CITY OF BELLEVUE

BELLEVUE DIVERSITY ADVISORY NETWORK

MEETING MINUTES

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| March 28, 2017 | Bellevue City Hall  |
| 6:00 p.m.  | Room 1E-121  |

MEMBERS PRESENT: Anthony Austin, Paulo Perez, Edilberto Flores, Mareth Flores, Eloisa Tran, Jennifer Karls, Justin Daigneault, Andrew Kelly, Tom Brewer, Haruka Kojima, Alaric Bien, Jingdong Yu, Margie Ye, Chinar Bopshetty, Aisha Kabani, Rita Badh, Mohamed Bakr

MEMBERS ABSENT: Beabe Akpojovwo, Linda Whitehead, Aleksandra Poseukova, Maria Batayola

STAFF PRESENT: Mark Manuel, Carol Ross

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:03 p.m. by Mark Manuel, Diversity Outreach and Engagement Administrator.

 A. Roll Call of Members

Upon the call of the roll, all members were present with the exception of Ms. Akpojovwo, Ms. Whitehead, Ms. Poseukova, and Ms. Batayola.

 B. Announce BDAN Leadership

Mr. Manuel reported that on a close vote, Anthony Austin had been elected chair and Rita Badh had been elected vice-chair. Mr. Manuel handed the gavel to Chair Austin.

 C. Adoption of the Agenda

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Ms. Flores. The motion was seconded by Mr. Bien and the motion carried unanimously.

 D. Adoption of the Minutes

Mr. Bakr called attention to the first sentence of the third paragraph on page 3 and noted that the figure “85” should be changed to “25.” He also pointed out that throughout the document “Maj. Kleinecht” should be spelled “Maj. Kleinknecht.”

Mr. Manuel referred to the third sentence of the first paragraph on page 7 and pointed out that “five-course class” should be changed to read “four-course class.”

A motion to approve the minutes of the January 31, 2017, meeting minutes as amended was made by Mr. Brewer. The motion was seconded by Ms. Karls and the motion carried unanimously.

2. SPECIAL PRESENTATION: PCD – DEPARTMENT OF NEIGHBORHOODS

Ms. Ross said she has been with the city for four years working on neighborhood outreach. She said she grew up in Cambridge, Massachusetts, between Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She said her parents were part of the great migration out of the South in 1940s, where they could not vote because of segregation. She said the values of succeeding, achieving and taking advantage of opportunities were instilled in her from her youngest days and has over the years driven her views about education, access, opportunity and inclusion.

Ms. Ross said Neighborhood Outreach is a division of the Department of Planning and Community Development. The job of the division is to connect residents with each other through various programs, and to help connect residents and visitors alike back to the city in a variety of ways. She said every time she attends a community event, such as the recent Interfaith Friendship Dinner at the East Shore Unitarian Church, she sees people she knows from the different types of neighborhood outreach programs and activities. She said she is one of six who staff the outreach team that is lead by Mike McCormick Huentelman. Each team member is assigned to cover different areas of the city. There is also a neighborhood outreach phone set up and the team helps direct calls to the appropriate departments so questions can be answers. Neighborhood outreach receives quite a lot of mail as well and the team responds appropriately. The team members are involved with city initiatives and help to facilitate public engagement and outreach. There are some 125 neighborhood associations in the city, and the neighborhood outreach team is involved with them and often attend their meetings.

A variety of means are utilized to communicate with the community. The monthly publication *Neighborhood News* is available in hard copy format and electronically, and it contains general interest information concerning what is happening in the neighborhoods, upcoming events, training opportunities, and board and commission meeting locations and times.

Ms. Ross said she got her start with the city of Bellevue by volunteering at the mini city hall in Crossroads Mall. Mini city hall has been effective over the years in that it is a place where residents can find someone who knows who they are, speaks their language, and can answer their questions. Mini city hall is truly cross-cultural communication in action. People can receive information and referrals, pay their water bills, sign up for utility rebates, receive help in learning how to use a computer, and get healthcare questions answered. In 2016, mini city hall handled 44,000 requests.

Neighborhood Outreach offers a number of educational components. Bellevue Essentials is a nine-week civic engagement course where the participants learn how the city works through presentations by city department representatives and interactive exercises. Mr. Manuel added that the program participants are a clear reflection of the community; about half of the participants are people of color from a wide variety of different backgrounds.

Ms. Ross said she has charge of the Cultural Conversations program. The program began small with a handful of women and has grown to where between 60 and 70 women now attend. The program is designed to create connections across the community in a safe environment, and the focus is on topics of culture. The program began with women, and in some cultures certain issues cannot be discussed with men in the room. Demand for the program is quite high. The next meeting slated for April 25.

