

DRAFT of the Minutes of the Equity Diversity Task Force, May 19, 2022 on the Zoom Platform

Members Present: Chair Andrea Fonseca, David Rosenberg, Jonathan Tropp, Lincoln Johnson, Marty Isaac

Also Present: First Selectman Vicki Tesoro, Attorney James Cordone, Stefan Lynne-Nielson, Director of Trumbull Library system, Tom McCarthy, Trumbull HR Director, Cindy Katske and Kathleen McGannon, Chief Operating Officers, Ashley Gaudiano, Town Council Chair, Joanne Orenstein, Clerk

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Fonseca at 7:35pm

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

There was no correspondence.

There were no Public Commnts.

Motion to approve minutes of 1/13/22 made by Jonathan Tropp, seconded by Marty Isaac. VOTE: All in favor

Motion to approve minutes of 2/17/22 made by David Rosenberg, seconded by Marty Isaac. VOTE: All in favor

Motion to approve minutes of 3/17/22 made by Jonathan Tropp, seconded by Marty Isaac. VOTE: All in favor.

New Business

Interview with Vicki Tesoro, Trumbull First Selectman, and her chief Administrative Officers Cindy Katske and Kathleen McGannon, Tom McCarthy, HR director for the Town of Trumbull, and Stefan Lynne-Nielson, director of the Trumbull Library System. Asking these questions:

- How can EDIT understand how your departments deal with equity and diversity
- How can EDIT help your department

Ms. Tesoro stated the programs the Library runs offer the best example. They run programs all year round that deal with all kinds of diversity. Jim Cordone can also answer questions as a Town Attorney. All the traditional holidays are observed and celebrated, as well as well floating holiday that can be chosen by the First Selectman. COVID impacted many ceremonies, but most have been able to be brought back now. Requests from the community are always taken into consideration: the community has a big part in event planning and creation of events.

Mr. Isaac asked about adding additional religious holidays – what is the process. Ms. Tesoro said to call the office to start the conversation. To access the green, residents can apply for a permit to reserve the space with the Parks and Rec Department.

Mr. Isaac also asked how the Mennorah and cresch can be on Town property. Ms. Tesoro said they come from outside organizations, but there is nothing to say other religious objects cannot be displayed. Ms. Tesoro noted to observe other religious holidays in the school calendar is up to the School Superintendant and the Board of Ed, who she recently contacted about adding muslim holidays at the request of a parent. Mr. Johnson noted that New Haven Schools had recently added muslim holidays, and Ms. Tesoro added that Bridgeport did as well.

Ms. Fonseca noted last ear there was a proclamation of Juneteenth (that will continue this year). She asked how the Pride flag was put up. Ms. Tesoro said they try and have as many proclamations as possible, the Pride flag will be put up again this year. Mr. Tropp asked how about a Black Lives or Blue Lives Matter flag? Ms. Tesoro said these had not been asked for, but she would have a discussion with the legal team if asked. Mr. Cordone said the Supreme Court ruled that an open flag pole needs to be available to everyone. They do what they can, the flag pole at Town Hall isn't necessarily an "Open" flag pole.

Mr. McCarthy spoke about hiring practices. He said there is a strong Civil Service by Charter for most jobs. The reason for Civil Service is to take out cronyism, but it can also make it hard to increase diversity as it screens out many applicants. They need to increase the pool to increase diversity. The hiring market is very hard now in general. He would welcome ideas on how to sell Trumbull as a place to work.

Mr. Isaac requested stats on progress over the last 5 years. Mr. Tropp added to the request to know how does Trumbull's workforce compare with it's populace. Mr. McCarthy will provide that information.

Changing the Charter requirement for civil Service did not come up in the last revision, but it should, per Ms. Tesoro, for the next one.

The Library works extensively to be inclusive, not exclusive. The Freedom of Information Act requires that. Mr. Lynne-Nielson said libraries should be content neutral –something for everyone, including controversial topics. They have hosted and sponsored a diverse array of programs in the public forum. They are not required to have all points of view represented all the time, but they try. Timelines of topics is a big consideration. The Library Board of Trustees sets policies and the Librarians, all of whom have Masters' Degrees, decide on all the programming.

EDIT can help the Library by letting the Library know more of what the public desires. Cultural programs are typically brought by patrons, but they also have programs on things like coding, chess, gardening and robotics. The Town connection is vital to the Library.

Mr. Tropp if people are upset about books – do they want them removed? Mr. Lynne-Nielson said they have a process for reviewing “challenges”. They do not consider political bias; religious views do not impact their choices. They have a collection broad enough to interest everyone and deep enough to be really educational. They have not removed any books or materials due to challenges. Simply because a topic is offensive to someone is not a reason to remove it. They have a process for culling books that has more to do with their relevancy – ie: medical books get out of date quickly – and the physical condition of the books. If they have not been used checked out in two or three years they may go. So it’s more in line with statistics than content.

Mr. Isaac said it would be good to share the Library events more generally. Are there opportunities to highlight more sub-groups in town? The Library is game for anything! Mr. Isaac thought a “Trumbull World celebration Day” would be great, others concurred. The further in advance programs can be planned, the better.

There was a suggestion for EDIT to be a part of the Arts festival. It’s being run by the Parks and Rec department – contact Noreen there .

Mr. Tropp suggested taking a break from interviews and digest what they have learned. The committee agreed. However, Ms. Fonseca noted that TPAUD has asked to present. They will be invited to the next meeting in June.

Motion to adjourn by Lincoln Johnson, seconded by Jonathan Tropp. VOTE: All in favor at 8:53pm.

Respectfully submitted:

Joanne Orenstein

May 20, 2022