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CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM

ACTION REQUESTED:

Receive an update on the City’s diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives

DEPARTMENT: City Manager’s Office

SUBMITTED BY: Geneace Williams, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Manager

BOARD/COMMISSION REVIEW:

NA

BACKGROUND:

In June 2023, staff presented a diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) update to the City Council. Our efforts are guided by the City’s mission statement, “To provide services that ensure a high quality of life, sound fiscal management, and a dynamic business environment, while creating an inclusive community that values diversity,” coupled with the City’s core values of People, Trust, Respect, and Pride. In the last update, I shared five areas of focus for the 2023 Workplan:

- growing internal workforce recruitment, retention, and engagement to reflect our community better,
- investing in expanding DEI education,
- increasing DEI awareness,
- engaging externally by partnering with individuals and community organizations for greater involvement in inclusion and belonging, and

beginning the process of evaluating City services.

DISCUSSION:

The attached document highlights DEI progress in 2023.

Internal Organization Efforts:

As an organization, we support an environment where all employees feel like they belong and are respected and valued, regardless of age, gender, gender identity, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, religion, disability, income, or background. Employee engagement and retention are interrelated, high priorities in today's work environment. Employee engagement improves work culture, reduces turnover, increases productivity, and fosters better work and customer relationships. High employee engagement also turns workers into an organization's best advocates, which can greatly impact recruitment efforts. In addition, inclusive organizational climates enable well-being, learning, and greater organizational performance. Every person within the organization has a role in advancing an environment of equity and inclusion for the workforce.

Employee Retention

Across the country, local governments continue to work toward the goal of having inclusive workforces that broadly reflect the communities they serve. In the last update, I reported that Chief Arres and I had finished the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus/University of Illinois pilot focused on strategies for embedding equity into local governments. After completion, Chief Arres and I led an IT department initiative tied directly to updating our retention strategies. Director Jackie Nguyen learned of opportunities to increase trust in the department, which led to intentionally expanding communications across the team. With intentional efforts to break down silos, team engagement grew when staff shared their knowledge and ideas across the department and gained an understanding of other team priorities. Qualitatively, she reports that the environment in the department has improved. Quantitatively, some attrition and new hires also impacted outcomes. As a result of the positive feedback from the IT pilot, in 2024, we will explore a potential retention project with other directors.

Engagement

The Emerging Leaders DEI team kicked off the new passport program in September. The passport program is for new employees to get to know **all** departments across the city, the range of work we do, its interrelatedness, and the importance of their work, giving employees a sense of purpose. The feedback was so positive that the passport program is increasing from two times per year to three times per year. We have also implemented the department spotlight program the Emerging Leaders DEI team developed.

Training and Recruitment

As a result of the RFP process that began this summer, we are negotiating with a firm to create customized education and training on fostering inclusion and belonging and inclusive leadership. We aim for contract approval at the January City Council meeting. Early steps include working with HR and the vendor on an updated employee inclusion survey to guide the development of training materials and metrics.

Since our new HR Director, Blain Wing, joined, we have begun discussing our recruitment process and will partner to enhance recruitment policies and practices. We continue to evaluate the use of existing and potentially new City resources (Employee Assistance Program, online platforms, etc.) for training and engagement opportunities.

External Efforts:

We strive to support our mission and live our core values by becoming a more inclusive community where all enjoy equitable opportunities to thrive. The benefits of working with community groups and

organizations include learning from, leveraging, and amplifying each other's work, which has the greatest potential for broader impact.

Increase DEI Awareness - Embrace Naperville Series

Since our update in June, we hosted the final *Embrace Naperville: Empowering Our Mission Through a Year of Learning* event. In partnership with KidsMatter, North Central College, 360 Youth Services, The Alive Center, and Indian Prairie School District, The Power of a Generation welcomed community members to Neuqua Valley High School, where high school students and college students participated in a panel discussion where they shared their experiences of living and attending school in Naperville. This intergenerational conversation has led to many requests for similar dialogue across Naperville.

During the second half of 2023, we also added Age and Household demographic data to the Naperville website at:

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/d4cb222dc95c496aad9792971807d9cc>

Increase DEI Understanding - Embracing Community Series

Planning is underway for 2024. We will launch *Embracing Community: Expanding Our Dialogue, Deepening Our Understanding*. In this second phase of our community engagement, we will move from awareness to creating an environment for greater understanding. We plan to partner with NCC to leverage interested faculty and students to help create and launch *Community Conversations*. In response to feedback from year one, "*Community Conversations*" is being created to expand the conversations we started in year one and to include a wider segment of the Naperville community. We will also leverage diverse partnerships, including the Senior Task Force and the Accessible Community Task Force to expand topics for our *Community Conversations*.

In 2024, we will partner with NCC and the Naperville Public Library hosting a production in February to recognize Black History Month. We are also partnering with the Library and Naper Pride to bring the Human Library to Naperville. The Human Library® creates a safe space for dialogue where topics are discussed openly between human books and their readers.

We will also continue to evaluate city services by using newly collected procurement data to understand current demographics in purchasing and update Boards & Commissions data on our website.

The entirety of these efforts helps us tackle our goal of enhancing community engagement, increasing DEI awareness and understanding, and celebrating the value of inclusion in Naperville. Moreover, we value your continued help connecting people and organizations with City staff as opportunities arise.

The next update will occur in June 2024, highlighting progress in the first several months of 2024.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The 2024 operating budget includes \$60,000 for DEI training and programming.