Ms. Ross said another program she is responsible for is called Neighbor Link. It runs from June 1 to October 1 and is focused on neighbor-to-neighbor connections. The program began as a grassroots effort. Neighborhood Outreach provides promotional materials to let people know about the events where community service is encouraged along with engagement with the police and fire departments. Some 35 of the events are held each year. The city allows for streets to be closed to accommodate the events, which gives folks of all ages the opportunity to be involved right where they live. Opportunity is taken at the events to focus on Block Watch and emergency preparedness.

The Day of Sharing and Caring program is conducted in conjunction with Jubilee Reach through a Memorandum of Understanding. Jubilee Reach organizes volunteers to go out and make transformational improvements to people’s homes that can be done in a single day. The teams come from the faith community, real estate firms and community groups. Neighborhood Outreach also runs a program through which volunteers go into the schools to prepare them for the school year, something for which the teachers are very appreciative.

In September members of the faith community were involved in a program called Better Prepared Together. The focus was on how to work with the city in the event of emergencies and disasters. In major events, it could take the city several days to get help out to all the communities, thus the need to organize communities to help one another.

Ms. Ross said Match is a small capital improvement program in which the city will match up to $10,000 in materials, cash and volunteer hours toward projects submitted by communities to make improvements in the rights-of-way. The program has yielded neighborhood entry signs, benches, small gathering amenities, traffic islands, median landscaping, play equipment and amenities. The program offers a great opportunity for people to work elbow-to-elbow with their neighbors.

The Neighborhood Enhancement Program, run by Emily Kish, rotates through the city’s 14 neighborhood areas. The $5 million program is spent over a period of seven years and allows communities to envision small projects and submit them to be evaluated by the established criteria of public benefit, feasibility, affordability, consistency, completion within five years, and maintainability. One does not have to be a homeowner to vote for a project.

Ms. Ross said the Neighborhood Mediation program is also part of the Planning and Community Development department.

Ms. Ye said she attended the Neighborhood Mediation course in 2013 and said she found it to be a great program.

Mr. Manuel said the program is responsive to the city’s changing demographics by looking at cultural patterns of communication that are not always what people are used to. Ms. Ross said the April program will in fact be focused on cross-cultural communications and understanding the difference. The program enjoys 30 active mediators and has 70 that can be called on. Hundreds of people have been trained through the program, which is a confidential, free and voluntary service. The program focuses on conflict coaching and group facilitation.

3. EXERCISE

Chair Austin engaged the Network members in an ice-breaker exercise that involved having the members tell the group about themselves based on an item in a box. Having pulled out a peace sign, Chair Austin said he has three children and a minister wife and said their family practices a superhero theology that is aimed at having goodness overcome evil. He said he is a peace lover and has been working with the youth of his church for over 25 years. He said he volunteers helping with the youth gathering which attracts some 36,000 people every three years to a host city to do servant projects ranging from talking to kids to cleaning parks. After Katrina, the gathering booked up all the hotels in New Orleans and did what was necessary to help the city get back on its feet by giving back.

Mr. Bakr also drew out a peace symbol. In Aramaic, he said “peace be upon you” and explained that that is an Islamic greeting. He said Islamists always greet in peace and wish peace when saying goodbye.

Mr. Yu pulled out a watch and said he appreciated those who are willing to spend their time focusing on the good of the community. He said there is much to be done, and time needs to be spent in doing those things.

Mr. Flores selected a tape measure and said in working with diverse communities it is necessary to maintain a balance in deciding how close to get to others and how to acknowledging individuals as a whole without crossing boundaries.

Ms. Kojima pulled a plastic toy cat out and said she has two cats, one of which was a stray and was bothering other people’s families. The cat has become very friendly.

Mr. Brewer grabbed a whistle from the box and blew it. He reported that at the end of the month his employment with Jubilee Reach would end and that he would be taking on the responsibility of director of community outreach for Bellevue Presbyterian Church.

Ms. Kabani took from the box a trophy cup and said her cup runneth over.

Ms. Bopshetty chose a superman cape said she believes everyone has superpowers that become evident when people work together. Everyone is either a diamond that is shining or a diamond in the rough.

Ms. Tran got the tape measure as well and said it was fitting as she is a data scientist. She said her work is often misunderstood by people because it does not involve creating the data, rather it involves simply interpreting the numbers from the raw data. She said her job is to define the characteristics of people based on their data.

Ms. Ye pulled out a box of crayons and informed the group that both of her parents were artists. She said she loved coloring when she was little and used to do geometric coloring using a ruler and a compass. She said she now is trying to get her three-year-old daughter interested and is bothered when she colors outside the lines.

Mr. Kelly chose the tape measure as well and said he recently purchased his first house. He said it has been an exciting adventure.

