



Mayor & Council Meeting Date: December 14, 2020
Agenda Item Type: Discussion
Department: Housing and Community Development
Responsible Staff: Asmara Habte

Subject

Social Justice, Racism and Bias Follow-Up Discussion

Recommendation

Staff recommend that the Mayor and Council discuss the items in the attached material and provide instructions to staff on next steps.

Discussion

At the September 21 Mayor and Council meeting, staff provided a raw summary of potential actionable ideas that were provided by members of the Mayor and Council, the Human Services Advisory Commission (HSAC), the Human Rights Commission (HRC), and community residents through Community Forum. The Mayor and Council provided its input during three Mayor and Council meetings, including June 22, July 6, and July 20. The HSAC and HRC provided comments to staff on July 6.

Following the September 21 meeting, the Mayor and Council provided staff with the following instructions:

1. Conduct an employee survey on racial equity and inclusion.
2. Refine the potentially actionable items by combining similar items.
3. Recommend implementing strategies for those potentially actionable items that may be acted on in the short term.

This staff report addresses the employee survey on racial equity and inclusion. Items #1 and #2 will be addressed in a future Mayor and Council meeting. Included in this staff report is a copy of the survey instrument for reference (Attachment A) and a summary of the survey findings.

Executive Summary of Survey

At the Mayor and Council's request, staff carried out an organization-wide survey focused on racial equity and inclusion. The survey seeks to achieve four goals: 1) contribute to the Mayor and Council's on-going dialogue about Social Justice, Racism, and Bias in the City of Rockville; 2)

understand our collective awareness of racial equity and how it impacts our work; 3) identify where we need to invest in staff training to increase competency around racial equity; and 4) build a baseline from which to develop best practices that seek to embed a racial equity and inclusion lens across the City in an effort to track our organizational progress toward building and advancing racial equity in the City of Rockville as an employer, policymaker and driver.

The survey was voluntary and anonymous. Aggregate results are presented here for discussion. The survey questions were developed and informed based on various sources, including the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE), best practices nationally, and input from staff.

The survey is composed of twelve (12) questions, including ten (10) multiple-choice and two (2) open-ended questions. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. The questions center around equitable treatment of City employees, residents, and those who work or conduct business in the city. Specific questions relating to City services, employment opportunities, employee relations, policy, and program prioritization considerations were included in the survey. The survey also solicited feedback specific to the performance of the Police department. Respondents were asked to rate the department on equitability and the manner in which services are delivered—public safety and protection services to those who live, work, or conduct business in the city. Moreover, the survey asked respondents to rate the City's equitability in applying its policies and procedures outside of the Police department, as well as areas of priority for the elected officials. The open-ended questions sought to solicit specific suggestions on ways the City can better deliver a diverse, just, and inclusive work environment for fair and equitable services to all our customers.

City employees may interact, directly or indirectly, with anyone who may reside or work and conduct business in the city. The responses capture employees' personal feelings and experiences as employees of the City with respect to their interactions with those of various demographic characteristics. The survey also asks employees how they perceive the equitable and inclusionary treatment with the City and its staff by those who do not share their demographic characteristics.

The survey was disseminated to all employees via citywide email, followed by a text message several days following the initial communication. A final reminder email was sent to all employees, encouraging employees to complete the survey before closing. The survey was conducted on the Survey Monkey™ platform, accessible on desktop/laptop, tablets, and mobile phones.

Staff received valuable input and insights from the survey response as the City explores ways to address these critical topics. Of the 502 full and part-time City employees, 170 completed the survey, representing a 34% response rate.

