

MEMORANDUM



To: Selectboard

From: Peter B. Elwell, Town Manager

Re: Promoting Diversity in the Community
and on the Town Staff

Date: June 16, 2017

This is in furtherance of the Selectboard's discussion and preliminary action on this matter at the June 6 Selectboard Meeting. After extensive community participation that evening, the Selectboard voted unanimously to approve the following actions (annotated to document how the Selectboard amended the actions I had recommended in our staff report dated June 1, 2017):

- Invite anyone to sign up to receive our job postings.
- Ask for community organizations to sign up and to:
 - (1) distribute our postings to their email lists, and
 - (2) recommend additional organizations that can help us cast our recruitment net as wide as possible.
- Conduct training of the management team, the Selectboard, and [the entire Town] staff ~~others involved in the hiring process~~:
 - (1) to raise awareness of bias (both conscious and unconscious), and
 - (2) to promote a welcoming and inclusive workplace environment.
- Through our Town government service, find ways to increase cultural awareness and appreciation of diversity throughout our community.
- Consider additional ideas from the community. Implement those that are both consistent with the Selectboard's intent and compliant with the applicable laws.

The Selectboard also requested that I propose for Selectboard consideration on June 20 a process for promoting diversity in Brattleboro through community engagement.

What actions have been taken since June 6?

On June 7, we created a dedicated section entitled "Promoting Diversity In Our Community" within the Town's website. We posted a link on the right side of our www.brattleboro.org homepage alongside similar links to "Police-Fire Facilities Upgrade Project," "Comprehensive Review of Town Operations (CRTO)," and "Long Term Financial Plan (LTFP)." As with those other topics, the Promoting Diversity link connects to a collection of documents and resources specific to this matter. To date, the Promoting Diversity section includes the City of Burlington's Diversity Equity Strategic Plan (posted per Curtiss Reed's request during the June 6 Selectboard meeting), our June 1 staff report that was considered at the June 6 Selectboard meeting, our June 14 news release that invited the broadest possible community participation in recruitment of applicants for vacant Town positions, and a link to the www.iamavermonter.org website.

On June 14, we issued a news release (and distributed it widely via email and social media) inviting the public to assist the Town in achieving greater diversity through broader outreach during recruitment to fill vacant staff positions. Recognizing that different individuals and groups differently define the specific objectives within our shared overarching goal of promoting a more diverse community and workforce, we intentionally invited "anyone and everyone" to participate and stated the following about assisting the Town in this effort: "Participants are asked to forward Town job opening notices to their email lists or social media contacts, or to use other means by which to distribute those notices either broadly or to target audiences of their choosing. Each participating individual or group will decide for themselves when and to whom such job opening notices will be forwarded. There are no limitations on who can sign up and signing up brings only the opportunity to participate, not any obligation to take any particular actions." The entire text of the news release is attached to this memorandum.

During the past week, I have met with members of the Town staff and received advice from a few community stakeholders and have begun to formulate additional Town actions for the future (primarily, but not exclusively, for proceeding with the training described in the third action bullet on the list of five that were approved by the Selectboard on June 6). This work will take more time (please see the "Promoting Diversity Through Community Engagement" section immediately below) and I will report on it further at a future Selectboard meeting.

Promoting Diversity Through Community Engagement

As mentioned in the paragraph immediately above, I have met with a few community stakeholders since the June 6 Selectboard meeting. My purpose was to ensure that my initial thoughts on how the Town could launch the community engagement part of this work were not developed in a vacuum. What I have discovered is that it will take much longer than nine days (the period of time between the June 6 Selectboard meeting and the writing of this memorandum) to develop an appropriate plan for community engagement. In fact, I have concluded that at this essentially important formative stage it would be a mistake for me to meet just with a small sampling of stakeholders to help me develop my further recommendations to the Selectboard. Rather, in the very spirit of inclusiveness that is the essence of this entire matter, I think it is important for me to reach out to a broad cross section of known stakeholders and to offer a blanket invitation to the community that I will meet with any other stakeholders who contact me to have a conversation around this issue. This work will take several weeks. It may take the remainder of the summer. But when I report back to the Selectboard I will be much better informed about (1) what work already is being done to promote diversity in Brattleboro, (2) what lessons people have learned from that work and from others that can help us increase the probability of success for the community engagement work the Town will launch, and (3) what specific deliverables the Town should be seeking in an RFP for professional services related to our planned training, community engagement, or other aspects of Town action on this matter.

Next Steps

I want to emphasize that the slower pace I am recommending for the formulation of my recommendations and for the Selectboard to take action does not reflect any reduced commitment to addressing this issue. Rather, it reflects an appreciation for the importance and complexity of this work and the need to proceed without rushing, thereby allowing a more inclusive process and a greater probability of success. If the Selectboard agrees with this approach, here are the next steps:

- I will continue to meet with stakeholder individuals and groups to learn from them about their work and their ideas for how the Town can effectively launch the community engagement part of our actions.
- I will issue a news release inviting anyone interested in assisting the Town on the broader aspects of this matter (beyond just Town staff recruitment) to contact me so that I can also learn from their experiences and ideas.
- I will develop a set of recommendations for Selectboard consideration that will address community engagement, Town training, and any other potential Town government actions that arise from my communication with the stakeholders.

I look forward to further addressing this matter with the Selectboard and the community.

PBE:
Attachment

TOWN OF BRATTLEBORO

Town Manager's Office 230 Main Street Brattleboro, VT 05301
(802) 251-8151 FAX (802) 257-2322

PRESS RELEASE

TO: Local Media

Date: June 14, 2017

From: Town Manager's Office

For Immediate Release:

The Town of Brattleboro is asking for help from anyone and everyone who is interested in promoting increased diversity on the Town staff. In addition to proactively distributing all future job opening notices more widely than in the past, the Town will send those notices to any individual or group who wishes to receive them. The goal of creating this "Job Openings Distribution List" is to help the Town achieve greater diversity in applicant pools. Participants are asked to forward Town job opening notices to their email lists or social media contacts, or to use other means by which to distribute those notices either broadly or to target audiences of their choosing. Each participating individual or group will decide for themselves when and to whom such job opening notices will be forwarded. There are no limitations on who can sign up and signing up brings only the opportunity to participate, not any obligation to take any particular actions. Town officials are hoping that by inviting broad public participation in our employee recruitment outreach, we will reach potential applicants that we have previously not attracted to Town employment.

To sign up for the Town's "Job Openings Distribution List," please send your email address or other contact information to the Town's Executive Secretary, Jan Anderson, at tmsecretary@brattleboro.org or at 230 Main Street in Brattleboro. For more information, you can contact Town Manager Peter Elwell at peilwell@brattleboro.org or at 802-251-8151.