

Date: Wednesday, March 27, 2024

Time: 5:30 PM

Location: Hybrid | In-Person: Carter Lake Conference Room, Larimer County Administrative Building, 200 W. Oak, Fort Collins, CO 80521; Online: Please register in advance for this webinar: https://larimer-org.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_LYrbVpTyTouj2dOtUrG8Cw

EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES

Call To Order

Chair Adame called the meeting to order at 5:37pm.

Members present: Vishvesh Singh; Hillel Katzir; Laura MacWaters; Fred Garcia; Jaxen Maynor; Lynn Adame

Staff present: Laurie Kadrich, Assistant County Manager; Jordan Dunn, Engagement Coordinator

Guests representing Fort Collins Human Relations Commission: Kevin Goff; Liz Messenger - Lead Equity and Inclusion Specialist (staff liaison); Teresa Cribelli; Beth Jaeger (Chair); Barb Kistler (Vice Chair)

Other community members present: Grace

Discussion Items

5:30pm – 7pm

1. Introductions

2. Discussion with Fort Collins Human Relations Commission (“HRC”)

Jaeger provided background on the HRC: It is one of 25 boards and commissions that advise Fort Collins City Council. It was established in 1964 and has 9 volunteer Commissioners. The Commission leads educational programs to advance equity and inclusion and raise awareness around diversity. The Commission presents the annual Human Relations Award. The Commission’s recent emphasis has been on collaborating with other groups on equity projects.

a. Ideas for building on the networking event on Feb. 4, 2024

Jaeger explained that the networking event arose from the abundance of organizations doing EDI work. The HRC started compiling a directory and identified over 150 organizations in 2023 and contacted Larimer County to find out what regional

organizations might still be missing. This turned into a collaboration on the February networking event, which was held at the Northside Aztlan Community Center and had over 100 attendees. On Monday, March 25, a subcommittee met to discuss the next steps. The group hopes to continue facilitating connection by hosting large events twice a year and encouraging smaller subgroups or affinity groups to meet in between larger meetings. HRC collected evaluations of the event and plans to share a summary and survey about an event in the fall with groups that attended.

Kadrich commented that Larimer County Commissioners are enthusiastic about continuing the partnership with HRC and would like to explore having similar events throughout Larimer County. Kadrich stated that the County has facilities in other communities that could host events.

The group brainstormed about other ideas for next steps, including: creating a directory of EDI professionals at different organizations across the county; creating a professional bulletin board to share ideas; creating spaces to build connections and awareness of what others are doing in the EDI space; making information more accessible; and avoiding burnout by sharing experiences.

The group discussed logistics of a professionals-only directory, which was a topic of the 3/25 post-event subcommittee meeting. HRC is meeting with organizations, including the Fort Collins Chamber of Commerce and United Way of Larimer County, about hosting and maintaining an online directory. The group discussed what information or links might be in a directory and how information could be searched or filtered. The Fort Collins Chamber of Commerce currently has a map-based nonprofit directory. Adame mentioned that a non-Fort Collins organization may be more accessible and welcoming for rural organizations.

b. Lessons from the Human Relations Commission

i. Evolution of the HRC; ideas, successes, and challenges

Adame asked what the EDI Board can learn from the HRC in how to be effective. Jaeger emphasized the “power of collaboration” and said the HRC does more by reaching out to partner organizations. Jaeger provided the example of the 2023 “Human Library” program, which was proposed by Fort Collins Equity & Inclusion Officer Claudia Menedez. The HRC did not have the budget, capacity, or physical space to execute this event alone, so it was necessary to partner with the Fort Collins Equity Office, the Poudre River Library District, and the Fort Collins Museum of Discovery. Jaeger commented that early on the HRC was hesitant to take on projects that they could not execute independently but they’ve learned they can do larger-scale education events when they collaborate to create and deliver programs.

Garcia asked for more information about the Human Library. Jaeger explained that it’s a concept originating in Copenhagen to create opportunities for “readers” to talk to human “books” about how the “books” experience life based on their identities. At the 2023 event, 25 “books” talked to 130 “readers” about their experiences. Jaeger said, “The ‘books’ were so generous with their stories and the ‘readers’ were so respectful and curious.” Kistler added that since the event,

multiple organizations, including CSU, Poudre School District, and communities as distant as Grand Junction, have asked about hosting similar events.

Garcia asked how Commission members address prejudice or bias when they observe it and under what circumstances they are acting in their capacity as Commission members. Jaeger responded that Commission members only act as a Commission when they are in a group. They do not address issues but sometimes will speak to groups informally as individuals.

The groups discussed group cohesion and several EDI Board members mentioned a desire to increase connection within the Board. Adame identified that one challenge is being a newer Board and determining priorities and where and how to focus the Board's efforts. Jaeger explained that the HRC's directive is to provide educational programming, and since that is a lot of work and requires collaboration to achieve a shared goal, relationships are built while working on projects, often informally, like conversations while making posters.

Kistler said clarity of purpose helps the HRC to work as a team. Kadrach remarked that the EDI Board created its first work plan last fall and will soon be discussing the execution of that plan.

