

**MINUTES**  
**WORKFORCE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION COMMITTEE**  
**OCTOBER 25, 2006 3:30 P.M.**  
**BEVERLY LIVESAY CONFERENCE ROOM**

Present: Leslyn McBean-Clairborne, Chair; Constance Thompson; Heather Stewart; Bob DeLuca; Audrey Cooper; Patricia Carey; Shawn Martel-Moore; Marcia Lynch; Chantalise DeMarco; Kathy Luz Herrera; Sonya Hicks; Lillian Lightbourn; Shelly Michelle Nunn; Satomi Hill; Lisa Holmes; Cathy Covert; Karen Fuller

**Called to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 3:35 p.m.

**Announcements**

The following announcements were made:

- At 3 p.m. this afternoon, The New Jersey Supreme Court ruled in favor of equal rights for same-sex couples wishing to legalize their unions. However, it appears that the court will leave it to the "democratic process" to determine what that union is called. The legislature has 180 days to amend the marriage statues or enact an appropriate statutory structure.
- The Committee was provided copies of a brochure entitled "*Traveler's Guide to Indigenous Peoples Events and Venues2006*".
- On November 8<sup>th</sup> there will be a Diversity Reading Circle co-sponsored by the Society of Human Resource Management, the Diversity Consortium, and the Tompkins County Public library; the book is "Blink" by Malcolm Gladwell.
- On November 14<sup>th</sup> there will be a "Welcome to Tompkins County" session sponsored by Audrey Edelman Associates and the Chamber of Commerce.
- A conference for Young Professionals in Upstate New York will be held from November 3 – 5; this is partially sponsored by Ithaca Forward.
- Due to the water damage at City Hall, City Court cases have been postponed.
- The First Friday celebration on November 3<sup>rd</sup> will have an "Old School" theme.

**Commercial Driver's License Program**

Ms. Herrera introduced Lillian Lightbourn, Commercial Driver Trainer, who spoke of the Commercial Driver's License Program being offered at this time. The course, partially funded from the City of Ithaca Community Development Small Block Grant Program, is a ten-week training session, with three weeks intensive full-day written material followed by hands-on procedure and driving experience to enable participants to obtain a Commercial Driver's License. The next class will begin on December 4<sup>th</sup>, however, if there is enough interest, Ms. Lightbourn will consider offering an evening class. Individuals in the program receive a \$300 stipend, one-half for the class work, and the other half upon completion of the course. All expenses are covered for this course, which as a training bus for the sole purpose of providing on-road experience. Interested individuals may call Ms. Lightbourn at Greater Ithaca Activities Center. It was noted that preference is given to City of Ithaca residents, and it is hoped the program will draw women and minorities seeking to better their income.

**County Budget Update**

Mrs. McBean-Clairborne announced that the Tompkins County Legislature has approved \$15,000 for Diversity initiatives and training purposes. Ms. Carey shared her experience using the three Project Assistant positions to enable individuals to explore County employment prior to Civil Service exams.

## **Other Reports**

### **Student Safety - Discussion**

Mrs. McBean-Clairborne shared information regarding the attempted kidnapping of two young students this morning. Members expressed concern that students are walking two or more miles to and from school daily. Members will be working to organize individuals interested in sharing the concern with appropriate school officials to seek amending the bussing policy.

### **Ethnicity**

Mrs. McBean-Clairborne shared her experience with having to explain and defend that viewing her as “African-American” is not correct, and expressed frustration with having to do so. She said it acts as a reminder of the importance of the work that has been done and the need to continue to move forward.

### **Approval of Bylaws**

The Committee reviewed and discussed the bylaws as presented. A discussion relating to membership occurred, during which it was said there is a need to clarify that the intention of the Committee is to have balanced stakeholders, including Community members, Legislators, and County staff, etc. The Committee agreed to add the following sentence to the “Qualifications” paragraph: “It is the intent that this Committee shall include representation from County Legislature, County staff, and the community.” The Committee then discussed whether the recommended language regarding quorum should be modified to more easily reflect a majority of present membership. It was determined that at this time no change would be made. The Bylaws as amended were approved by consensus of the Committee and will be presented to the Personnel Committee of the Legislature for approval.

### **Report from Marketing Subcommittee**

The subcommittee is presently reworking the logo and meets next on November 17<sup>th</sup>. A full report will be provided at the next meeting.

### **Additional Announcements**

- There will be a Halloween Parade/Party held October 31<sup>st</sup> from 4:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at GIAC.
- On November 17<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m., in the Beverly J. Martin Gym the annual Harvest Fest meal will be provided. Volunteers for this project are being sought.

### **Workforce Violence Prevention Act**

Ms. Stewart provided copies of a sample policy and the actual legislation relating to the recently adopted Workforce Violence Prevention Act (WVPA). The County will need to create a policy but at this time there has not been direction from the State as to required content. Presently, OSHA Representative Mark Smart is assisting in the completion of a workplace safety analysis as it applies to the WVPA. In addition, many individuals, including Frank Croteau, Safety Officer, union representatives, Jackie Thomas, library representatives and Ms. Stewart are working to develop the policy. Following the initial WVPA training it could be combined with the Right-to-Know Annual training for all employees.

### **Additional Marketing Report**

Ms. Martel-Moore spoke of an offer made by Cornell University to assist in translating the Diversity Statement into other languages; presently they have nine various languages they could provide.

### **Hearing Impaired Translators**

A brief discussion took place on the need to provide translators for hearing impaired individuals, particularly during important meetings such as the budget. Various methods of achieving the desired translation were suggested and included: closed caption broadcasts, TTY lines, monitors and keyboards, American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters, etc. Ms. Hill spoke of her agency making their hearing impaired equipment available for a small deposit fee. It was thought it would be a good project for a task force to take on with assistance from Marcia Lynch.

### **Civil Service Tests and Positions**

The Committee discussed various aspects of Civil Service requirements in New York State. It was noted that the exams are not available in various languages as the basic belief is that potential employees have the ability to converse in English, the native language. New York City is an exception to this rule as they have a different Civil Service division that allows some language variances. County staff spoke of the benefits of utilizing a Project Assistant within their departments as it allows the potential employee to experience a particular workplace and whether it is what they would like to do. In addition, the supervisors are able to assist the employee in having a clear understanding of the various government positions and how to be best prepared for the Civil Service examination. Ms. Stewart spoke of her working closely with individuals in the Project Assistant positions to prepare them for further employment within the government Civil Service guidelines.

### **Other Announcements**

- The Ithaca Breast Cancer Alliance Walkathon will take place on Saturday, October 28<sup>th</sup>.

### **Updated Fringe Information**

Heather Stewart reported on changes due to recent legislation that provides County employees (both male and female) a maximum of four hours excused leave annually to obtain a screening for breast cancer. The bill is effective September 15, 2006. County employees are entitled to four hours paid excused leave for the period of 9/15/06 through 12/31/06 and are then entitled to an additional four hours excused leave every year thereafter.

### **Next Meeting**

- The next meeting is December 11<sup>th</sup>. The November 22 and December 27 meetings have been cancelled.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.