



## MEETING MINUTES

### COMMUNITY INCLUSION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, December 19, 2023

#### CALL TO ORDER

Imran Malik, Chair, called the Community Inclusion Advisory Committee (CIAC) meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

#### ROLL CALL

Members Present: Chair Imran Malik, Vice Chair Niki Lombardo, Vineet Goel, Noor Amara, Michael Haynes, Isao Shoji, Peggy Kilty

Members Absent: Kristine Aldemir, Ming Yu, Katawi Cato, Max Xu

Staff Present: Christine Nardecchia, Robin Myers, Chief Justin Páez

#### APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Nardecchia noted that due to technical difficulties with the last meeting recording, the October 24, 2023 meeting minutes will be provided at the January 23, 2024 meeting for approval.

#### PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

- **MUNICIPAL EQUALITY INDEX SCORE AND REPORT**

Robin Myers, City Talent Development & Training Manager, reviewed the Human Rights Campaign 2023 Municipal Equality Index (MEI) Report. The Human Rights Campaign (HRC) is an agency that advocates for the rights of the LGBTQ+ members of the community, working with cities and with corporations. The MEI is a scorecard that rates how well cities and towns support LGBTQ+ individuals. The organization assesses policies, procedures and practices. Dublin is one of 8 cities in Ohio selected for evaluation; Dublin was selected in 2016. Initially, the City's score was low. It did not have many policies, procedures and practices in place for that purpose. In 2022 and 2023, however, the City received a score of 100. The element that helped the City achieve that score was the passage of a non-discrimination ordinance (Ordinance 81-21) on November 21, 2021. The City follows the categories listed on the index to achieve 28 points. The City's law enforcement and

leadership have been instrumental in helping the City achieve its score. The following contributed to the City's score:

- Passage of a non-discrimination ordinance;
- The City's health insurance policy covers LGBTQ+ employees;
- Adoption of non-discrimination Administrative Orders (AOs) and provision of staff training;
- There are LGBTQ+ liaisons on staff, including one within the Police Department, and the City provides many services to the LGBTQ+ community;
- In 2022, City law enforcement dealt with a hate crime, which gave the City an additional 12 points.
- City leadership promotes the CIAC body to the community.

Ms. Myers stated that the handout provided shows the 5 sections in the index and the points available in each.

Only 4 of the 8 Ohio cities evaluated received a score of 100 the last two years. The HRC MEI website provides more details regarding their scoring process.

### **Committee Questions/Comments**

Mr. Goel stated that since the Covid pandemic, working from home is common. In that scenario, how would the nondiscrimination law apply?

Ms. Myers responded that this MEI index and scorecard is specific for municipalities, but there are some corporations that are being evaluated as well. It is possible to check online and see how they are being evaluated.

Mr. Shoji stated that there is a flex element under Section 2 concerning City employee – domestic partner benefits. Does the fact that the scorecard reflects a "0" mean that Dublin does not offer domestic partner benefits?

Ms. Myers responded that the City does offer insurance benefits to domestic partners.

Ms. Nardecchia stated that the City began to offer that benefit to its employees before it became law.

Ms. Myers noted that flex points are available to cities to reach a score of 100, even if the City experiences no hate crime.

Ms. Nardecchia inquired if it is necessary to have a reported hate crime to get those points.

Ms. Myers responded affirmatively.

Ms. Kilty inquired if Dublin has a human rights commission.

Ms. Myers responded that it does not; however, there is a discrimination compliance process in Mayor's Court, which was leveraged to achieve those points on the report.

Mr. Malik inquired if the MEI Index evaluation and report is conducted statewide or nationwide.

Ms. Myers responded that over 506 cities in the U.S. are evaluated. If a city is not selected, they can request to be included.

Mr. Haynes inquired if we are aware of how many discrimination cases have been submitted to Mayor's Court.

Ms. Myers responded that she would follow-up with that information.

Ms. Lombardo inquired if the City is contemplating pursuing the flex points available for services for LGBTQ+ older adults.

Ms. Nardecchia stated the City is always interested in receiving more points, so the City's DEI Committee will be looking into that opportunity. The DEI effort is centralized in Human Resources and is evaluated by the internal DEI Committee. She will share Ms. Lombardo's question with them. She requested Ms. Myers to explain the color coding in the report.

Ms. Myers responded that the colors reflect the year in which the cities were included in the scoring process.

Mr. Malik inquired what ways the committee could help the City to maintain a score of 100.

Ms. Myers responded that the committee can assist by lending leadership and advocacy to LGBTQ+ and other minority groups within the City. If desired, the committee could network with other state agencies, such as Stonewall and Diversity Ohio.

