



TOWN OF FAIRFAX

STAFF REPORT

September 7, 2022

TO: Mayor and Town Council

FROM: Lorena Barrera, Administrative Analyst

SUBJECT: Receive report on work completed to date on the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Initiatives for Fairfax

RECOMMENDATION

No action is required. This item is for information only.

DISCUSSION

At the October 6, 2021 Town Council meeting, Council held a discussion on several racial equity and social justice initiatives proposed by staff for Council consideration. These items were brought up as a list of “menu items” for Council to think about and to direct staff to initiate, depending on whether the item was appropriate for Fairfax. With that understanding, Council directed staff to begin working on a few of the items. Within category one of the menu, *Overview and Development of Town Policies, Plans, Surveys and Training*, Council considered the options: Racial Equity Action Plan; Handbook for Recruiting, Hiring, and Retaining Employees; General Plan Update; Community Survey for the Town of Fairfax; and Diversity and Inclusion Training Program. Council directed staff to begin the work on a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) training program, a handbook for recruiting, hiring and retaining employees, an update to the General Plan and community survey for the Town of Fairfax.

Out of these items, staff immediately began the review of the General Plan as much of the work was conducted by Shelley Hamilton, a Fairfax resident and former Planning Commissioner. Hamilton had previously presented the idea of revising the General Plan to the Racial Equity and Social Justice Committee (RESJ) and the RESJ had reached consensus to recommend the proposal to the Council. Council considered the proposal by Hamilton at the October 20, 2021 Special Meeting and voted to refer the review to the Planning Commission and bring the item back to Council at a later date.

Previously, Fairfax did not have staff to assign to the other DEI work products, so a shared services agreement with the Town of Corte Madera was implemented to provide the needed focus. This staff participates regularly in the Marin Agency DEI Resource Group, the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE), makes reports to Council, and leads the projects listed below.

In March 2022, staff began the research on a community survey since the idea was that the results from a survey would be a guide on the community’s perspective on law enforcement and

DEI. Council also felt that the survey results would allow them more insight on other menu items that could be considered for implementation in Fairfax.

The RESJ had conducted an informal survey previously and therefore, Council agreed that staff should search for a public opinion research firm that could provide comprehensive research services by using quantitative and qualitative research techniques. The idea behind this was that the research firm would create a survey that was unbiased and unpersuasive and then the community would have a better understanding of the perspectives of other residents in Fairfax after seeing the results collected and analyzed by the professional firm. Staff initiated the work and as reported at the April 6, 2022 Town Council meeting, staff submitted requests for information, scheduled meetings, requested quotes and scopes of work to four different research firms. After gathering the information, staff scheduled a meeting with one of the firms FM3 Research, an Oakland based organization. FM3 had experience on scientific surveys in nearby jurisdictions like Cotati and they presented a more detailed explanation on how the survey would be conducted. The members of the working group, Vice Mayor Cutrano and Council Member Goddard met with staff and FM3 to discuss the process and to provide FM3 with more insight on the DEI-related matters for Fairfax. After a long conversation and an understanding of the process being focused on residents who reside in Fairfax, the members of the Council were concerned with circulating another survey as RESJ had already done so and also questioned whether the new survey would be representative of all of Fairfax since FM3 noted that these types of scientific surveys excluded the opinions of individuals who work in Fairfax but do not currently live in Fairfax. These points led to a pause on the community survey efforts and staff proceeded with other research related to the Council's direction from October 2021.

Staff continued the work on the DEI training program for Town employees. Diversity and inclusion training programs are intended to help individuals understand and respect various differences among themselves. These differences include but are not limited to race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, age, and sexual orientation. The proposal to Council on such a program was that it should be designed to target all employees within the Town and after staff has initiated the designed training and provided feedback, it would also be offered to all council members, board members, commissioners and committee members. From conducting research on training and brainstorming with the Marin Agency DEI Resource Group, staff searched for organizations that could conduct training in person, for a better understanding of what DEI entails, and from recommendations from the City of Larkspur and Central Marin Fire Authority, staff scheduled a training in early October 2022 for Fairfax employees with CircleUp Education. CircleUp's inception began when two UC Berkeley Peace and Conflict Studies graduates joined forces to attempt to find how to end inequities and discrimination in our lifetime by addressing the root causes of hate, oppression, racism, and unconscious bias. Since 2014, CircleUp has served over 650 organizations and trained over 42,550 individuals. They have a commitment to practice what they teach, maintain value-based approaches to service delivery, and be empathetic toward the diverse communities they serve. CircleUp will be providing an overall introduction into DEI through their *Diversity Uncovered* class. This is an awareness-building and skill development training that is designed to uncover conscious and unconscious discrimination and learn tools to interrupt stereotypes, microaggressions, and implicit bias. This training also helps to develop a common language around Diversity, Stereotypes, Bias, and Discrimination, making it easier to talk about uncomfortable, yet important topics in the workplace.

