City of Upper Arlington

October 2, 2019 | 1:30 pm

The meeting of the Community Relations Assessment Committee was called to order at Noon in the Council Committee Room located at 3600 Tremont Road by Co-Chair Sue Ralph.

Members Present

Sue Ralph, City Council	Jim Lynch, City Council	Michele Hoyle, City Council
Michelle Montgomery, Equal UA	Nic Fortkamp, Equal UA	Marianne Mitchell, Equal UA
Jenn Faure, UA Library	Steve Schoeny, City Manager	Dan Ralley, Asst. City Manager
Steve Farmer, Police Chief	Emma Speight, Comm. Affairs Director	

Members Absent

Tricia Fellinger, UA Schools		

MINUTES

1. **Welcome**
    Approval of September 19, 2019 Meeting Minutes
    Motioned: *Michelle Montgomery*   ***Seconded:*** *Marianne Mitchell*
    Motion unanimously passed

2. **Review/discussion of existing community relations initiatives, groups and strategic plans**
    City Organization – Emma Speight presented, with Steve Farmer and Dan Ralley
    - Gender identity and sensitivity training is already occurring in Parks & Recreation. Expanding to the organization in 2020.
    - Human Resources is working to compare the City's Equal Employment Opportunity report (filed every two years with federal agency) of staffing stats with the community/region – to identify gaps and map out plan to address those gaps.
    - Steps have been taken to provide gender neutral support for new parents—the City already has a maternity/paternity leave policy.
    - Police and Fire emphasis on diversifying workforce – national testing network expands the pool of available candidates and hiring has been expedited in some instances. This process could be formalized.
      o Police Accreditation – the workforce should mirror the community (basic requirement for accreditation). The Police Division is in a good position for representation of African American populations, low on women, zero on Asian

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representation. The Chief hopes to create a diversity & inclusion officer (ancillary role performed by existing member of staff).

- o School Resource Officer positions have helped break down barriers between police and other races within the schools.
- Fire Division – staff routinely undergoes extensive training for assisting individuals with special needs (Alzheimer disease, autism, etc.), infectious diseases, etc.
- Fire recognizes that Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) training is needed and is already planning to implement such training.
- The City Manager intends to schedule implicit bias training for all employees.

Community Cultural Workshop Report & Survey Takeaways
- Important to note that the survey reflects the opinions of workshop participants, not necessarily the broader community.
- There is an opportunity for the City to explore broader community opinions as part of the upcoming 2020 Community Survey process.
- Some of the findings:
  - o Sense that UA is very/somewhat welcoming & inclusive (61%) versus somewhat or very unwelcoming (35%)
  - o Sense that Central Ohio views UA as somewhat or very unwelcoming (73%) versus somewhat or very welcoming (16%)
  - o 58% think presence/importance of DEI in UA is important but UA could do more, 10% think it's already a community priority
  - o 57% think presence/importance of DEI in UA Schools is important but UA could do more, 19% think it's already a priority
  - o Top ideas for making UA more welcoming:
    - ▪ Community center (81%)
    - ▪ Cultural celebrations (48%)
    - ▪ Transparency in communication (43%)
- o 61% think UA does not have an effective tool for citizens to connect, versus 39% who think UA does have an effective tool.

The idea of a "one stop" webtool was discussed, to help residents find what they want when they want it, and to cut through the clutter of too much information. It was noted that in light of UA's demographics, we should not rely on electronic communication but should continue providing a range of options for accessing information.

Upper Arlington Library – Jenn Faure presented
- The Library is trying to diversify its workforce however salaries are the lowest in the region, which makes recruiting a challenge.
- Staff participates in bias and civility training.
- With free services/resources, the Library has an economically diverse customer base. It also attracts/serves customers who do not live here, which helps expand diversity.
- Focus is currently being placed on being more welcoming to customers who don't speak English. Eight key languages have been identified upon which to focus. Connections are being made with bi-lingual students at the High School (part of the Ambassadors of Change program) to assist with translations.
- The Library is conducting a strategic plan with the Benefactor Group – to date a Strategic Planning Discovery Summary has been prepared. Diversity and inclusion issues were prominent themes.

The Big Table Discussion Highlights – Jenn Faure presented
- Of the topics that participants could select, community connectedness was the most popular. Some general topics/conversation areas were highlighted:
    o Encourage local businesses to host activities that help with social interaction, example–wine tasting at Giant Eagle.
    o New residents have a hard time finding their place when they move in.
    o A need for cross-generational conversations. Especially between senior population and youth.
    o Younger people feel marginalized by older people.
    o Invitations are important, people want to feel invited.
    o Welcome wagon–community guide. Help connect to residents or organizations.
    o Diverse food tastings, feature cultures of people who reside in Upper Arlington.
    o Health/wellness was a big topic. People, especially younger people feel isolated.
    o How do we encourage people to do things as simple as saying "hi" to a neighbor?

