

City of Worcester Advisory Committee on the Status of Women

VIRTUAL MEETING MINUTES– Tuesday June 7, 2022, 5:45 PM

<https://cow.webex.com/cow/j.php?MTID=mec5f5ee5dbf88ebdea1960bf33c1f400>

Meeting number: 2311 267 6845 Password: G2TmSkhjA32

Call in: 415-655-0001 Access Code: 2311 267 6845

Members Present: Rubby Wuabu, Tracey Whitney, Esther Boama-Nyarko, Kayanna James, and Heather Borelli

Members Absent: Samantha Sendrowski, Marcia Macri

Staff: Jayna Turchek

Guest presenters: William Bagley, Director of Human Resources

1. Call to order and Introductions

Kayanna James called the meeting to order at 5:50 pm. Kayanna James welcomed members of the commission and those present, and a roll call was taken, 5-0-0, that established a quorum. Agenda was approved with no revisions.

2. Review and approval of April 5, 2022 meeting minutes

Esther Boama-Nyarko indicated she was at the April 5th meeting. Ms. Turchek indicated Heather's name was corrected on previous minutes was incorrect as Helen. Kayanna James motioned to accept the minutes with edits for the April 5, 2022 meeting. Tracy Whitney seconded. Minutes with the two edits were unanimously passed on a roll call vote of 5-0-0.

3. New Business

Topic: Discussion on the status of women in City of Worcester employment and volunteer opportunities (Guest: William Bagley, Director of Human Resources)

Tracy Whitney framed the conversation and welcomed William Bagley. The objectives of tonight's meeting is to better understand current policies, employment and volunteer opportunities, and gender specific programming and benefits offered to employees of the City of Worcester.

The Committee received written responses to the following questions that were asked. These responses are attached at the end of the minutes. Ms. Whitney preceded to ask the questions and generated the following discussion.

1. With regard to the Chief Diversity Officer position the city has engaged a consultant to carry out the Equity Audits for three departments. The audits of Human Resources and Health and Human Services are wrapping up. With regard to the work, the city hopes to continue to move toward having the workforce reflect the diversity of the community and to take steps to remove barriers for women and minority groups making the city the employer of choice in the community.

2. Currently, the City has 51 males in executive management roles and 20 females the below graph represents male/female ratio for executive management and the second chart represents the same with race included. Those figures represent the current workforce. Historically the fire, police and public works departments have been male dominated. There is work being done to make this a more inviting and appealing to want to work here. If one removes these three department, the number of executive managers are 33 males and 20 females: employee as a whole without these 3 departments there are 320 male and 350 female more aligned where the city wants to be.

3. There was a drop off in female applicants. He felt this was cyclical. In 2021 there was a decrease and in 2022 there is an increase. In 2028, the applicants were 59% female and 41 % male and in 2019 42% female and 5% male. The city does not have a way to know why women are not applying. In 2022 there seems to be more of a balance between male/female.

4. The City does not have data for the rate or number of resignations from employment and volunteer boards broken down by gender for the last 4 years.

5. The highest ranking female in the Fire Department is a Fire Lieutenant which is above a firefighter, and females make up 3% of the employee population. Two of the women are officials. One of the women was recently honored at the state level for her work.

The highest ranking female in the Police Department is a Police Lieutenant which is above a Sargent, and females make up 5% of the employee population.

Both Departments have assigned Diversity Officers who focus on recruitment, retention, equity, and inclusion. The goal of each Department is to build a workforce that is reflective of the Community they serve. During recruitment periods, both departments hold career open houses and attend community career fairs to increase interest and to educate interested applicants in the Civil Service process.

In speaking with the Fire Chief, the fire department goes into schools to encourage young people to consider a firefighter career.

Committee member asked if there was development programs within the fire department. Mr. Bagley would have to talk with the Chief and get back to the Committee.

6. The City is engaged in negotiations to remove Civil Service from non-public safety positions.

7. There is presently no draft for shared inclusive language to be adopted by the City, but the City anticipates that this will be a priority of its next CDO.

8. The City does not have any childcare benefits or subsidies for employees.

9. The City does have a permanent Telework policy. In addition to the Policy, since remote work was made available to eligible employees during the stay at home order, even if departments do not have regular remote flexibility, they do allow for employees to work from home if they been diagnosed with COVID-19, awaiting test results, etc. There are currently 24 men and 71 women working on telework. Obviously front facing workers such as customer service workers and emergency responders cannot do work from home.

The City does not keep track why people work at home. Remote work would not effect a promotion. The City would consider a survey about working from home but would not be mandated.

10. The City is developing a Leadership, Training & Development Division that will provide employees with the opportunity to develop skills to prepare them for advancement opportunities, as well as leadership skills when they do advance. At this point the City is gearing up to work with both male and female employee. In the future this may be gender specific.

11. The City would consider a youth to shadow employees for a day. A program must be vetted and approved. The city has negotiated with union to allow youth internships.

12. The City maintains a Sexual Harassment Policy, in which each employee is trained during employee orientation. In the policy, directions detail for employees to contact the Sexual harassment Grievance Officer. The Human Resources Department formed an Investigatory Unit and employees may contact the Lead Investigator or whomever the employees feels most comfortable with to file a complaint. Arrangements will be made to meet with the employee with representatives from the Human Resources Department. Once the investigation is complete, appropriate action is taken. May be retraining etc.

13. If an employee needs assistance, they should contact their manager or Human Resources immediately, employees are eligible for leave related to intimate partner violence. The City does not have a policy directly related to intimate partner violence. However pursuant to Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 149, Section 52E: Leave

from work when employee or family member of employee has been a victim of abusive behavior, employees are eligible for leave time. Therefore City employees who are faced with intimate partner violence are eligible for 15 days off of work during a 12 month period.

malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXXI/Chapter149/Section52e

The City does not have a clear policy on this, however, Mr. Bagley will address this moving forward.

