

MINUTES
CULTIVATING CULTURES COMMITTEE
(EQUITY AND INCLUSION ADVISORY COMMITTEE)
Meeting of January 26, 2022
TEAMS Meeting

Members

Stephanie Banner - Human Resources - Present
April Blathers - Veterans Benefits/Claims - Present
Leslie Busby-Amegashie - Veterans Benefits/Grants - ABSENT
VACANT - Veterans Benefits/SAA -
Kevin Hampton - Veterans Museum - Present
Shantell Henderson - Veterans Benefits/VORP - Present
Russ Horton - Veterans Museum - Present
Jeff Hughes - Veterans Benefits/Cemeteries - Present
Jeanne Lind - Veterans Homes - Present
Patrick Meyer - Veterans Homes - Present
Shannon Miller - Public Affairs - ABSENT
Matt Niehaus - Enterprise Services – Present
Kristy Smith - Veterans Benefits/Cemeteries - Absent
VACANT - Veterans Homes -
Victoria Simonson - Human Resources - Present
Carla Vigue - Public Affairs - Present
Angela Zilliox - Human Resources – Non-Voting – Present

Others Present (not all inclusive)

No public participants

WDVA Present

Chad Koplien

Total Voting Membership present: 11
Total Attendees: 13

Total Voting Membership: 14
Necessary for Quorum: 5

1. Call to order, roll call

The meeting of the Cultivating Cultures Committee – Equity and Inclusion Advisory Committee was called to order by Russ Horton at 2:02. Roll was called and a quorum was present.

2. Certification of notice of meeting

The meeting was notified as being properly noticed.

3. Adoption of Meeting Minutes:

Russ Horton circulated the December meeting minutes via email. No discussion was had. Jeff Hughes moved to adopt the meeting minutes; Matt Niehaus seconded; motion passed by unanimous vote.

4. Subcommittee chair reports:

Russ acknowledged that this is Carla Vigue's last meeting. Carla and Russ have been working together on some iteration of this committee since the old employee achievement committee back in 2013 so Carla's done a lot of work deserving of recognition and commendation and thanks for her efforts for nearly 10 years.

Carla talked about how this committee has changed and evolved though the mission has stayed the same and the work is very important to make this Department as a whole a better place to work.

Appreciation: Jeanne Lind, Chair, reported that the subcommittee continues with developing the years of service appreciation event and reintroducing catch-a-coworker.

Diversity: Russ informed the committee that Larry Graves resigned, and the sub-committee chair is vacant. Stephanie Banner indicated nothing new to report.

Involvement and Input: Patrick Meyer, Chair, reported everything is status quo since last meeting. They have identified the problems and are still focusing on what to do for solutions

Morale and Fun: Matt Niehaus reported that the sub-committee met and has been working on several things but nothing concrete ready to report on for the committee. Russ commended Shannon and Matt for the Holiday Sweater event that got some good participation. Shannon and Matt are still working on the survey with input from all sub-committees.

Wellness: Victoria Simonson, Chair, reported that the subcommittee is in the process of trying to get a full calendar together for the whole year with wellness activities or information that can go out at least once a month. A quick review from Flu Clinic in 2021 indicated the event was fairly successful; would like to try to get more DVA employees to participate. We had a total of 10 last year.

5. Old Business:

Employee Survey: Russ reported that it is moving forward and will be a good thing to get feedback from.

6. New Business:

Membership and Sub-Committee representation: Russ mentioned that Larry Graves and others have had to step down and/or have left WDVA so there are a few vacancies that need filling. Russ asked committee members to let the committee know if they're leaving WDVA so that the membership can be updated since the committee isn't always informed until the next meeting well after the fact. There is a need to find a new sub-committee chair for the Diversity Sub-committee. If there are any volunteers that would be great; more information can be sent along via email. In the committee's by-laws there is a statement that there should be general representation from all divisions as part of the Committee's membership. It's something that needs to be worked on and reviewed to make sure the membership adequately representing all divisions. Russ will ask James Bond for how to define Divisions.

Russ also talked about how there has been discussion at previous meetings for recruiting for sub-committees and not necessarily requiring those volunteers to serve on the full CCC committee if time commitment is an obstacle. That said, the CCC does need people to serve on the full CCC committee since the membership is down since last meeting.

Stephanie mentioned that the nature of the work at the facilities makes it difficult to get participation from staff due to work restraints, etc. She conveys the message of diversity and inclusion but it would help to understand the overall message/goal/direction of the CCC so that she can adequately convey that to other staff to involve and engage them. It would help to have a clear message/compass direction. Russ remarked that that was good feedback and we will work on developing a clear message of what we're doing, who we are, and where we are for employees. Stephanie said it's good to put it in the forefront since it's easy to get lost especially with COVID and other messaging.

Russ asked for any new business.

Jeanee Lind had a question about the survey. Is there input from the different sub-committees? Matt said he's been helping Shannon a lot and they're looking for input from the other committees to build that out. So please send them along to Shannon or Matt. Russ will touchbase with Matt and Shannon for a deadline for input and circulate that to the committee.

7. Public Input: None

8. Future Agenda items:

Russ said we will need to have an election for a new co-chair in April.

Angie wanted to let everyone know that she's hoping to introduce the new Equity and Inclusion employee at the next meeting.

Survey results will hopefully be available.

Working on the message defining who we are and what we're doing.

9. Adjournment

Russ thanked everyone for meeting and again thanked Carla.

A motion to adjourn at 2:25 by Carla, Matt seconded the motion. Motion carried on a unanimous vote.

Russell Horton, Chair