Ms. Badh selected a sheriff’s badge and said she often feels like an undercover cop when driving on the motorway tailgate her. She said she is quick to stand up for her children when necessary.

Ms. Flores picked out an old pager and said she hates hanging onto things and loves throwing things away. She said she enjoying purging and would have a difficult time should she ever meet a hoarder.

Ms. Karls chose a flat black Lego piece and said her calling is building foundations for people to build on.

Mr. Bien pulled from the box the crayons and said as a child he found it difficult to color inside the lines. He said throughout his adult life he has tried to stay within the lines but has not always been successful.

Ms. Daigneault also chose the crayons said he works with youth and as such is challenged to always keep his brain in curious mode while working as a therapist.

Mr. Manuel selected a toy motorcycle and said after his divorce he bought a motorcycle. He said he remarried and has three children. He said his eldest is in college and is someone to lean on in dealing with life changes relative to life roles. He noted that his middle child does not like the motorcycle, but his youngest child has a toy motorcycle of her own to ride.

4. UPDATES

Mr. Manuel reported that Paulo Perez is facing some challenging life issues and has indicated he will not be able to continue as a member of the Network. He also said Maria Batayola encountered an unexpected medical condition and has chosen to take a leave of absence from the Network at least through April.

With regard to communicating within the group, Mr. Manuel allowed that everyone has crazy email boxes, making it difficult to find something when needed. He said Mr. Kelly had recommended creating a Google group, and Ms. Tran mentioned using Slack. He stressed that there are records that must be maintained and retained in accordance with the law. There is a staff person who oversees all communications for the city’s boards and commissions. That person will make the determination about whether or not Google Groups or Slack can be used given the degree to which they are to be used outside of regular email to engage in the business of the Network.

Ms. Bopshetty asked what program is used within the city to manage communications and asked if Sharepoint is used. Mr. Manuel said the city uses Office 365 and also uses Sharepoint internally. Ms. Bopshetty said there are a lot of elements of Sharepoint that would make it the right tool.

Ms. Tran said Whatsapp could be another possibility.

Mr. Bien pointed out that if the Network is intended to act like a board or commission, it will be subject to the Public Open Meetings Act and will require training about the rules and regulations.

Mr. Kelly said what is needed is essentially a storage location for notes and minutes for the team to use. Mr. Manuel asked if Sharepoint can serve that function and Ms. Kabani allowed that it can. Ms. Ye said she used to manage Sharepoint and said the program can be used as a document depository.

Ms. Tran said she is currently managing a big conference using Google Drive, which is a system that would also work for the Network.

Mr. Manuel said he would follow up on the information and report back to the group.

5. FEDERAL TRANSITION

 A. Hate Crime Information Session IAWW at NBCC

Ms. Badh reported that on March 19 the IAWW hosted a hate crime session at the North Bellevue Community Center that was attended by more than 200. A similar session was held in January with Mike Hogan, the King County prosecutor for hate crimes. It was felt that while people understood what hate crimes are and how they are prosecuted, the vast majority of folks did not understand all the gray areas. The March session included a panel with representatives from the Bellevue police department, the Bellevue School District, and a US district attorney. Some 12 specific scenarios were written up and put up on the screen for review and comment. Also present were immigration attorneys and elected officials. Questions and answered followed the presentation, and the people left feeling empowered.

Ms. Kojima said she recently was a helping a Japanese friend whose daughter is a seventh grader in the Bellevue School District who has experienced bullying because of her race. Her mother had small children at a park throwing stones at her and yelling for her to go back to China; their mothers were nearby and did not intervene. Ms. Badh said if such an incident were to happen at a school, it would need to be reported to the school officials. She said that was an excellent example of a gray area incident.

Ms. Badh said it was good for those attending the hate crime session to hear from the police and others that there are policies and procedures in place.

Mr. Manuel said there are numerous ongoing conversations about options. One option would be to establish a hotline for people to call, but there would need to also be the capacity to have people checking it often and triggering follow-up. It was voiced that when such incidents occur, a call should be made to 9-1-1. It is highly likely that incidents simply go unreported. The city has been collecting information anecdotally, but the overall picture would be much clearer if incidents were routinely reported.

Ms. Badh commented that she was in the city of Sammamish recently and told a Councilmember about the session. The Councilmember made the statement that such incidents are not happening in Sammamish as evidenced by the fact that there have been no 9-1-1 reports. She said just because reports are not being filed does not mean the incidents are not happening. There are many who are hearing about and personally experiencing gray area hate crimes, but the vast majority of people are not having those experiences. There is a clear need to encourage people to report things when they happen and to encourage others to do the same.

