



**TOWN COUNCIL
VIRTUAL MEETING
May 10, 2021
Special Town Council Meeting**

UNAPPROVED MINUTES

1) CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Trinks called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Present: Mayor Donald Trinks, Deputy Mayor Joseph McAuliffe, Councilor Nuchette Black-Burke, Councilor Lisa Rampulla Bress, Councilor James Dobler, Councilor James Govoni, Councilor Donald Jepsen, Councilor Lenworth Walker and Councilor Kenneth Wilkos

2) DISCUSSION OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Town Manager Souza gave an introduction and explained what the town has done to this point regarding employee engagement. In the last 2-1/2 years, the town has supplied training to its staff on emotional intelligence and unconscious bias. He stated that 55 supervisors have gone through the training at various levels. In the fall of 2020, an organization-wide employee survey was completed with the assistance of BlessingWhite. This is the first organization-wide survey that has been completed in a dozen years. The town will use this as a tool and as a process to start a series of conversations to gain insights as to how the town is doing as an organization along with our sub-organizations and where they are. This is a continuation of what we started years ago.

Colleen Casey from BlessingWhite gave a presentation to the Council.

Town Manager Souza stated it has been an eye-opening process for him. We have asked all the departments to engage in one-on-one conversations with their staff and some have already begun that process. We've had supervisors go through additional training opportunities as well.

Deputy Mayor McAuliffe said that it looks like some of this aggregate data has been shared on a departmental level. Town Manager Souza said yes, department managers and champions did receive the information. He explained that the 'champions' were individuals on the front line or at the mid-level of the organization. They have met with their different groups and have begun digesting and engaging in the one-on-one conversations with individuals.

Councilor Dobler said it sounds like BlessingWhite has set a baseline for the town. So, moving forward do we just take BlessingWhite's suggestions and run with them? How do we move forward? Town Manager Souza responded that the reason we went with BlessingWhite is because they have a tremendous amount of digital information where supervisors and department directors can go to for help with those one-on-one conversations and give them suggestions and ideas. We would also use BlessingWhite for some one-on-one consulting. Town Manager Souza said we would continue to give this current training some time to develop and maybe in one year or so down the road, we could branch out and give training to other sub-sets of the organization.

Councilor Wilkos stated that the way this was presented is that BlessingWhite compared us to the baseline and he does not like that approach. When you look at some of the grades of 57% - 62% with managers and directors having issues, he sees that immediate improvements are needed at this level. To measure that against another organization is not a good benchmark. So, let's use this information to build on. Town Manager Souza stated that he concurred with Councilor Wilkos' comments. He added that this is a baseline and he knows that there will be all types of variations going forward, but certainly this baseline will help to move the ball forward.

Councilor Black Burke thanked Ms. Casey for the information. She asked if these slides will be shared with the Council so they can process them a little deeper and if she comes up with more questions, if Town Manager Souza would share them with the company. Town Manager Souza said yes to both questions.

Councilor Bress thanked Ms. Casey and Town Manager Souza for the presentation. She doesn't mind having outside benchmarks but agrees with Councilor Wilkos that this needs to be a priority. There are some things that were very positive in the survey, especially in terms of employees who are very dedicated and feel it's 'more than a job'. It's obvious we have some very dedicated employees, however, some of the other measures were not so positive.

Councilor Bress asked Ms. Casey how she would progress with this type of results. What does her company offer in assistance besides videos in order for an organization to move forward on these particular goals? Ms. Casey responded that they have a platform available to all. In addition to that data, we offer other resources. Some of the resources help you to understand how the organization takes action on this information. Ms. Casey explained the next steps, answered additional questions and outlined the resources available.

Councilor Bress asked what the typical amount of time is before another follow up survey should be performed. Ms. Casey answered that it can be done annually or biannually, depending on the company. The most important thing with the survey is that the organization digest the information first and deploy it before a follow up survey is initiated.

Councilor Bress stated that the results stated that some of the responsibility lies with the employees themselves. She asked Ms. Casey if BlessingWhite does work regarding core strengths. Ms. Casey stated that core strengths is integrated into some of the training they have done.

Councilor Bress stated the data that was distributed was an overview of the organization. This does not necessarily mean that every single department had the same results. There could have been anomalies or some results that skewed the data and this is a conglomerate of all the data and not specific to one department. She asked if this was correct. Ms. Casey confirmed that it was correct.

Councilor Govoni thanked Ms. Casey for her presentation. He would like to have the survey broken down by each department. He stated the town did a survey several years ago in Public Works. He'd like to see the difference between the two surveys – the one completed several years ago as compared to the current one. What has improved since we did the last survey?

Town Manger Souza appreciated all the comments. He stated the organization is continuing to make this a priority with department directors and they have developed work plans. We will continue along this front and provide the slides to Town Council members for their review.

3) REVIEW AND DISCUSSION OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION (DEI)

Town Manager Souza introduced Mr. Bird Guess from The Racial Equity Group. Town Manager Souza stated that all full-time and part-time employees are in the process of going through the training. Mr. Guess is going to walk through the fundamental concepts that were discussed with all town employees. At this point, we've had 182 part-time and full-time employees go through the base training. We've had 55 supervisors and managers go through a second training session that spoke about how to employ this in terms of standard operating practices.

Mr. Guess gave a presentation outlining Diversity, Equity and Inclusion practices.

Councilor Bress thanked Mr. Guess for the thorough presentation. It was informative and helpful. This is a good foundation for our town to use.

Deputy Mayor McAuliffe concurred with Councilor Bress that it was a good presentation.

Councilor Jepsen thanked Mr. Guess for the presentation. He asked if the Council could get a copy of these slides as well. Town Manager Souza said yes.

Councilor Bress asked what the next steps are in terms of this work. Town Manager Souza stated that is a conversation we've engaged Mr. Guess in helping us to form what those next steps might be. We have been talking at the department director level to see

how we are collecting our data and doing it in a different way. We will also look at some of our key policies and practices. Human Resources will look at, from a recruiting perspective, making sure we are getting candidate pools that are broad and diverse. They will also review the interview process to ensure it is up to date and make sure there is no unconscious bias happening there.

Councilor Black Burke wanted to thank Mr. Guess and the Town Manager for making this happen. She is definitely interested in the next steps. She asked what is going to be the cadence of the training moving forward. Town Manager Souza stated that we have not yet laid out that framework completely. Mr. Guess will help us get a sense on how we might proceed in keeping this in the forefront not only in terms of education and awareness, but with looking at our practices and policies on how we continue to move forward.

4) ADJOURNMENT

MOVED by Councilor Bress, seconded by Deputy Mayor McAuliffe to adjourn the meeting at 8:26 p.m.

Motion Passed 8-0-0 (Councilor Dobler not present)

Respectfully Submitted,

Helene Albert
Recording Secretary