Summary of Survey Results

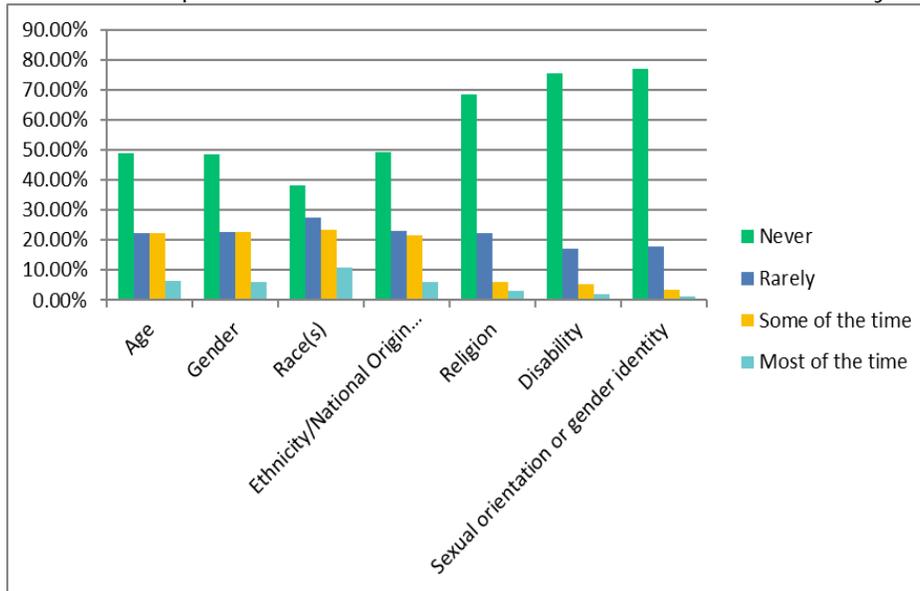
Question 1: Are people who live, work, or conduct business in the City treated equitably under the same City policies, provided equal access to services programs, resources, and information by those who identify to the various demographic characteristics? Of the 170 respondents, 167 responded to the question, while three skipped the questions. The responses are summarized below:

Table 1. Equitable Treatment and demographic categories

Demographic Category	Not equitably	Slightly equitably	Moderately equitably	Very equitably	Don't know
People with disabilities	3.07%	8.59%	19.02%	49.08%	20.25%
People who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, transgender, other non-straight, or non-binary sexual identities	1.81%	6.02%	10.84%	54.22%	27.11%
Men	1.81%	4.82%	12.65%	72.89%	7.83%
Women	4.82%	9.64%	26.51%	49.40%	9.64%
People who are Arab, Middle Eastern, North African	3.05%	7.93%	17.07%	48.78%	23.17%
People who are Asian, Asian Indian or Pacific Islander	4.82%	5.42%	16.87%	52.41%	20.48%
People who are Black or African American	4.79%	11.38%	17.37%	53.89%	12.57%
People who are Hispanic/Latino	3.01%	13.25%	22.89%	44.58%	16.27%
People who are American Indian or Alaskan Native	3.01%	6.63%	9.64%	43.37%	37.35%
People who are White	3.61%	3.01%	12.05%	73.49%	7.83%
People whose first language is not English	5.42%	16.27%	27.11%	36.75%	14.46%
People who are 65 and older	3.64%	2.42%	16.97%	55.76%	21.21%
People who are younger under 25	4.82%	4.82%	18.07%	50.60%	21.69%
People who are of lower income	9.04%	13.86%	25.30%	34.94%	16.87%

Question 2. To what extent have YOU personally felt you experienced or witnessed discrimination/insensitivity to diversity based on each of the following in the City of Rockville in the past 12 months? Of the 170 respondents, 168 responded to the question, while two skipped the question. The chart below summarizes the responses:

Chart 1. Experienced or Witnessed Discrimination, or Insensitivity



Question 3. Please rate the City of Rockville, as a governmental institution and community of residence, workplace, or in which to conduct business. Of the 170 respondents, 168 responded to the question, while two skipped the question. The table below summarizes the responses:

Table 2. Rating of Rockville as a place of residences, workplace and in which to conduct business.