Ms. Bopshetty said she has heard anecdotally that there is a perception that there is no point to calling 9-1-1 because nothing will happen. She said she was aware of an incident that occurred in Crossroads recently that was made known through a distribution list at Microsoft. The victim did call 9-1-1 and by the time the police responded 45 minutes later there was nothing to see or address. Ms. Badh allowed that calling 9-1-1 may not lead immediately to a resolution, but it will add to the city’s baseline data.

Mr. Kelly said during his career in law enforcement he often heard complaints about the police arriving too late to help. The 9-1-1 system prioritizes calls in order of emergency, so a car accident would take precedence of a reported hate crime. However, the 9-1-1 dispatcher can direct callers to other resources. Where officers are sent out in response to a call, they must determine if a crime occurred, if the victim is willing to follow-through in going to court to testify, and whether they want the perpetrator hauled away in handcuffs. The victim may just want to see the situation resolved with some respect. In situations where a person does not know how to handle it, a call should be made to the police. At the very least, a report will be made.

Mr. Manuel said in his talks with the police they have been adamant about people calling 9-1-1. Their position has been that they would rather make any determination of the facts while the parties are still there. The police are not in favor of efforts to push out a non-emergency number.

Mr. Bien said the police chief has been very clear about wanting people to call 9-1-1 rather than trying to figure things out on their own.

Ms. Tran said she was involved in an incident in which she made the choice to call 9-1-1. She reported that the police were there in about three minutes. Mr. Brewer said he also recently made a 9-1-1 call and was assured that an officer would be dispatched. An officer arrived in about four minutes to find that the person whose actions prompted the call was female, so the male officer called for backup and a female officer arrived in just a few minutes. He said he was very impressed with how responsive the police were and how they immediately engaged with the subject with sensitivity.

Mr. Manuel said part of the challenge is how to capture the data to avoid having nothing but anecdotal information.

Ms. Bopshetty suggested the platforms like NextDoor should be used to get the word out about what to do. Having some information would be better than having none.

Mr. Manuel said part of the challenge is how people perceive the police. He said having worked closely with the police over the last two years, his perceptions changed as he saw how willing the police are to go out of their way to build bridges with the different populations in the community. There are, of course, still people within the community who have much different perceptions of law enforcement.

Mr. Bien reported that on April 1 from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. there will be a Muslim/Community safety forum at Sammamish High School put on by Mr. Bakr.

Mr. Bakr said a similar but smaller event was held in December prior to immigration issues coming to prominence. He said there have since then been many calls about immigration issues. The forum will focus on answering questions.

Mr. Bien added that there will be a community conversation with the community relations officer from Immigrations and Customs Enforcement on April 30 from 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. at the East Shore Unitarian Church. The event will be open to the public.

 B. Discussion on What’s Happening

Mr. Manuel said meetings have been held internally around the federal transition. He said it is always good to hear directly from those who know what is happening in their communities to help inform the process. He said one option would be to break into small groups to discuss the federal transition issues and share information. Alternatively, the information could be shared in subcommittees. Often for groups like the Network it can take up to a year to get grounded in purpose and identity, and to establish a mission and goals. There is so much to do immediately that it would be good to start the discussions right away.

On the strength of a straw vote, the group unanimously indicated a preference for taking the subcommittee approach.

6. STANDING COMMITTEES

Ms. Ye suggested the Network should work toward developing an action agenda. She proposed having the members brainstorm current issues and prioritize them. Some part of each meeting should be set aside to do the work.

Chair Austin said at the next meeting he and Ms. Badh would be sharing information and answer questions. He said there has already been a lot of work done and there is no desire to recreate the wheel. A focus is being developed in the background and things are on track to bring it forward for a full discussion. The Network is in its infancy and will in time be become expert at answering the global questions.

Mr. Manuel said he and Ms. Badh met earlier with Mr. Manuel and found themselves to be an effective group. He said he likes focusing on strategy and vision, and Ms. Badh has a logistical sense. He suggested each subcommittee should determine a chair, either by volunteer or vote, and to use the remaining time to decide when to get together or participate via conference call.

Mr. Manuel provided the members with a list of questions aimed at providing a basis from which to start each conversation. He asked the members to answer the questions and bring them back for additional discussion.

Mr. Brewer suggested it would be very informative for the members to share their answers with the other members of their subcommittees in the coming week or so.

Ms. Tran volunteered to create a spreadsheet listing everyone’s answers to the questions.

7. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Manuel urged the Network members to let him, the Chair or Vice-Chair know if they will not be able to attend a meeting. He reminded the members that the meetings are slated for the last Tuesday of each month. Training sessions on various topics will be scheduled throughout the year.

8. ADJOURN

A motion to adjourn was made by Ms. Flores. The motion was seconded by Mr. Brewer and the motion carried unanimously.

Chair Austin adjourned the meeting at 7:57 p.m.