Ms. Nardecchia stated that the City is only 24.5 square miles; however, the school district is 47 square miles and incorporates municipalities other than Dublin. Are there any categories on the scorecard that relate to schools?

Ms. Myers stated that the City has not reached out to the various local schools regarding opportunities to support them.

Ms. Kilty stated there is a national organization called GLSEN, which conducts a nationwide staff and student-driven survey every two years. Schools must ask to participate. She does not believe Dublin City Schools have opted into that survey; however, the survey could indicate the students' perspective on school safety for LGBTQ+ students. There is a Columbus chapter of GLSEN.

Ms. Lombardo stated that if the City has no other hate crime that is reported to the FBI, it loses those 12 points.

Ms. Myers clarified that it must be within a 5-year timespan to be included.

Ms. Lombardo stated that without a hate crime, it would be necessary to achieve some of the flex points.

Mr. Haynes inquired about the reference to single occupancy, all gender facilities, which is listed under nondiscrimination laws. Is that a reference about City laws or City facilities?

Ms. Myers responded that the reference is to City buildings. The City applied for that flex point, but did not receive it due to how the City Recreation Center locker room is set up.

Mr. Haynes inquired if that is something that the City could achieve.

Ms. Myers responded that the recreation center is set up in the manner that works best for the community. The facility has all-gender restrooms.

Ms. Lombardo inquired if as the City Economic Development Department engages in attracting employers to the City, does the City ask those employers about their HRC rating or about their anti-discrimination policies? If not, should the City do so to ensure that those potential employers would share the values of the City of Dublin?

Ms. Myers responded that she would reach out to the Economic Director to inquire.

Mr. Malik inquired about the City's Safe Spaces initiative.

Chief Paez responded that it is not presently reflected in the MEI index. The Safe Spaces community effort is tethered to discouraging hate crimes. The MEI scoring does not reflect a hope for hate crimes to occur, but if they should occur, there is an understanding of how to report them. The City wants to hold individuals guilty of accountable offenses, report them to the FBI and partner with them to protect vulnerable members of the community. The intent of the MEI index is to ensure that there is active awareness and conversation and offenses are addressed by the proper authorities.

Mr. Haynes inquired what level of crimes are reported as hate crimes. Are only violent crimes reported, or is vandalism also reported?

Chief Paez responded that individual offense reports would be examined under the lens of whether it was motivated by a bias against a particular group. If it meets that threshold, it would be addressed as a hate crime. For the recent Safe Space Dublin anniversary, the police department's FBI liaison shared information concerning the threshold for hate crime reporting and the resources available with the Safe Space program.

Ms. Nardecchia thanked Ms. Myers for presenting the annual report to the committee.

- **FINALIZE AND ADOPT 2024 MEETING SCHEDULE**

Ms. Nardecchia stated that the draft schedule was provided to the Committee at their last meeting. Since then, the City Manager has requested a joint presentation to City Council by CIAC, the Chief's Advisory Commission and the Veterans Committee. That presentation has been added to the proposed meeting schedule on November 18, 2024. There is no CIAC regular meeting in November. Mr. Haynes noted a need for the following date corrections: January 23 and June 25. Following a roll call vote, the 2024 Meeting Schedule was adopted unanimously.

- **OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT UPDATES**

Ms. Nardecchia thanked the members who attended the one-year anniversary of Safe Space Dublin. The event was well attended. The MLK civic service will kick off on the MLK holiday. A naturalization ceremony is scheduled on Wednesday, May 8 and will be held in the Abbey Theater. At their October meeting, the Committee asked that the City make a statement of comfort regarding the events in the Middle East. To best address the safety perspective within the community, City administration decided that the statement needed to be in conjunction with Safe Space Dublin. She read the following City Statement regarding Safe Space Dublin.

City Statement:

"This month marks the first anniversary of Safe Space Dublin, which is designed to promote havens of safety, security and support resources for anyone who can use help. This initiative ensures there are community-based sanctuaries for people who have experienced hate crimes, threats or intimidation or for people in personal crisis. All City buildings, including the Dublin Justice Center, all Washington Township Fire Department stations and many local businesses and organizations operate as Safe Space Dublin locations. The City of Dublin is comprised of many unique communities with diverse perspectives and traditions. Inclusion and safety are ingrained in our philosophy as a local democracy. We endeavor to incorporate cultural understanding and celebrate diversity in all that we do. We do not tolerate negative stereotyping or discrimination and strive to ensure equal

opportunity and respect for all people. We are committed to working collaboratively with our community to continue fostering a future that is open, healthy and diverse, where all feel welcome and valued.”