Category	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Don't know
Making all persons, who live, work, or conduct business in the City feel welcome	7.74%	13.69%	39.88%	34.52%	5.36%
Helping new all persons, who live, work, or conduct business in the City feel connected and integrated	8.33%	19.64%	40.48%	26.79%	6.55%
Attracting and valuing all persons, who live, work, or conduct business in the City from diverse backgrounds	11.31%	16.67%	40.48%	26.79%	5.95%
Demonstrating respect for all persons, who live, work, or conduct business in the City of different cultures and belief systems	9.52%	15.48%	39.29%	32.14%	4.17%
Providing a safe and secure environment for all persons, who live, work, or conduct business in the City of all backgrounds	10.12%	13.69%	35.71%	35.71%	5.36%
Respecting individual cultural beliefs and values	6.02%	12.05%	40.36%	33.73%	8.43%
Providing equal employment opportunities to all persons, who live, work, or conduct business in the City of all backgrounds	10.18%	16.77%	38.32%	31.74%	3.59%
Providing equal access to housing for all persons, who live, work, or conduct business in the City of all backgrounds	9.58%	14.37%	33.53%	22.75%	20.36%
Making all persons, who live, work, or conduct business in the City feel welcome in business establishments	4.79%	13.77%	34.13%	33.53%	13.77%
Providing equitable access and treatment to all persons, who live, work, or conduct business in the City from all backgrounds to participate in local government and community decision-making	10.78%	19.76%	29.34%	33.53%	6.59%
Providing equitable access and treatment to City services and programming of all persons, who live, work, or conduct business in the City of all backgrounds	6.63%	14.46%	37.35%	36.75%	6.02%
Equitable application of City policies and regulations to persons, who live, work, or conduct business in the City of all backgrounds	15.57%	14.97%	35.33%	28.74%	5.99%
Conducting outreach and engaging diverse communities	5.95%	27.38%	29.76%	26.19%	11.90%
Creating programs and initiatives that celebrating our diverse communities	6.55%	17.86%	32.14%	34.52%	9.52%

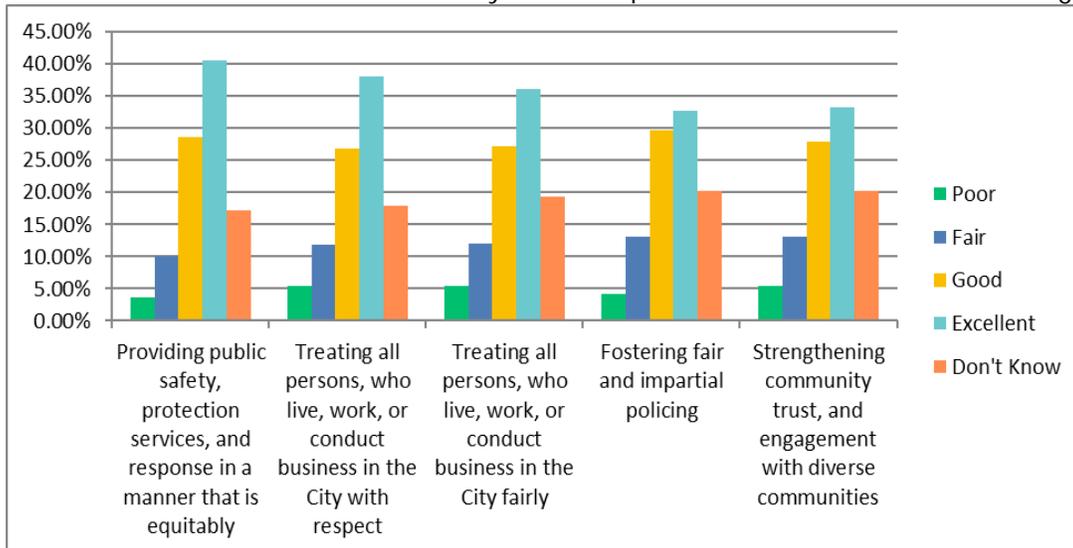
Question 4. How much of a priority should it be for the City of Rockville, as a governmental institution, to focus on various areas? Of the 170 respondents, 166 responded to the question, while four skipped the question. The table below summarizes the responses:

Table 3. Areas of Priority

Area of Priority	Not a priority	Low priority	Moderate priority	High priority	Don't know
Creating a diverse, inclusive, and fair community	2.41%	6.63%	25.30%	62.05%	3.61%
Addressing social, economic, and racial inequities in jobs and housing	5.42%	6.63%	28.31%	56.02%	3.61%
Addressing social, economic, and racial inequity in health and education	7.23%	13.25%	22.89%	54.22%	2.41%
Addressing social, economic, and racial inequity in the criminal justice system	7.23%	12.05%	25.30%	50.60%	4.82%
Hiring more diverse staff	8.54%	13.41%	32.32%	43.29%	2.44%
Recruiting diverse people into positions of local government leadership	7.23%	13.25%	33.73%	42.17%	3.61%
Supporting healthier communities and reducing health disparities	6.63%	10.24%	28.31%	51.81%	3.01%

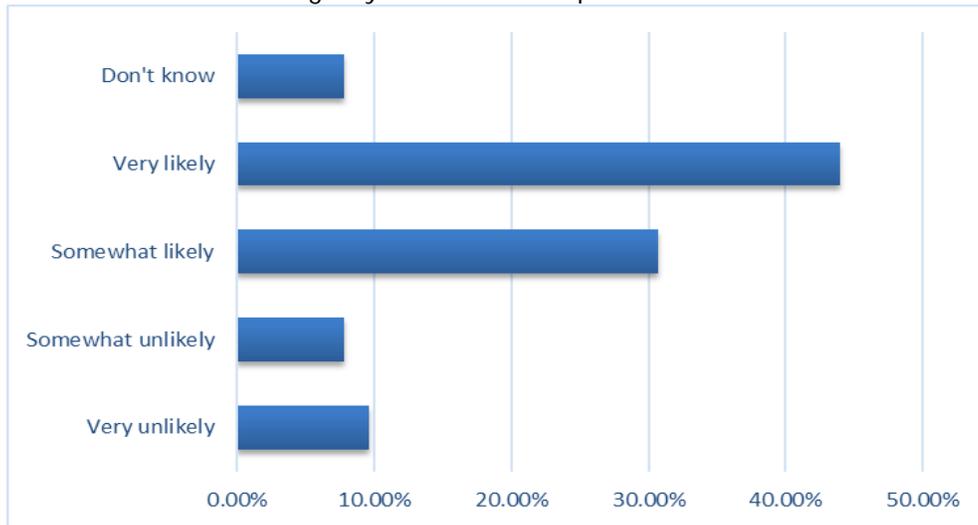
Question 5. Please rate the Rockville City Police Department on each of the various areas. Of the 170 respondents, 168 responded to the question, while two skipped the question. The chart below summarizes the responses:

Chart 2. Please rate the Rockville City Police Department on each of the following:



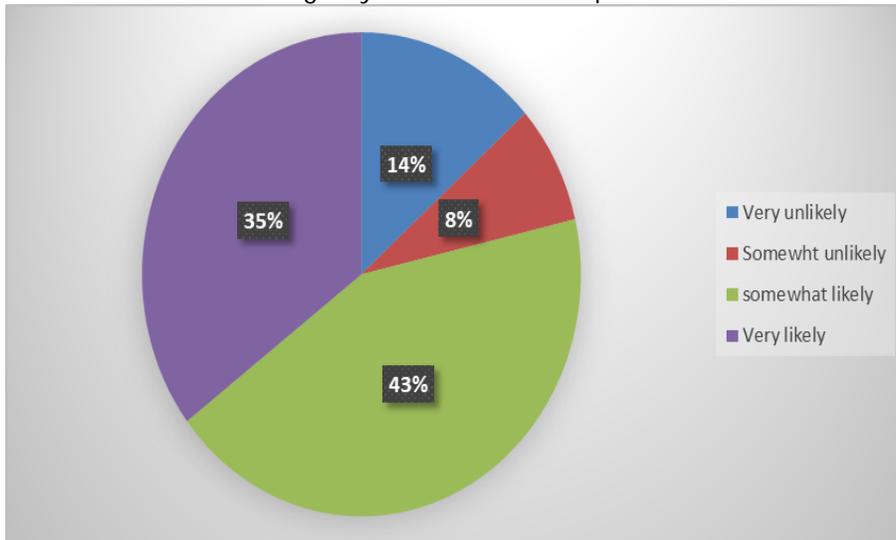
Question 6. How likely or unlikely are you to recommend living in the City of Rockville to anyone who asks? Of the 170 respondents, 166 responded to the question, while four skipped the question. The chart below summarizes the responses:

Chart 3. Recommending City of Rockville as place to live.



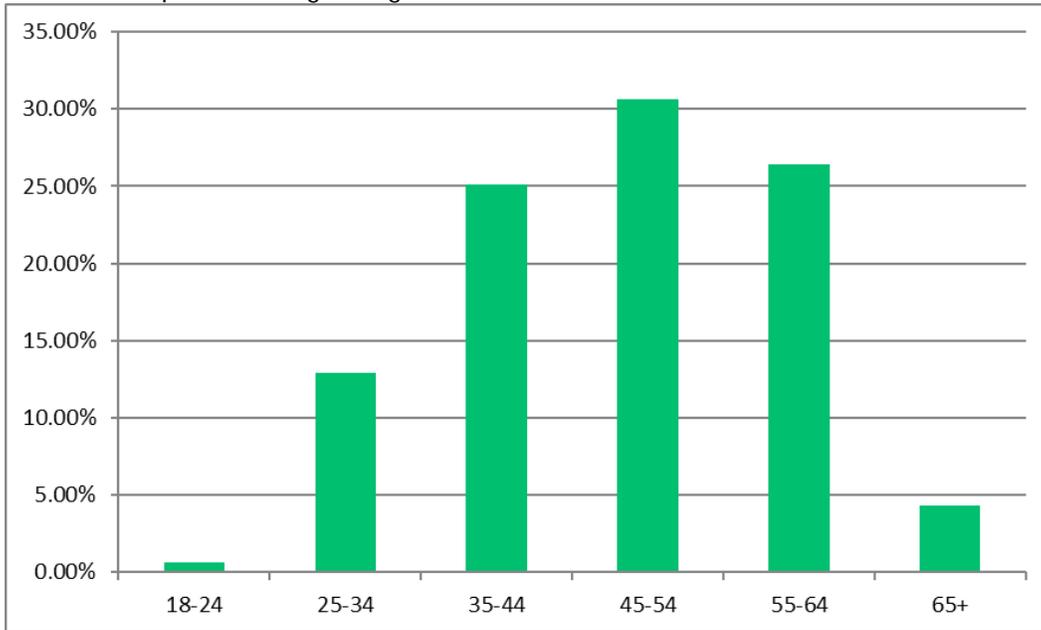
Question 7. How likely or unlikely are you to recommend working or conducting business in the City of Rockville to anyone who asks? Of the 170 respondents, 164 responded to the question, while six skipped the question. The chart below summarizes the responses:

Chart 4. Recommending City of Rockville as a place to work or conduct business.