The groups discussed the support structures that contribute to success. Kistler mentioned that recently Fort Collins allowed board and commissions to work together. Kistler remarked, "The more good thinking and helpful hands you can put on a project, the better." Katzir noted that Larimer County offers a mixer event for boards and commissions. Cribelli asked if Larimer County has an Equity Office. Kadrach explained that instead there is an Inclusion Administrator who works with staff in each department. Cribelli said the Equity Office and Claudia Menendez have provided support and good energy, contributing to the success of the HRC.

ii. Recruitment, procedures, and logistics advice

HRC members serve 4-year terms up to two times.

Kistler noted that logistics are always challenging since the HRC can only make decisions once a month and even planning meetings with 3 or more members requires creating agendas and timely posting to comply with open meetings law. Kistler said they have excellent staff support and could not be successful without it. Messenger added that the HRC frequently has to consult with the legal department and has to understand and comply with rules.

The groups discussed membership, attendance, and recruitment. The HRC does not participate in interviews; City Council interviews potential candidates. Regarding recruitment, Kistler said "As a volunteer, I want to know I am making a difference, putting my energy where I have passion, using my skills" and recommended the Board ask itself "Is what you're doing attracting people who are passionate about what you're doing?"

Kistler went on to note that, as a volunteer board, the energy and effectiveness of the Commission “ebbs and flows” and it can be challenging when Commission members join with a particular goal in mind. Adame said the EDI Board has had a difficult time retaining and engaging its members with the pressure of other life commitments. Kistler said having a hybrid option for meetings has helped members participate while juggling other life commitments. Katzir noted that there has been significant Board turnover and Garcia agreed, saying there have been Board members who have only attended a few meetings before dropping off or don’t attend regularly. Garcia said it’s difficult to build a team when Board members leave after only a short time. Both the HRC and EDI Board have bylaws and codes of conduct regarding attendance. The groups discussed efforts by the City and County to maintain standards for boards and commissions that support engagement.

c. Independent budget for the HRC and relationship with City Council

The City of Fort Collins provides \$6,100 annually to the HRC to conduct educational programs and activities. The HRC works to stretch its budget by collaborating with other organizations for resources, venues, and volunteers. The HRC has a strong relationship with City Council and strong participation and support from the Equity Office and City staff. The Commission does not create policy but advises and makes recommendations. It *could* hear community member complaints (though the Commission has rarely acted in this quasi-judicial role).

Katzir noted the difference in structure and said the EDI Board has a “more limited” scope - it interfaces with County departments and not the public. Kistler said the HRC doesn’t work with other City departments outside the Equity Office and is required to follow their work plan with both internal and external foci. MacWaters observed that it has been successful for the EDI Board to ask departments to examine programs, services, and activities through an EDI lens. Kadrich concurred, saying she recently summarized the Board’s accomplishments and was impressed with the impact of the Board both on various department operations and on county-wide efforts like the recent strategic plan. Kadrich said, “In the short time the Board has existed, you’ve impacted leaders in a positive way.”

The discussion ended with mutual thanks and a desire to collaborate in the future.

3. Evaluate request for the EDI Board to review equity indicators in the Climate Smart and Future Ready initiative

Kadrich explained the request: County staff would like the EDI Board to advise on what kind of equity lens each project should be examined through and would like a group to bounce questions off. Kadrich noted this is not part of the existing workplan and the Board may wish to evaluate capacity and who could commit to assisting with this project. Chair Adame proposed moving the discussion to May and the Board approved discussing the matter further in May.

4. Consider future joint meeting with Larimer County Inclusion Advisory Committee [internal, Larimer County Employees]

Kadrich explained that the Inclusion Advisory Council (IAC) is an internal group of Larimer County employees and was established relatively recently. Kadrich expressed support for a joint meeting. Adame, Garcia, Katzir, and Maynor also spoke in support of a joint meeting. The Board agreed to move forward with planning a joint session. Kadrich agreed to contact the Council Liaison to discuss next steps.

New Business

Approval of Minutes

1. Draft minutes from February 28, 2024

Adame noted a misspelling in her name and proposed amending the minutes to correct the spelling.

Singh said the minutes are accurate but noted that the February 28 meeting had many agenda items and that there was not adequate time to discuss all the items. Singh said he had feedback on the APIDA proclamation that he was unable to share because the pace did not allow him to contribute. Adame thanked Singh for the feedback and stated an intention to slow down so that all board members are able to contribute.

The minutes were approved unanimously with the proposed correction to Adame's name.

Miscellaneous Discussion

- MacWaters advised that there will be a Trans101 education event at the Fort Collins Senior Center on Saturday.
- Maynor shared that West Asian and Jewish American History Month is coming up in April and May and CSU will be hosting several events.
- Garcia announced that he was selected to chair the DEI committee for the Board of SummitStone.
- Adame shared that Heart and Sol recently hosted an event with the Loveland Police Department focused on the relationship with the LGBTQIA+ community. The event was successful and there will be another event tomorrow with the Loveland Police Department focused on relationships with the BILPOC community. Adame also shared that there will be an APIDA Heritage Month event at the Loveland Library on May 18 and Heart and Sol is seeking APIDA-led booths.

Adjourn

Chair Adame adjourned the meeting at 7:38.

Per the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Larimer County will provide a reasonable accommodation to qualified individuals with a disability who need assistance. Services can be arranged with at least seven (7) business days' notice. Please email us at dunnjw@co.larimer.co.us, or call (970) 498-7007 or Relay Colorado 711. "Walk-in" requests for auxiliary aids and services will be honored to the extent possible but may be unavailable if advance notice is not provided.