



## Office of Mayor Miro Weinberger

### MEMORANDUM

**To:** City Council  
**From:** Mayor Miro Weinberger  
**Date:** June 12, 2014  
**Re:** *City of Burlington Diversity & Equity Strategic Plan*

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On July 16, 2012, with my full support, the Burlington City Council unanimously adopted a resolution to create a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee to facilitate the development of a Diversity & Equity Strategic Plan. Over the last two years first the Committee and then the Vermont Partnership for Fairness & Diversity (a consultant selected by competitive bid) have completed the the *City of Burlington Diversity & Equity Strategic Plan* (the Plan) which is being communicated to the Council today with this memo.

The Plan contains 33 findings, 31 recommendations, and 49 action steps. The action steps are meant to address three goals:

- Eliminate race-based disparities across all City departments;
- Promote inclusion and engagement of all community members; and
- Eliminate race-based disparities in the greater Burlington community.

The Plan contains serious and substantive recommendations and associated action steps required for implementation. These action steps require different levels of authority to enact, and some action steps require further discussion before they can be implemented effectively. To facilitate next steps, I have directed my staff, including the City Attorney, to separate the recommendations and action steps in the Strategic Plan into four categories, which are outlined in the memo that follows as (i) recommendations or action steps that are being implemented by the Mayor independently; (ii) measures that require review and action by the City Council; (iii) measures that require changes to the City Charter; and (iv) measures that require further discussion prior to implementation. In contemplating these different steps, I have prioritized measures focused on City Departments to ensure our internal processes and procedures are appropriate.

#### Action Steps That Are Being Or Will Be Implemented By the Mayor Independently:

The following steps are already underway or will be implemented within the next year:

- City leadership highlights equity and inclusion goals as top City priorities, and speaks to them often (underway)

- Establish Core Team to provide implementation, monitoring, and evaluation oversight of the strategic plan
- Core Team members and Department Heads receive mandatory executive level diversity, inclusion, and equity training. Training to include concepts and practical applications of diversity, inclusion, and equity related to race and ethnicity in the promotion and delivery of City services
- Core Team members and Department Heads receive mandatory executive level EEO and civil rights training
- The City budget reflects a sustained commitment to support diversity and equity goals, will be assessed with an equity lens, and will provide funding for: HR Generalist (Training Specialist), City employee diversity & equity training, interpreter services, data collection and analysis, core team, and other resources as identified (Mayor's FY15 Budget includes additional funding for these areas)
- Budget for and hire a Human Resources Generalist (Senior Training Specialist) who reports to the Director of Human Resources (Mayor's FY15 Budget includes funding for this position)
- HR will provide a report outlining demographics of new hires, promotions, and turnover, thus highlighting areas of underutilization/underrepresentation
- Each Department, including the Mayor's Office, works in conjunction with the HR Department and develops strategies to address underutilization, demonstrating commitment to equal employment opportunity and nondiscrimination policies
- The City's commitment to diversity and equity is clearly communicated during new employee orientation, and all current and new employees are required to complete on-line diversity tutorial
- Establish City-wide guidelines and principles to ensure that outreach and services are inclusive and reach diverse under-represented and under-served populations
- Require all new City contracts and grants made with businesses and organizations contain an anti-discrimination policy to be on file with the City. If such a policy does not exist, the City will ask that one be created before entering into a contract or grant with the other party that includes at least the following protected classes: race, color, sex, age, national origin, religion, ancestry, place of birth, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical or mental condition, and HIV status
- Existing policies and procedures will be reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis
- Create a "cheat sheet" outlining key programs and compliment and complaint processes such that all City employees with public contact become conversant in these programs and processes. The delivery of such a document would be made at a formal meeting with the nuances of these processes are explained
- Messaging on each City or City-sponsored web page encouraging diverse pool of applicants
- Give special recognition at City events and online
- Identify projects that require public input for targeted public engagement, including budgeting for interpreters and supports for attendance at public meetings
- Create a global on-line complaint-compliment portal for all Departments
- Post upcoming Board and Commission vacancies to thought leader e-mail group for reposting to their constituents (underway)
- Establish the Human Resources Department as a training hub/clearinghouse for most City training including training for diversity, inclusion, and equity concepts and skills related to race and ethnicity

### Action Steps I Urge the City Council to Consider:

Measures in the following category require City Council authorization for effective implementation. I would encourage the City Council's IHRPC Committee to take up the discussion of the following measures, with the goal of providing implementation recommendations to the full Council in a timely manner.