In addition to this scheduled training, staff held a meeting with the Town Manager and the DEI working group members in early August 2022 to review a proposed training policy that was created with the idea of having a formal training policy that details what trainings are required, explains the training procedures, describes the various training levels and gives some examples of training topics. This training policy is still being revised and the working group will be meeting again to make necessary revisions.

On the direction of a handbook for recruiting, hiring, and retaining employees, the idea was to develop a handbook that can include steps and points for Fairfax Human Resources functions, hiring managers, and staff members to consider to help acquire a more diverse workforce. Although a draft of this type of handbook has not yet been created, staff has worked on a project focused on boards, commissions, and committees so that there is something in place for members of such groups, including council, to get an understanding of the various roles, responsibilities and relationships when it comes to being representative of a community. Though it is not focused on employees, it is focused on individuals serving as a voice for residents. This handbook is being reviewed by management and after any necessary revisions are made, can be put into implementation.

A new idea that was developed by staff and proposed to the DEI working group was for Fairfax to adopt definitions to the words equity, diversity, inclusion, accessibility and justice. This idea came about from research on the topics of DEI and from consideration of comments made by Fairfax residents at Town public meetings. Staff believes that it is important for organizations to adopt their definitions to these words so that there is a better understanding of how these words are being applied when it comes to the analysis, work and creation of programs and policies for an organization. At the last working group meeting, the group received a handout that included the dictionary definition, federal government definition, Marin County definition and a suggested definition for the various words. The handout was created to show the overall differences in how these words can be defined. The working group will be going over possible definitions that are representative of Fairfax and once consensus is reached, these definitions will be presented to the Town Council for consideration and possible adoption.

At the August working group meeting, it was also suggested that staff research the process for the development of a racial equity plan. Staff believes this entails a Request for Proposal (RFP) being published and that a professional organization would need to be hired in order to create such a plan. Once more research is conducted, staff will provide an update to request the necessary approvals from Council in order to move forward with the public process involving RFPs.

In addition to these updates, staff will be working with Police Chief Tabaranza to acquire statistics and updates on the law enforcement improvements since the last DEI public meeting discussion held in October 2021. An update will be provided at a future Town Council meeting.

Lastly, although direction was not specifically given by Council when it comes to events, the discussion related to DEI has already been adopted in the mindset of Town staff. A great

example of this includes the efforts of the Climate Action Coordinator developing public information in Spanish. This reflects an acknowledgement of part of the working community in Fairfax, which although many don't make the connect, just being aware of who we serve as public servants, is connected to DEI. Another great example of staff efforts that touches on category 2 of the proposed menu items, *Community Collaboration and Town Partnerships*, can be seen in this year's Town-wide picnic sponsored by the Fairfax Volunteers. The picnic will be partnering with the Spahr Center, a non-profit community agency devoted to serving, supporting and empowering Marin's Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Trans & Queer (LGBTQ) population. Additionally, several of the types of activities that will be held during that event involve the Fairfax PD and Ross Valley Fire, and also feature live music and food trucks. As mentioned in the October 2021 Town Council meeting, events like this bring the community together and while everyone gathers, people are learning at the same time while enjoying a community. Acknowledging the collaborations involved in putting such an event together, the presence of the various foods, music and activities for various age groups are all part of DEI. This is a great example of the type of work DEI involves.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with the acceptance of this update.

ATTACHMENTS

Menu items presented at the October 6, 2021 Town Council Meeting.

REFERENCE OF MENU ITEMS

1. Overview and Development of Town Policies, Plans, Surveys and Training
 - Racial Equity Action Plan
 - Handbook for Recruiting, Hiring, and Retaining Employees
 - General Plan Update
 - Community Survey for the Town of Fairfax
 - Diversity and Inclusion Training Program
2. Community Collaboration and Town Partnerships
 - Job Fairs
 - Pop-Up Events
 - Partnerships with the Local Library
3. Economic Development
 - Redevelopment Funding
 - Resources for Local Businesses
4. Communication and Understanding
 - Communications Program Development
 - Teaming Up with Community-Based Organizations
 - Two-Way Communication: *Creating a Safe Space*
5. Public Safety and Police Practices
 - Police Chief Annual Statistics Report to Council
 - Community Outreach
 - Training and Course Requirements for the Fairfax Police Department
 - Collaboration with Mobile Crisis Response Team