that fact is detailed in the report.

Task Force Member Sesterhenn referenced the Task Force subcommittees' worksheets; she stated that the Task Force knows what they are, but those reading won't; could the format be changed and not include subcommittee recommendations. Facilitator Viniard-Weideman stated there was a version of the report like that, but it became so data-heavy it would lose people; there was also a version in which the recommendations were presented first. Task Force Member Heston stated the worksheets require clear labeling and explanation – this is the work of the subcommittee(s) as presented to the full Task Force.

Chair Darrah and Vice Chair Dunn expressed the importance of how the report is presented to Council to get them on board with continuing the work.

Task Force Member Johnson referenced the Education subcommittee's first bullet point and stated it does not have an outcome attached; the education subcommittee members will reword and complete the outcome. He stated that the education data should be cited to the Cedar Falls schools; Task Force Member Smith-Nalls added it needs to be dated.

Task Force Member Lee referenced a housing subcommittee recommendation regarding diversity and inclusion plans for developments requiring board or council approval; he requested clarification if this is within the Task Force's scope to recommend and why it's a recommendation. Task Force Member Heston stated the background is that people live where they do because of factors such as transportation, proximity to employment and goods; the goal is to push developers to be intentional about planning and ensure the board(s) is considering diversity and equity aspects in new developments with these considerations instead of continuing the status quo. Task Force Member Lee questioned if it could be written with less specificity in the report. Task Force Member Vajpeyi stated the recommendations aren't things the Task Force itself will do, they are recommendations to the City extending to staff, so it could be clarified; City staff would come up with the scoring criteria; the goal is to alert or remind the commission members that the way a development is built will either exacerbate or help current issues of equity; this is a way for them to make intentional decisions. Task Force Member Smith-Nalls stated that this consideration is part of other cities' equity plans, not just housing, but everything done should be filtered through the equity lens; right now it can't be stated who will do it, because the Task Force doesn't know that yet; a function of subsidized housing is if it's functional, does it work – is there access to transportation, markets, employment, etc.; these are things that should be considered all the time, it's a red flag if they're not. Task Force Member Lee recommended changing the wording to "Creating and implementing" and Task Force Member Vajpeyi agreed, a directive was missing.

Task Force Member Sesterhenn questioned the difference in recommendations for subcommittees on the work pages versus the written recommendations in the report; she stated they should match more closely. Task Force Member Dunn stated the subcommittee work sheets are like "showing your work". Facilitator Viniard-Weideman stated the report team did not want to edit the worksheets; Task Force Member Lee suggested identifying the worksheets as appendices and making clear separation between the work and the report. Task Force Member Sesterhenn expressed hesitation about language in the worksheets; Facilitator Viniard-Weideman stated the subcommittees can bring back edited worksheets. Task Force Member Sesterhenn questioned keeping them in the report; Task Force Member Lee questioned how one would see what's been discussed without going through all the minutes; Task Force Member Heston responded that the worksheets are a reflection of the minutes of the subcommittees and editing by the report committee would not be good. Task Force Member Lee stated there is validity in ensuring each subcommittee is in agreement on the final copy of their respective worksheet.

Facilitator Viniard-Weideman requested consensus on subcommittees editing a final copy of their worksheets without added new content; consensus reached. Facilitator Viniard-Weideman requested consensus on editing the draft report with the same set-up and format while altering some graphs for clarity/ease of reading while keeping the data to "paint the picture" and clearly labeling the recommendations from the worksheets versus those in the report; consensus reached.

6. Discussion of Presentation to City Council

Facilitator Viniard-Weideman welcomed Mayor Green to present options for presentation of the report to City Council. Mayor Green stated that the report will be included in the City's annual Goal Setting meeting in

December. He stated the document may be presented at one of two Council meetings, October 18 or November 1. He stated the Task Force should consider who will be present from the Task Force; he noted that public comment will be allowed at the time of filing the report with Council; he stated the Task Force needs to consider how to present and who will present the report.

Vice Chair Dunn stated the report group discussed Task Force Members Lee and Sesterhenn reporting if they are willing and the Task Force agrees.

Mayor Green presented two options for presentation to Council: a Work Session or a Committee of the Whole meeting. He stated a Work Session is more an informal meeting, more like a conversation while a Committee of the Whole meeting is more formal and limits the number of people invited to the discussion; he stated it's a dialogue versus a presentation. Task Force Member Lee questioned if dialogue is necessary for Council presentation; Chair Darrah stated he doesn't see this as a Work Session dialogue, it would imply Council can affect the report, the goal is to give the Council the work accomplished to this point.

Facilitator Viniard-Weideman urged the Task Force to consider the level of detail and also the questions: who we are; what we did; subcommittees; and recommendations. Chair Darrah stated the presentation should not gloss over the data as it demonstrates there is work yet to do.

Chair Darrah stated the presentation should consider the current lack of public engagement; Vice Chair Dunn stated that a recommendation is public engagement as part of next steps/continuation of work; Mayor Green stated make it very clear that public engagement is a recommendation.

City Administrator Gaines stated if the Task Force presents at a Committee of the Whole meeting on October 18, the report can be entered to be received and filed on November 1. Facilitator Viniard-Weideman requested consensus on Task Force Members Lee and Sesterhenn presented to the Committee of the Whole on October 18, with as many members in attendance as possible for the report to be received and filed at the regular City Council meeting on November 1; consensus reached.

7-8. Consideration of Action Items and Next Steps

Facilitator Viniard-Weideman stated the focus of the next meeting will be a review of the revised draft from this meeting's work session; there will be review of a power point presentation; the Task Force will prepare for the Committee of the Whole meeting on October 18, 2021. Facilitator Viniard-Weideman stated there will be a recommendation for this Task Force to follow-up with Council after the City's Goal Setting meeting(s) in December of 2021.

9. Next Meeting Date

The Task Force's next meeting is October 6, 2021 at 4:00 PM.

10. Adjournment:

Chair Darrah accepted a motion to adjourn. Task Force Member Lee motioned; Task Force Member Johnson seconded. Motion carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 5:32 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Katie Terhune, Administrative Assistant