

## **WMSWCD Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Committee Meeting Summary May 27, 2020 Noon to 2:00 pm, WMSWCD Conference Call**

**Attending:** Scott Gall (Chair); Michele Levis, Mary Logalbo, Renee Magyar, Randi Razalenti, Laura Taylor

**Welcome/Check-In/Equity Shares** -- The following announcements were shared.

Mary shared that Cole will be updating our District area map with demographic data collected from local schools as suggested at the March DEI Committee meeting. Mary reached out to her former professor and Indi Keith about picking up where they left off with peer review for the *Whose Land is Our Land?* paper, and her professor is onboard, but she has not yet heard from Indi and will keep the Committee posted. Mary also reiterated Terri's message that was emailed to the Committee (because she couldn't attend the meeting) regarding the feedback received from the Board regarding how often and what they want to hear from the Committee [see May Board meeting minutes for details].

- **Action item:** Scott will circle back with Terri and pull in Mary, Michele and Randi to figure out the details of who is charged with doing what and next steps to fulfill the Board's request. Michele will look at the May Board meeting minutes to ensure that all of Terri's notes were captured before the June Board meeting.

Laura briefly discussed some of the horrible news lately regarding the unjust treatment and killing of black men around the country and is thinking about this while we explore our own work in this Committee. Randi announced that the gender/pronoun training discussed at the March DEI Committee meeting is going to be facilitated by Cliff Jones and Alexis Millett, and is called *Deepening our Understanding of Gender*. Based on feedback from the trainers, it's been decided that the Board and staff will have separate trainings to ensure that we are getting the most out of the training by making sure that everyone is as comfortable as possible and recognizing that there is a different staff culture and board culture. The staff will have the full 4-hour training as soon as possible remotely (ideally broken up over two days, two hours at a time). The Board will have a higher level shorter training (likely two hours) later in the winter. Because the microaggression training for the Board was already in the works and will address some of the concerns that would come up in the gender/pronoun training, as well as the workload the Board has in relation to the Long Range Business Plan update, it was determined it would be best if this training can take place later when the Board will be alleviated of some of their duties and will likely result in more participation.

**Approval of the March 2020 Meeting Summary** – Scott left one item highlighted from the original notes taken because Randi and Scott were uncertain what the word “this” referred to from Laura's original notes. Change “Now these are developed, and the LRBP plays a main role in doing this” to “Now the LRBP plays a main role in further developing DEI goals”. Change the last line of the notes to be more accurate to read “Notes taken by Laura Taylor, partially edited by Randi Razalenti, and finalized by Scott Gall.” The Committee approved the minutes with the above changes.

**Financial Report** – Scott reported that all is looking good with the Committee budget and noted some expenses that have occurred since the March meeting. Randi announced that through the end of the fiscal year we will continue to track expenses that came out of the Committee's budget and moved to other budgets as originally requested in order to remain consistent through the fiscal year. We will only be tracking the DEI Committee expenses starting July 1.

- **Action item:** Michele Levis will correct Capacity Partnership invoice to be entered under the DEI class code (it was accidentally approved as a Communications expense, and therefore entered as such).

**UERC Debrief** – Scott compiled take homes from those that went to UERC regarding the keynote morning and afternoon speakers and the lunchtime topic lead by Mary and Indi. The Committee discussed some of the take homes, acknowledged what we could do to improve, what we are doing that is working that we want to keep doing and potentially expand upon, and potential next steps. The major points listed below will be shared at the June 1<sup>st</sup> All-Staff meeting.

- Organizational goal to go beyond *welcoming* of diverse communities to *belonging* of diverse communities in our organization. Shift our messaging to reflect this.
- Having an equity lens isn't equal to having diverse leadership in decision making.
  - Hiring people of color at the leadership level is desirable.
  - The most immediate opportunity for the District to involve a person of color at the leadership level is the recruitment of an Associate Director to serve on the Board to replace Susan Weedall, who recently moved out of the District and therefore can no longer serve in that role.

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- Mary is working on creating an Advisory Committee to help with the LRBP, and is hopeful this Advisory Committee could serve beyond the LRBP.
- Integrating communities of color in our work in multiple ways. We do this now, and should continue to explore opportunities to expand on this.
- When leading a discussion about our equity work, pausing at the beginning of the discussion to acknowledge privileges, the role that you play, and what is being done to include diverse perspectives from the community.
- When people of color are hired onto our staff and become board members, it is crucial that they are not targeted as “having all the answers”, or doing all the work to uncover white peoples’ “blind spots”, or putting all the emotional burden and pressure on them to come up with answers simply because of their race.
- Consider a dedicated position to lead in oversight, implementation, and further the District’s diversity, equity and inclusion work. This would not replace but rather lead and aid the staff’s involvement in this work. Capacity and time restrictions and the desire to do more have been documented in the Organizational Health staff survey as an issue. Though we cannot afford this position in the near future, it is important to document the desire and ideas for such a role should the budget allow for this position, as this could be a major step toward organizational health.

**Recruitment of Associate Board Directors** –The last recruitment took place in 2015, which led to Susan Weedall, Finlay Anderson, and Jan Hamer joining as Associate Directors. Susan Weedall’s recent resignation from the Board due to moving out of the District is prompting the District to look at recruitment tools and efforts for Associate Directors. Michele, Mary and Terri wanted to get input from the DEI Committee regarding the application to becoming an Associate Director of the Board. The Associate Director policy (adopted by the Board) and Guidelines for Appointment of Associate Directors (not adopted) was shared for reference. The Committee quickly recognized potential barriers in this document, particularly in the Policy regarding a certain number of meetings being attended in advance, and in the Guidelines in having to have a conservation project completed with the District. The DEI Committee will have future opportunities to make recommended revisions to this document as well as provide guidance for recruitment efforts to the Board. Special Districts Association of Oregon (SDAO) sent the District a Board Member Recruitment Toolkit in October 2019 that Jim Cathcart flagged needed to be reviewed by the DEI Committee before it was ever used. This has been a backburner item, but can be brought to the forefront in the near future.

- **Action items:** Scott to include an agenda topic at the July DEI Committee meeting to make recommendations on revisions to the Associate Director Policy and Guidelines for Appointment of Associate Directors. Randi to track down an electronic version of the SDAO Board Member Recruitment Toolkit so it can be shared remotely with the DEI Committee to review in the near future.

The following recommendations were made for the Associate Director Application:

- Take out the word “how” from the first question, so it reads “Have you interacted with the District in the past?” Consider any further language that demonstrates the reason this question is being asked – if this question is only asked for informational purposes, it shouldn’t read as though someone is being scored on this question.
  - Move the first question down to later in the application. If someone has limited experience working with the District, it would be best to not have that be the first item that the applicant is acknowledging in themselves nor the first item that the Board is learning about the applicant. We want to expand who we are working with, and in order to do this changing the priority of when this question is asked may lessen any perceived notion that this is the top priority.
  - Include a question about abilities to build inclusive environments.
- **Action item:** Michele and Mary will talk with Terri and Leadership some more to get a plan going forward.

**Action Item Review – See above action items in bold.**

**Next Meeting:** Noon to 2:00 pm, July 22nd.