She noted that the statement has been posted to the City’s website and shared via three social media platforms. As a result of this statement, Safe Space Dublin has garnered an increase in views of 143%.

### **Committee Questions/Comments**

Mr. Haynes responded that it is good to provide comfort to everyone, as the statement does; however, the Committee had requested something specific to the ongoing event in the Middle East. Anyone within our local community who might have been affected or be uncertain would not find their concerns represented in this statement.

Ms. Amara stated that she appreciates the statement and the Safe Space Dublin program. It is a beautiful statement, aptly presented on the one-year Safe Space Dublin anniversary. However, the statement does not address the humanity issue and loss of human life in the world. Trying to include people by saying nothing specific is an exclusive act. We can do better. Although we are not hearing what we need on a Federal level, that does not mean as a local entity, we cannot speak to the humanity issue.

Ms. Lombardo inquired the City’s reason for not providing a more specific statement.

Ms. Nardecchia responded that the Committee provided a recommendation to the City to make a statement of comfort. As emotional as the event in the Middle East was and continues to be, the City was concerned that as a local government, we could not take the risk of this becoming a flash point for the City. Staff met with the FBI and was advised that regardless of the sentiments concerning what was right or not right, making a statement of inclusion and safety was the safest statement of the City’s beliefs.

Chief Paez stated that staff considered the Committee’s recommendation and attempted to meet the intent in the best way possible. They reached out to peer communities in arriving at the statement. While it could have been made separately, the Safe Space Dublin anniversary was considered a good opportunity to make a statement about the personal safety concerns and community support.

Ms. Amara stated that she speaks on behalf of her constituents. She does not believe that people will develop the trust to report to the City any security concerns, if there has been no statement concerning the recent loss of lives.

Ms. Kilty inquired if the City would support a candlelight vigil for peace.

Ms. Nardecchia responded that citizens have every right to demonstrate their stances and opinions.

Ms. Kilty inquired if the City would back such an event.

Ms. Nardecchia responded that she believes supporting a demonstration could be just as much of a flashpoint as making a statement.

Ms. Kilty responded that a demonstration and a peaceful candlelight vigil are two different things.

Mr. Haynes stated that he wonders what other atrocities the City will decide are too risky to confront.

Mr. Malik stated that the City administration's job is to provide comfort to every citizen, not to engage in the conflict happening in the world. Should I be able to request a statement tomorrow on the Armenian conflict, where a genocide is occurring, or ask for a statement to be issued on the Russia-Ukraine conflict? We are asking the City to provide a comfort statement to whoever might be feeling insecure. He believes Safe Space Dublin is a great City initiative.

Ms. Amara stated that she agrees, but when the City lights the bridge for Ukraine, that is selective humanity. Choosing which topics we will care about creates division and exclusion.

Mr. Malik stated that he appreciates the fact that everyone in this room feels safe to speak their minds and hearts. However, historically, Dublin has not issued statements of this type. Safe Space Dublin is leading the way in encouraging citizens to feel comfortable coming forward with any safety concerns, and leaders to have this type of discussion. Hopefully, as this initiative continues, we will develop a culture wherein City and Township leaders and political officials will be comfortable making such statements. He has dealt with many different leaderships regarding faith, cultural, political and civic engagement issues, and he believes the City has shown strong support in issuing this statement. What CIAC members contribute now and in the future will create a momentum and assurance for having these conversations candidly. In the past, he has worked with FBI leadership, and the safety of the local community is the focal point. He appreciates that the City had conversations with the FBI that helped shape this statement.

- **NEW BUSINESS**

Mr. Haynes inquired if an update of the speaker series agenda would be provided at the January 23, 2024 meeting.

Ms. Nardecchia stated that she and the City Manager met with the Ohio University Dean, William Burke and discussed the university's upcoming speaker series. This will be an agenda item at the January committee meeting.

- **CHIEF'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE UPDATE**

Chief Paez stated that the Chief's Advisory Committee (CAC) did not meet this week, due to lack of a quorum. At their October meeting, the CAC discussed an initiative to register community members with disabilities so that in the event the individual is separated from family, in need of support and unable to communicate their need, a mechanism is in place to enable Law Enforcement to facilitate the reunification or support. Potential names for the initiative were discussed. This item will be scheduled at the CAC January meeting. CAC also discussed an incident that had occurred at Jerome High School. By the time the news was being disseminated to the public, Police had already addressed the issue. They worked with the school to ensure all parties were safe. The event that occurred last week in the Scioto High School area was similarly addressed, working with other public safety officers. Another agency initially worked on the issue; Dublin Police were involved to assist and support. Everything was resolved in a timely manner. They worked with Dublin Schools to ensure accurate information was shared and that parents, students, faculty and staff had the necessary awareness to keep themselves safe and understand how the City was ensuring their safety.

