

Advisory Team Meeting #9

April 14, 2021

6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

Summary notes are below. A recording of this meeting is also available on the website at www.red-wing.org/1032/Policy-and-Practice-Project-Meetings

Team Members Present

Steve Blaine, Alexis DeVries, Michael Holmes, Sara Kern, Cory Koplin, Doug Larsen, Samantha Malcom, Liz Magill, Cholwe Walker, Thomas Young

Team Members Absent: Juan DeLaFuente, Yadira Ramos

Facilitator

Michelle Leise, City of Red Wing Community Engagement Facilitator

Meeting Notes

Around the Table

Each team member shared one word describing how they are feeling and one thing they are looking forward to this summer.

Michelle introduced the first draft of the Red Wing Racial Equity Plan and described the draft as the very first step in a process to gather community input. She explained how the plan is arranged in terms of order and content. She said additional demographic data is being collected now to add later this summer. (The draft is online at <http://www.red-wing.org/DocumentCenter/View/4857/Racial-Equity-Plan-Draft---revised-April-9-2021-PDF>.)

Michelle read the questions that team members were considering per the meeting materials sent ahead of time:

- What changes would you make to the Racial Equity Plan draft so it would better reflect the results you want to see happen?
- What parts do you think are most important and should definitely stay in the plan?
- What specific goals, strategies, and actions would you add, delete, or edit so it fits with what you believe is really important in our community?
- What specific goals, strategies, and actions would you add, delete, or edit so it fits with what you believe is really important to address in our City of Red Wing organization?
- Are there parts of the Plan that seem confusing in any way?

- Are there parts you feel are misleading or misrepresent something?
- Is the Plan missing something you think is important overall?
- What is your general impression of the Plan?
- How would you suggest we get this draft out to other individuals in our community to get their opinions and feedback?

Team member Liz Magill first asked Mayor Wilson, who was in attendance, his opinion about racism in the community. The Mayor said racism is a problem and a major issue in Red Wing that needs to be addressed. He said he is looking for the community at large to work together on this – including the Advisory Team – so Red Wing can collectively find solutions to the issue.

First Half of the Plan

The team then went through the first half of the plan, which includes the introduction, background, acknowledgement statements, statistics, definitions, and timeline.

The following ideas were shared by members:

- Portions of the plan, especially toward the beginning, should be re-written so the language itself better reflects people of color in the community.
- Some team members shared they wanted more clarity on when and where the plan started, who wrote it, and how it came about. Michelle explained some of the history, starting with the Government Alliance on Race and Equity initiative in 2016, through the 2040 Plan, and more recent conversations with the Human Rights Commission, Advisory Team, and others. Michelle said the wording can be redone to better reflect the community.
- Some members said they are happy something like this plan has started but more needs to be done now to start implementing the changes it talks about.
- Some members said it is good to have a guideline and now the community needs to weigh in and make their suggestions to the plan from people who have lived with the injustices and inequities.
- A few specific wording changes were suggested. Michelle took notes and will add those suggestions in the next draft.
- One member asked if the plan should focus on racial equity specifically or equity as a whole, including how the LGBTQ+ community, physically challenged, and others experience policies. The group discussed this idea and ultimately decided it would be best to focus strictly on racial equity because that topic is often left out of conversations and that focus is often not laid out in policies.

-- A few members had concerns that the plan is just words and that nothing else will change.

Discussion on How to Collect More Feedback for the Plan

-- The group discussed concerns that it would be difficult for government to reach people and gather opinions about what should be in the Racial Equity Plan from those who do not often speak out or who do not trust government. The team decided they could ask a series of questions in a conversational way to their friends, family members, and others around them to see what others would want to happen in order to make Red Wing feel more inclusive and equitable in people's daily lives. In learning more about these varied viewpoints, the team might learn more about what needs to be included and/or changed in the Racial Equity Plan draft.

--The team decided they would use a series of questions and go out to their families, friends, and acquaintances and bring back those opinions to the team. Topics could include questions like who do people trust in Red Wing, has there been change over time in Red Wing, and where do people feel safe? What changes would they want to see in Red Wing? Right now, the questions would not go out on social media and instead be asked by the Advisory Team only. Next steps could come later. Demographic questions should be asked as part of those conversations.

Second Half of the Plan

The team then walked through the second half of the plan that outlines specific strategies and actions. These points were noted:

-- A question was asked for clarification about the first item in Strategy #1: "Acknowledge harm and build system of accountability." The first item was to "create a system for bringing human rights complaints to the City." Other members gave details on why this is important – the formation of a complaint system would allow the City to document when people have human rights concerns in the community, and that is important for residents to be heard and have their feelings documented.

-- The team agreed with strategies two and three. Strategy #2 is drafted as "Build a more inclusive decision-making process." Strategy #3 is "Expand the use of data." Under Strategy #3, it was noted that having data on public safety, as well as other categories, will help people have more knowledge about each subject area. More data will help tell the broader story of Red Wing today.

--It was mentioned that Strategy #4, which states "Engage more people who are not often heard" is one of the most important strategies. Some ideas came forward include the following:

--Need to create spaces where city officials and staff come together to listen to people intentionally and authentically and hear their stories.

--Could talk with nonprofits who could be trusted sources and offer survey questions to clients if the client agrees. There may be issues or concerns with this but it is worth checking on.

--Could use the Advisory Team and “spider our way out” to see how many people we can reach to share their opinions with us.

--Use message boards in grocery stores, etc. because many people see those – focus on places that everybody uses.

The team went through the last three strategies.

Strategy #5 is drafted as “Create a workplace culture within the City of Red Wing that prioritizes equity.” This needs to be clarified that this strategy focuses specifically on city government as an organization (not the community).

Strategy #6 is drafted as “Increase equity in policies, public services, public spaces, and programming.”

Strategy #7 is drafted as “Increase quality of life outcomes for BIPOC residents by increasing equity in economic development and housing.”

Some points team members made include the following:

-- Red Wing needs a type of support system, especially for BIPOC youth, where people feel comfortable enough to express themselves.

--Red Wing needs a youth center for the young adults because there is not much to do.

--More acknowledgement within the business community of BIPOC business owners and highlighting businesses owned by people of color.

--Businesses could use more education to make sure they are welcoming to BIPOC residents. People continue to say that they do not feel welcome in some or many businesses.

--Dear Neighbor was noted as one specific initiative where communities can come together. This has been done in other cities. Getting stronger as neighbors and neighborhoods is important.

--Need to find a way for more affordable housing to happen. This includes allowing other voices to be heard so the “not in my backyard” viewpoint is not the only opinion being listened to. Need to allow for some flexibility in regulations like the specific number of parking spaces or a certain number of square feet per housing unit. Some places can be smaller without two parking spaces, for instance.

--City could potentially partner more with the school district to advertise more available job positions on the same site so people of color know that Red Wing is looking to hire more people of color in multiple different sectors.

After the team discussed the Racial Equity Plan draft, Michelle said she would send a first-draft questionnaire out to the team. The team could provide suggestions and edits to her, and a final draft of the questions will go out after that so team members can start asking people questions before the next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.