- City Council members receive mandatory executive level diversity, inclusion, and equity training. Training to include concepts and practical applications of diversity, inclusion, and equity related to race and ethnicity in the promotion and delivery of City services
- City Council members receive mandatory executive level EEO and civil rights training
- Assess demographics of all City Boards and Commissions, Regional Boards, and Miscellaneous Bodies annually
- Actively recruit a more diverse applicant pool for all vacancies to serve on Boards and Commissions
- Urge City Council to create a five-member committee that includes at least three members of color to explore and recommend courses of action relative to the question, "How do we ensure continued progress on diversity, inclusion, and equity related to race and ethnicity when the administration changes?"

### Action Steps That Require a Charter Change:

The Vermont Partnership's recommendation of Mayoral appointment of the Superintendent of the Burlington School District was unsolicited and unexpected. I do not believe that such a measure – which would overturn longstanding tradition in Burlington and would require a change in the City's Charter – can be considered without extensive and inclusive public process, nor am I convinced at this time that such an approach is the correct course for the City. To better understand the issue and the consequences, I believe the appropriate forum to begin such a discussion is the City Council's Charter Change Committee.

- Convene a study group to examine how the State of Vermont made the transition from a Commissioner of Education appointed by the State Board of Education to a Secretary of Education appointed directly by the Governor, as well as similar actions by New York City, Chicago, and Boston; recommend process with end result that the Mayor appoints the Superintendent of the Burlington School District

### Action Steps That Require Further Discussion:

As noted above, the Plan contains serious and substantive recommendations and associated action steps required for implementation. Some of these steps require significant reorganizations of City resources, job positions, or even City Departments, some raise important legal considerations, and some require additional clarity before they can be operationalized. I have directed my staff, including the City Attorney's office, to review the following recommendations with the goal of reporting back to the Council with an implementation plan or explanation for electing not to implement the measure, no later than the end of September.

- Launch a structured, concerted, internal listening initiative of one month in length whereby the ideas, successes, and challenges of City personnel around diversity, inclusion, and equity

related to race and ethnicity may be heard within the context of safe conversations, and built upon.

- Department Heads identify, monitor, and track inequities within their Departments. Department Heads include action steps to address inequities in Departmental strategic plans
- Provide key service information to diverse populations in print and on the City's website in the most popular languages
- Each Department will identify the most critical information that needs to be translated and interpreters will be compensated for services
- Determine language, frequency, and location of trainings in consultation with the Public Engagement Specialist and largely underrepresented populations
- Provide training to Commissions and Boards on implicit bias relative to City priority for diversity, inclusion, and equity
- Prepare short 1-2 page booklet on City services in main spoken languages
- Stakeholder group convened by the City creates guidelines to promote equity and inclusion in partner organizations, agencies, and departments
- Promote We All Belong as a tool to strengthen largely single-issue focused partner organizations
- Adjust the function and responsibilities of the Public Engagement Specialist to focus on civic engagement capacity building for constituents of diverse backgrounds, especially with the grassroots support of AmeriCorps members serving the City
- Restructure the relationship between CEDO, its multiple sub-departments, and City government.
- Each Department maintains basic demographic information on those requesting services and those to whom services are delivered
- Establish specific, quantitative and qualitative, and regularly-updated measures of training success tied to City business objectives
- Transition the We All Belong program to a product that the City uses to strengthen largely single-issue focused partner organizations
- Every hiring decision, including Mayoral appointments, goes through an assessment to determine that underutilized populations, particularly ethnically diverse populations, are at least proportionally represented at all positional levels in the City's workforce
- All employees are evaluated, during the annual performance evaluation process, on the outcomes of recruitment, retention, and promotion efforts, making program changes where desirable or necessary
- Transfer the AmeriCorps program from CEDO to Human Resources Department
- Train thought leaders in the art and science of civic engagement
- Post upcoming Board and Commission vacancies on-line nine months in advance of vacancy
- Fill the next two Burlington Police Commission vacancies from a candidate pool of Burlington residents of color
- Revise Burlington Police Commission mandate to include statutory language and operational procedures that parallels those of the State Police Advisory Council
- Train each Department in promising practices for meaningful community engagement
- Provide training to the CAO and Clerk-Treasurer's Department purchasing authorities on implicit bias in promoting business opportunities to racial or ethnic minority-owned businesses
- Expand notification of new business or grant opportunities to include racial or ethnic minority-owned businesses and organizations

- Petition the Vermont legislature to grant City residents who meet a one-year residency requirement the right to vote in local Burlington-area elections. City Council would need to pass a resolution to that effect prior to petitioning the Legislature. This precedent-setting action could be a stand-alone effort or a collaborative effort with surrounding municipalities. As an interim step, City Council should extend eligibility requirements to serve on City Boards, Commissions, and Committees to City residents who meet a one-year residency requirement regardless of citizenship status (*NOTE: This measure would also require involvement of the State Legislature and is currently under review by the City Attorney at the request of the Mayor. Review is expected to be complete by the end of the month.*)

Thank you.