14. The City is going out into the community, talking about working in the city. The City will continue to strive to remove barriers and create opportunities for underrepresented groups. In addition, the City will build opportunities for development and training that will allow all employees to perform at a higher level in the positions they hold as well as prepare for promotional opportunities if they choose to pursue them.

15. The City Council oversees the hiring process for the City Manager position.

Other questions raised at the meeting.

Q: One of the concerns heard is the job descriptions will refer to comparable experience. Some people don't know what this means and may have it. Is there work being done on looking at the development of job descriptions?

Response: Currently there is a racial audit taking place. The plan is to wait for the Chief Diversity Officer to come aboard to set the plan. There has been internal review of descriptions, but it is wise to wait so everyone is on the same page.

Q: Who is being sent from the fire Department to talk to the schools, etc? It makes a difference in terms of gender and diversity.

Response: He did not get that specific with the Chief.

Q: What training do people get when moving into a manager's position? Example: best practices, implicit biases etc?

Response: The City is not where it wants to be with this kind of training. In the next year both mandatory and volunteer opportunities are slated to be developed. We currently have some basic training for managers.

Q: Who is training City staff what sexual harassment means? What does zero tolerance mean?

Response: Internal staff usually at orientation and occasionally an outside vendor will do training. In terms of zero tolerance. The City is not necessarily going to terminate some, but will take steps to correct the situation.

Q: Pathways for Change, Inc. Is the only agency that provides sexual violence training in the regional, is there a reason why we have not been asked?

Response: Mr. Bagley is fairly new to the role. Does not know why the City has not asked Pathways. He is open to having a conversation about this.

Q: How does the city provide resources related to sexual harassment? Who will be informing (implementing) the policy?

Response: This may be related to the Violence Against Women Policy. The City does not have a policy. Human Resource Department would develop this policy. An outside Counsel may be asked to help with language.

Q: How is the City going to address women's fear of City employees across the board and fire and police staff specifically?)

Response: Outside those three departments (WPD, WFD, DPW) the City has a pretty balanced workforce. The City will continue to educate. Where appropriate action is taken.

Q: Can you speculate as to why women apply to be police officers do not hear back and their male counterparts do?

Response: He was unable to. This is a very controlled process of the civil service. A test is taken, the test is scored and ranked. The City goes down the list gotten from the State to invite candidates into a class. Without having more information. He suggested the male cohorts may be a higher rank on the list.

Q: The leadership on Boards is not broken down by gender. There is a perception the males dominate. Can you comment?

Response: He was not sure about the perception. The City works to move in the right direction. Referring to 2003 70% of board/commission members were male, 208 was down to 62% and about now is 55% male. The trend says women are interested in the positions and are being considered for them.

Q: Are the Chief Diversity Officers in the Fire and Police Departments persons of color?

Response: They are persons of color.

Q: Referring to the 10% number of women in the Fire Department, what is the overall number of firefighters?

Response: Was given in the materials received by the committee and not the public. The response was provided in the chat.

They City has a contract with a diversity firm that connects the jobs with diverse communities in order to reach as many people as possible with every job being advertised. Other communities are being asked what they do related to recruitment and training as well.

Q: Are there any steps being taken to address the gaps in disparities?

Response: The City has been reviewing this issue. There is an effort to keep as much information out of the process called a blind application and hope the consultants will agree. Looking to the consultants audit to help identify the gaps and suggest improvements.

Q: Will the audit consultants be looking at the recruitment and hiring process at the Fire and Police Departments? Has there been an audit such as this in the past?

Response: Not specifically, these departments are civil service jobs under control of State law and the labor union. As far as an audit in the past, he was not aware of one that has been performed.

Q: Do the two department chief diversity officers work with the City's Chief Diversity Officer or do they work separately?

Response: Would be better to ask the Chief Diversity Officer. He would think they work together.

Q: With all the work that is happening around diversity in the workplace and staff changes, what is the plan to implement and sustain the work?

Response: The understanding is there will be a roadmap laid out for the City to follow, whoever is responsible. The audit is related to Human Resources Department with the understanding this department works with all City departments.

Q: Some cities have a human resource board, does Worcester have one?

Response: Worcester does not have one.

4. Old Business

A. Update and collaboration with the MA Commission for the Status of Women (Kayanna James)

Ms. James had a conversation with the Executive Director of the Massachusetts Commission for the Status of Women in April sharing information about Worcester's Committee.

Points discussed:

- Asked to receive the Committee's reports
- Made introduced the regional director and talked about the upcoming regional meeting
- Discussed regional collaborative plan
 - The regional group will be charged with holding hearings and work with suggestions and complaints. At the end of the year write a report.
- Invitation to the legislative meeting in September.
- Spread the word about the Girl's Empowerment Initiative
- Committee at the regional level that tracks Mass legislation.

The committee expressed interest in legislative priorities and thought it would be an opportunity to support the women in Worcester.

B. Review marketing presentation for Wonder Women of Worcester posters

Ms. Macri was not in attendance. Ms. James moved to table this item. Ms. Borelli seconded. Unanimous.

Director Turchek reminded the Committee that this is the end of the fiscal year and end of current work plan. The ideas brought forth this evening by Ms. James will be helpful in developing the next plan at the July meeting. All ideas and suggestions are welcome.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:11pm with the approval of a motion made by Ms. James and seconded by Ms. Wuabu (5-0-0)