Mr. Soji inquired what occurred that day. He received an email notification at work concerning the situation, but was unable to find any information. There must somewhere he could have found more information.

Chief Paez responded that probably was not possible. Dublin Police worked on a public message that indicated the measures being taken to ensure the schools were safe, although nothing started at or affected the school. However, due to the close proximity, the school environment was secured. He went to each school that was being secured and talked with the administrators, and Dublin police officers supported the search. Dublin Police was not the agency that initiated the search but was involved to add support. Federal partners were involved. The individual was not found in the area at that time, and when there was sufficient certainty that the search could be ended, schools were informed that they could proceed with their normal dismissal procedures. They partnered with the school on who would share the public information, ensuring that no information would be shared that would compromise the ongoing investigation of the individual.

Ms. Lombardo inquired how Police notify the residents in a neighborhood to secure their homes. Chief Paez responded that there are a number of ways in which to communicate that, including by phone, social media and NextDoor. Personal communication by officers in the area occurred in this case.

- **COMMITTEE REFLECTIONS**

Ms. Lombardo stated that in her time on the Committee, she has learned to scale back her expectations of how quickly things can be done in a municipality. However, she believes the Committee had accomplishments in 2023 and was able to advise the City on a number of topics. Looking ahead to 2024, she is looking forward to reviewing the Committee's framework priorities and considering what additional recommendations the Committee might be able to make.

Mr. Soji stated that in 2023, the committee continued to gel, which has laid a foundation for more results in 2024. The committee discussed many items at a high level. In 2024, perhaps the committee will be prepared to make more specific recommendations on certain items. He thanks the City for their support. Working with staff teaches committee members about the sensitive nature of the topics with which we deal. In order for this committee to be viewed as a credible body on which the City can depend, we have to learn how to work within the environment in which we are placed.

Ms. Kilty stated that this year, she has learned much about how City government functions. For it to have created a body such as this is special, and she is honored to be part of it. She looks forward to a deeper focus on some topics and to continuing to learn from each other.

Mr. Haynes stated that looking back on 2023, he is proud of some things, such as the translation service, Safe Space Dublin, partnering with other agencies and the City's excellent MEI score. However, he feels the committee may not be focused sufficiently on protecting the most vulnerable, including LGBTQ+, new Americans and black Americans. Over 2023, he believes the committee may have stepped back from the more difficult components of DEI. He understands the need for a balance in a pursuit of DEI goals. He is concerned that the City did not show the will in 2023 that it had in the preceding years.

Mr. Goel stated that the biggest responsibility of this committee is to be the human interface between the City government and the community. He looks forward to continuing to do so in 2024.

Ms. Myers thanked the committee for inviting her to share the HRC MEI scorecard. She thanks the committee for sharing their thoughts, experiences and supporting the community.

Ms. Nardecchia thanked the committee for their service. It is difficult to balance passion and beliefs with the government process. CIAC is an advising committee of Council. Being a liaison for the committee has been humbling. She has learned much from the committee.

Ms. Amara stated that she agrees that serving on this committee has been a humbling experience. She has learned much. 2023 has taught her how to use her voice. She is attempting to find the courage to speak out for minorities, the oppressed and the diverse. She believes it would be good for the committee to review its mission statement with each meeting. We tackle local issues, but need to address the more global issues as they pertain to our city. She prays for world peace for all.

Mr. Malik stated that OSU recently extended an initiative that involved faith leaders, in which he was involved. The initial conversation was good, and a follow-up conversation will occur in February. That is representative of the volunteer work in which he has been involved the last 25 years. The committee is learning how local municipalities work. This body serves in an advisory role. It can provide recommendations, but cannot guarantee results. CIAC is a conduit between constituents of the multicultural community and the City administration. Each member of the committee brings value, some with a global perspective, others with a local perspective. This committee is the first of its kind for the City. He is hoping the committee can delve more deeply into the elements of its framework. We are creating pathways for the next members who will sit in these seats, and we are creating a fraternity of friends in Dublin. CIAC is our platform, but we are friends and community members. He encourages other members to reach out to him at any time they might have a need.

Ms. Kilty responded that she would contact him about initiating a candlelight vigil.

Mr. Malik stated that it might not be possible for the City to be involved in that. However, he is working with the faith and multicultural communities to see if that type of undertaking might be possible in the future. We all have to be mindful and respectful of the different communities within the City, but patience will lead to positive results.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:36 pm.

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Imran Malik, Chair

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Assistant Clerk of Council