

**DRAFT -- WMSWCD Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Committee Meeting Summary – DRAFT
July 22, 2020 Noon to 2:00 pm, WMSWCD Conference Call**

Attending: Scott Gall (Chair); Terri Preeg Riggsby, Michele Levis, Mary Logalbo, Renee Magyar, Randi Razalenti, Hannah Spencer, Laura Taylor; Guests: Gianna Petito & Kristen Balschunat (Winooski Natural Resources Conservation District)

Welcome/Check-In/Equity Shares – Mary shared that she heard back from Indi Keith, who has confirmed she is interested in moving forward with the peer review of the *Whose Land is Our Land?* paper with the District.

Approval of the May 2020 Meeting Summary – Approved as written.

Financial Report – The group reviewed the report from the end of the fiscal year. There were ADP payroll items from April and May that were accidentally coded to DEI, but were not DEI expenses.

Action Item: Michele to correct ADP items in QuickBooks.

Long Range Business Plan (LRBP) – Organizational Health & Conservation Scope Teams' Evolving Success Criteria Questions for DEI Committee – This item was moved up on the agenda due to Terri not being available at the meeting yet. The group looked at the questions from the planning teams and discussed. Mary iterated that the DEI Committee is charged with giving insights, and this does not need to be final answers.

Organizational Health Team Question 1: How can we ingrain equity and inclusivity in our decision making?

- Diversifying leadership
- Slowing down
- Equity lens & abbreviated equity lens
- Outreach for perspectives from different communities in our District
- Finding tools that can be used habitually by staff on an individual level for decision making that has medium and short term impact, such as the abbreviated lens & continuing/increasing use for full equity lens for long term impact decisions (such as hiring)
- Having a diverse standing advisory committee
- Continuing/increasing working with diverse partners
- Continuing education for staff and Board with DEI trainings

Organizational Health Team question 2: How shall we ensure ample time and slower pace is supported to be more equitable and inclusive?

- Making it clear that we are allocating time for this on individual annual work plans
- Adjust expectations for how long things take and how many projects we can do in a year
- Actually making the space to do the practice – such as a reminders in workflows
- Leadership need to continue to be supportive of actually taking the time to make space for this
- Track how staff time is spent. This will help inform how to set this up realistically in annual work plans, and will make it easier to allocate the necessary resources to do this work.
- Rewarding and encouraging the behavior as well as holding staff accountable for making time

Conservation Scope Question #1: Should we include equity and inclusion in our mission statement?

Mary let the group know that the Board was asked this question and it was met with some uncertainty because they were unsure if this is the right place to have this. The mission statement should be why the District exists. The vision statement is our goals. Renee and Mary have been discussing having a tagline in addition to a mission and vision. The group had general support of including this in the mission statement with the following notes:

- Actual words used for this needs to be worked on, and being succinct is important.
- We exist to serve people in an equitable and inclusive model.
- Stay simple, clear and straightforward. Our current mission talks about people – it's not exclusionary the way that it reads.
- Mary notes that a tagline for NRCS was accidentally introduced to the Board as a mission statement to the Board, which they were very supportive of how short it was, but didn't know it was a tagline at the time. Taglines can read shorter and mission statements can include more.

- Michele notes that Jim Cathcart had a tagline that he had suggested: Clean water. Healthy soil. Diverse Habitat.

This topic was cut short due to time constraints. Scott noted that the group can contact Mary with anything outside of the meeting about this topic as needed.

Recruitment of Associate Board Directors – This is now called an Associate Director Information packet instead of an application packet as a first step to make it less intimidating. Michele added some information about what the District does so if we want to really reach out to new people they will understand what their role would be, attributes that would be helpful, and what the selection process would be like. Michele incorporated items from the roles that the Board approved of the role they want Associate Directors to do. Michele reminded the group of changes to the document that came from the DEI Committee’s last meeting.

The group looked more at the information form and discussed and made additional modifications to make the form more approachable for all. The group discussed different ways to simplify the form and a subcommittee was formed to work on the form some more before bringing back to the DEI Committee. Michele, Renee, and Terri will work on this. The DEI Committee will reconvene to look at the revised form and talk about the perspectives and process that the Board uses with these materials. There may be more revisions based on this insight of how the form may be used.

Action item: Michele will schedule time with Renee and Terri to work more on the information form.

DEI Reports to Board of Directors – Terri reminded the group that the Board members wanted to have a quarterly report from the Committee, or more often as needed. There may be ways to do this that make it more digestible and engaging for the Board to track what the Committee is doing and how annual work plan goals are being met.

Action Item: Scott and Terri will come up with an example of the DEI Committee report to the Board for both the Board and DEI Committee to weigh in on. Scott may reach out to Committee members as needed for items to include on the report.

Voluntary DEI Discussion sessions for Staff – Through conversations and surveys with staff, it has been noted that the staff need more time and space to have more open / less structured conversations around equity outside of the DEI Committee meetings. Particularly during the pandemic with the office closed, there currently isn’t a natural way of talking about some of the current issues related to equity like there would normally be when staff were all in the office together. The District is going to start having monthly open-ended discussions, and perhaps increasing the frequency of these discussions as desired. The first two are going to have more structure in that they are going to be voluntary debriefs of the two upcoming trainings – one training (with Board and some partners) on microaggressions, and the other training on gender (staff only, Board to have their own training after the LRBP update).

Action Item: Randi to facilitate the first two discussions and then check in with Scott about when to have the more open ended discussions after that and who will facilitate. Scott and Randi will coordinate these and alternate facilitating.

Add August DEI Meeting – Due to the need for more discussion related to the LRBP questions and Associate Board Director recruitment, a meeting has been added on August 12 from noon- 2:00pm.

Action Items – see above.

The group talked a bit more to the guests at the end of the meeting and Kristen invited staff to talk about these questions that their District is thinking about: How do we best talk about landownership, especially in relation to Native Americans? Safety on the job, particularly in rural communities, how can we make sure that people of color in these positions are safe? Gianna found our District by searching for conservation districts and DEI.

Next Meeting: Noon to 2:00 pm, August 12.