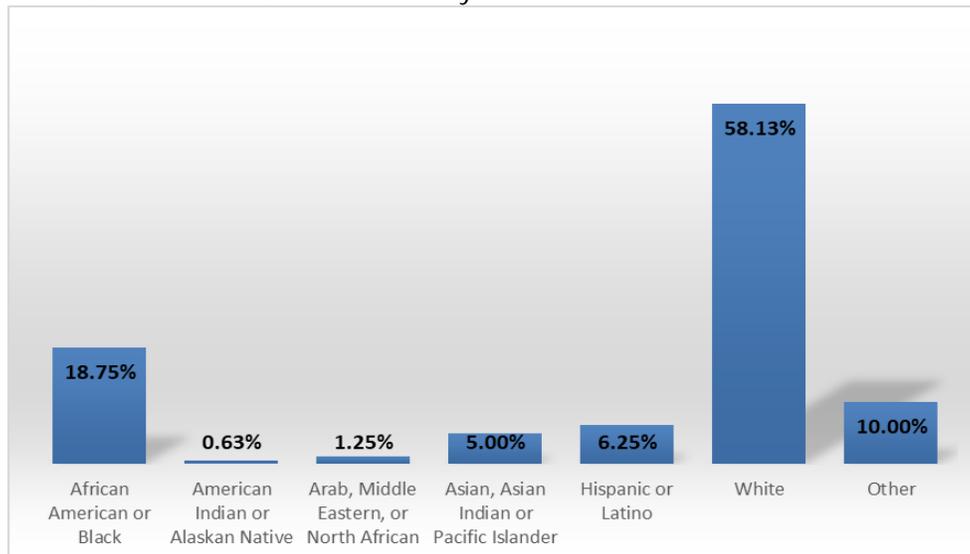
Question 8. Please select your age range. Of the 170 respondents, 163 responded to the question, while seven skipped the question. The chart below summarizes the responses:

Chart 7. Respondents age range



Question 9. What is your race and/or ethnicity? (Mark one or more races/ethnicities to indicate which you consider yourself to be). Of the 170 respondents, 160 responded to the question, while ten skipped the question. The chart below summarizes the responses:

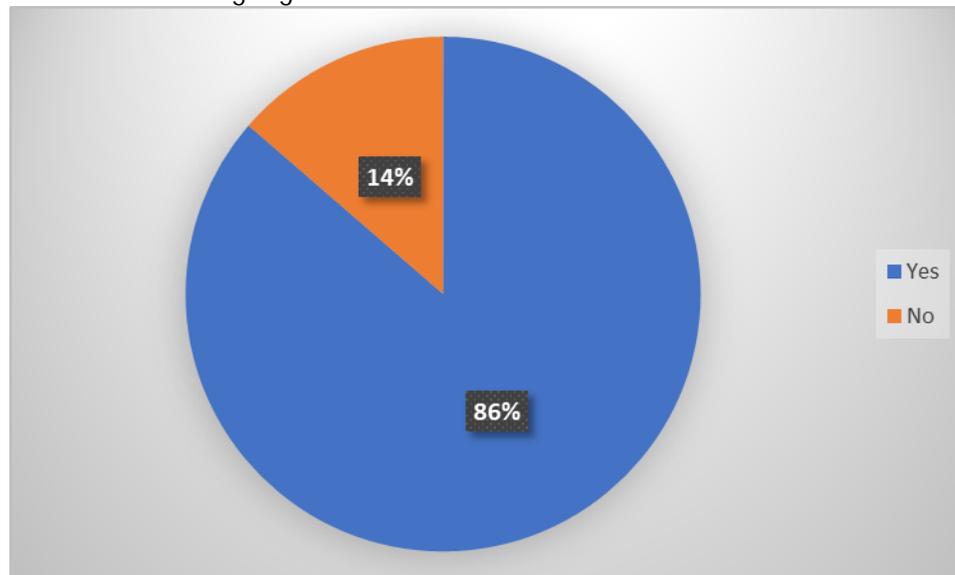
Chart 8. Racial and/or Ethnic Identity



Question 10. Is English your first language? This questions further asked respondents to list other language(s) that the City of Rockville should consider to better communicate and engage

with residents. Of the 170 respondents, 154 responded to the question, while 14 skipped the question. The chart below summarizes the responses:

Chart 9. First Language



In response to the second part of the question, Spanish and Chinese (two respondents specified Mandarin Chinese) were the top two languages listed. Arabic, French and Vietnamese were three other languages suggested. One respondent provided a more elaborate response by suggesting a targeted recruitment and hiring of Spanish and Chinese speakers at the Police department, accompanied by bilingual pay.

Open-Ended Questions--#11 and #12

As noted earlier, the survey included two open-ended questions designed to provide respondents an opportunity to offer specific suggestions that could further the City's efforts to deliver a diverse, better, just and inclusive work environment, as well as fair and equitable services to all our customers.