The group discussed building on ideas for developing a core group to launch/run a UA Welcome Wagon. One idea that could be pursued/encouraged for public employees and residents to participate in is the Experience Columbus Greater Columbus Certified Ambassador Program, which provides training for people that work in the hospitality industry.

Equal UA – Michelle Montgomery presented
- Equal UA was formed in 2017–triggered by a racial incident that had been posted to the UA Discussion Forum on Facebook.
- Two residents felt it was time to put a line in the sand to call out inappropriate behavior and encourage citizens to treat everyone like neighbors.
- They made yard signs—the response was extremely positive.
- An Equal UA Facebook page was subsequently launched. The page has grown to 2,000 members and has featured human connections threads–shared stories of challenges and what it's like to be a person of diversity.
- A monthly discussion series was launched at the Library, typically comprised of panels. Members of OSU's Kirwan Institute have helped to facilitate conversations.
- Equal UA is working with the Schools and City on appropriate recognition and history of Pleasant Litchford (former slave and area landowner).
- Equal UA recently became a 501 c3, with a board.
- The group is working on creating a fund to help with diversity training.
- The group is launching a welcoming chorus in October 2019. Anyone welcome to sing welcoming songs at the Library. Shared goals to bring neighbors together.
- "The art of neighboring."
- When asked about outreach through area churches, Equal UA has worked with churches in an informal capacity, but the group wants to be sure that invitations go out to all communities and doesn't want to risk putting some people off.

General Discussion
A key question to answer is what community relations actually is. Equal UA believes there are two sides:
        1: What is the City doing?
        2: What is the community doing?

To implement a community relations program:
- What programs/activities could be launched to help everyone connect?
- How do we become more transparent and open up communication?

Some Ideas:
- Michele Hoyle - Start with low hanging fruit – talk about the small things we can all do to change perceptions. Like not saying how long you've lived in UA.
- Nic – working on small stuff but be loud about it. What is the City taking seriously?
- Decatur, GA "Better Together Community Action Plan" – look at this action plan to help develop an implementation structure, so that people can report back and then you can let people know and report out. Spread the word.
- Have goals – do something more than once and it becomes a tradition.
- Jenn Faure – First start by identifying what it is. Take a community-centric approach: "What do you need us to be?" "This is what we have." "What are the action items to accomplish them?" "What do we need to deliver?"
- How do you get the message out? The Library is currently the default community center. Messengers are in the schools though. Use high schoolers as the messengers. Idea: Four Corners assignment – students have to meet someone at all four corners around their house. This might force parents to go with the kids to meet the neighbors.
- Steve Schoeny – suggested a definition: "Community relations is how we define ourselves, present back to the world, and then evolve."
- Michele Hoyle – honor where we have come from, don't alienate generations that have lived here for many years (out with the old, in with the new).
- Worthington Commission Model – more a good neighbor program. With an annual budget of $5,500 and a staff liaison, the Commission's activities include: annual MLK breakfast; grants to neighborhoods, hosting meetings and town halls, assist with educating the community, advises City Council, representative of the commission sits on City employee candidate interviews.
- Steve Farmer – we wouldn't change definition of what the safety forces do but wants to be a part as this grows. How police can be more than the people that pull you over.
- Is there value in talking about what community relations is not? – yes.
- We're not here to talk about what we have been. We're not here to talk about our deficiencies. It's a concept/place for people to come together.
- How to build a community that can succeed in the 21st Century – this includes building a community that is open and diverse.

Next Meeting
- General charge for the brainstorming meeting: Goals; Next Steps; Structure.
- We have a Solid headline – but what are some goals and action items? The brainstorming session will help to formulate guiding principle and a vision. Start with opportunities – see how that guides the structure.
- Youth Council – great way to engage students in a formal way, and to help communicate to the schools but how they can help get our message out.
- We have the who, what, but now let's lay out a structure for the upcoming brainstorming meeting. After that, the committee will work on wordsmithing.
- Really get into how we want to institutionalize this group/commission.

- Take away from today - Building relationships between the City, organizations and the community.
- Sue Ralph, Michelle Montgomery, Jenn Faure and Emma Speight will meet in advance of the brainstorming session, to frame the agenda.
- Emma Speight and Steve Schoeny will revisit a proposed definition of community relations to share with the committee.

3. **Finalize Meeting Schedule**

The committee identified its next meeting date as Friday, October 18, from Noon-3 pm, at which time the committee will engage in a brainstorming session.
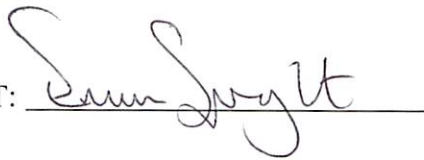
ADJOURNMENT

Motioned: Michele Hoyle *Seconded:* Dan Ralley

Motion Passed *Meeting was adjourned at 1:35 pm*

ATTEST: _____ CHAIR: _____