The responses to these two questions included constructive ideas and concepts. Of the 170 respondents, 113 responded to question 11. Some of the terms that appeared frequently included better training on diversity, equity and empathy to all staff including leadership, fair and equitable application of HR policies, and promotion of minorities and women into supervisory and leadership roles, and frequent communications from management and elected officials. The following response encapsulated the overall sentiment expressed in the many responses to question #11:

Anti-racist training, diversity, equity and inclusion training, anti-gender bias training that includes confidential research-based assessments of bias for participants' personal knowledge. Follow best practices in recruiting, interviewing, hiring. Offer DEI!

Follow best practices in recruiting, interviewing, hiring. Offer DEI¹ discussion groups. Ensure all senior managers participate in training. Examine salary ranges and work responsibilities and ensure they are aligned regardless of gender, age, and race. Look at typically Hispanic and black divisions and ensure they are getting the resources they need for a safe and healthy workplace environment and facilities. Provide access to English language training for hourly workers. Recognize the work of laborers as well as administrative staff. Cultivate an environment where staff feel comfortable calling out racist practices that result in under-resourcing certain divisions.

Below are a sample of respondent comments:

- Educate men on how to respect women in the workplace. Not just say women are respected but treat women with respect.
- Hiring more diversity in Recreation at the top of the food chain.
- Training. Stressing the ability to empathize with others who are different. Showing different perspectives etc. Get leaders who are truly progressive and not afraid to tackle a complex and difficult subject.
- We need more females in leadership roles in the police department.
- There should be more minorities in Supervisor position. This has been a big issue within the Rockville City Police Department. There are no African American Police Supervisors.
- Provide opportunities to engage older and institutionally wise individuals in decision making. Continue to have sensitivity training.
- More effort into quality of workspaces being more equitable, regardless of department.
- More diversity needed in leadership positions, diversity and culturally sensitive training for all employees on an ongoing basis, post-COVID, hold employee engagement events that highlight employee diversity and cultures.
- Provide more training; have a zero tolerance for inequity; and bring back the customer service committee to spearhead consistency across all departments and provide/coordinate education and training.
- More celebration of staff as a diverse group of individuals in City events and publications.

¹ Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

- Promote within and have more leaders from different generations to showcase the strength and values of the City.
- Treat everyone the same, have managers that are not biased.
- Some departments are too reliant on internal promotions when senior positions become available. This approach tends to prolong historic advantages of certain groups (white men) relative to other groups who may be able to compete successfully for these positions.
- Have an open-door policy were employees feel they have a place to talk and discuss issues without fear of retaliation. Have higher level managers, HR, etc. regularly check in on employees and investigate problems, complaints, and issues. Get rid of superintendents and managers that show favoritism towards some and treat others unfairly.
- Treat all interactions between people of varying cultures and races equally, especially between City staff. It feels like a cult sometimes and people mostly only freely speak/greet others who look like them.
- Provide more City documents translated in multiple languages for residents; provide cultural competency training for all City employees; provide better opportunity for low-income residents and residents of color for civic engagement (translation; childcare; more time options for participation in Mayor and Council meetings).
- More communication or somewhat sharing information of what is going on within the City and each division.
- Anything to improve communication within the City will help. An example: more updates on Mayor and Council initiatives or staff successes, like through a monthly email with important updates to staff.

Question #12 asked respondents to provide specific suggestions on ways the City of Rockville can better deliver fair and equitable services to all our customers. Of the 170 respondents, 98 responded to this question. The responses to question 12 were similarly diverse. Some of the suggestions included: fair and equitable service delivery to communities on both sides of 355, provide written information in multiple languages, more outreach and engagement with "...communities that are less involved," hiring better and supportive leadership, equitable treatment of all staff, and be more business friendly. One respondent referenced a checklist similar to that of the City of Seattle, for use by every City department to test and analyze equitability in services as applicable, and "...to ensure that any unintended harm does not fall disproportionately on historically disenfranchised communities." Below are a sample of respondent comments:

- House social service programs on one webpage so it's easy to access. The City offers many programs in the new Housing and Human Services Department and other departments as well.
- Keep in mind the middle income or just above poverty individuals for assistance, 2. Try to take into further consideration that there may be some residents that don't have access to computers or understand the intricacies of the use of computers or electronic devices. 3. Translations into additional languages could be done to provide additional understanding of the services available.
- Provide more training to employees in accessing translation services. This appears to be a gap in providing services to customers who may not speak English as their first language. Provide new employees with information about Rockville services and departments, so that they can better direct customers for needed assistance. Survey customers for feedback.
- The City has always gone out of its way to take care of the customer. I don't think the Citizens in the City would complain about the level of service. The formula is very simple. Take care of the employees who provide that service and they will be motivated to provide the high level of service. When workers resign from the City, use the information obtained in those exit interviews to address problems that caused them to leave.
- There is a strong bias towards over-responsiveness to certain affluent neighborhoods, who tend to be white, in the city. Attention and resources seem to flow in that direction, and the rest of the city's neighborhoods notice. Also, zoning policies make it impossible for people of diverse incomes to live in many Rockville neighborhoods. Opening up zoning would make the city more equitable.
- The more vocal/influential people within the community, although acting on good will, have little understanding of the dynamics of the less affluent areas. They work to initiate change that does not affect themselves, and negatively effects the ability of our lower income citizens/communities who are trying to get by day to day. Rockville needs to do better in understanding the dynamics and needs of the lower income communities and help keep them nice for them, rather than go a direction that only serves to create an appearance of helping to those who don't actually live in the communities
- Firstly, change the mindset from a need to deliver fair and equitable service to delivering a consistent customer service/experience across all channels. Once again, the City will never meet this goal until it becomes committed to investing the time, funding

and resources necessary to deliver a consistent, high quality customer journey/experience for all customers.

- Provide programs that are affordable for all backgrounds. We currently do great with this, but we can always do better. Our programs aren't diverse enough to be proud of and we as the city need to do better in that. We need to do better with our youth. They are our future and we spend a lot of time with the senior community. If we can spend the same time and money on the youth, Rockville will be a great space for families to raise their children.
- The more vocal/influential people within the community, although acting on good will, have little understanding of the dynamics of the less affluent areas. They work to initiate change that does not affect themselves, and negatively effects the ability of our lower income citizens/communities who are trying to get by day to day. Rockville needs to do better in understanding the dynamics and needs of the lower income communities and help keep them nice for them, rather than go a direction that only serves to create an appearance of helping to those who don't actually live in the communities.
- Our services and outreach is heavily geared toward seniors. If you're younger than 65 there are little ways for you to connect with the city or participate. Majority of the feedback used by the city to make decisions come from the senior age group or a select few loud voices in the community, making it inequitable for the majority of our community.
- Ensure all City staff are trained in customer service. Some City staff are rude to customers all the time, that can be perceived certain ways by different races, and if people are consistently rude or complained about, they should be dealt with appropriately.

Overall, the survey provided a unique opportunity for employees by enabling them to share their understanding of the City's environment in the areas of racial equity and inclusion. The questions were designed to solicit feedback on their views, feelings and experience, as well as how they perceive diversity, equity and inclusion of others from different demographic categories. Similarly, the survey provides insights for management and the Mayor and Council regarding its employees' feelings and experiences in the area of diversity, equity and inclusion. We believe this feedback will help inform the City and its leadership as it explores ways in which to address inequities and strive for the City of Rockville's overall betterment.

Mayor and Council History

The Mayor and Council have discussed this topic at three previous Mayor and Council meetings, including June 22, July 6, and July 20. This work session is a continuation of an on-going Mayor and Council discussion.

Next Steps

Staff recommends the Mayor and Council discuss the action items, calendar, and survey results and provide feedback.

Attachments

SurveyMonkey_equity and inclusion (PDF)



Rob DiSpirito, City Manager

12/9/2020