

Diversity and Inclusion Task Force Meeting

Broadcast Via Live Webinar and Teleconference, Tuesday, March 9, 2021

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Diversity and Inclusion Task Force Meeting was held on Tuesday, March 9, 2021 at 6:00 p.m., James E. Bostic, Jr., Chair, presiding.

I. Call to Order

Chair Jim Bostic called the meeting to order at **6:00 p.m.**

Roll Call

Members present: James "Jim" Bostic, Desmond Curry, Raquel González, Rabbi Joshua Heller, Nicole Morris, Reverend Bill Murray, Sgt. Sal Ortega, Jose Osorio, Olivia Rocamora and Clarissa Sparks

Guest present: Mayor Rusty Paul

II. Prayer – Rev. Dr. Bill Murray, Rector, Holy Innocents' Episcopal Church

III. New Business

DIT2021-001 Mayor Rusty Paul's Task Force Goals

Mayor Rusty Paul thanked all for agreeing to serve on the Diversity and Inclusion Task Force. This is a journey and a process that we need to continue to look. We will always have to look at it and try to figure out what we should do. How do we build bridges? How do we understand, celebrate, and, recognize the diversity of our community and bring that together in a way that lives up to the commonality that community really means. This Task Force will investigate assets, quality of life and experiences of the community. Our community is very diverse. It is diverse economically, ethnically, and, diverse in age. It was very clear from the Civic Dinners that there is a lot of work to do. The next after the dinners is come together and begin the process of having a community-wide dialogue. This task force, representing the City leadership, cares about bringing people together. You are not to just look at government, but do not ignore us and do not leave us out of the process, but also look at the community as a whole and help us understand how we bring the community at-large together and begin a dialogue. There are housing issues; economic issues; families are hurting; a lot of different things going on in this community. Not all the problems can be solved, but perhaps a difference can be made that will make lives easier and help them to understand that we do care. They are part of our community; how do we engage them and go from an act of caring and feeling to making it real.

DIT2021-002 Introduction of Task Force Members

Chair Jim Bostic asked that each member introduce themselves.

DIT2021-003 Organization of Task Force & DIT2021-004 Key Objectives of the Task Force

Chair Jim Bostic stated the Task Force would organize itself into subcommittees to discuss:

(1) Recreation.

(2) Housing and Transportation. Particularly with people in rental housing. Owners may renovate an apartment complex and renters may have to leave where they live, because price is too high for them to return. This is a serious issue and one that the Task Force should attack and look at to see if there are recommendations that can be made to City leadership. He would like for this subcommittee to investigate having more low- and middle-income housing in the City.

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(3) **Economic Development.** There are a large number of people who are unemployed at this time, who need to have an opportunity to go back to work. This would not be tackled at this time but as we get recommendations from either Recreation or on Housing, then we take the opportunity to look at this.

(4) **City Activities.**

Education is another topic of discussion of interest to members. The Task Force can invite Dr. Looney to a future meeting to discuss some of the education issues that have been brought up by various members. While the City of Sandy Springs has no control over education, which is provided by Fulton County Board of Education, the school board does have two Sandy Springs representatives - Gail Dean representing District 3 and Julia Bernath representing District 7.

Member Joshua Heller asked if discussing law enforcement in Sandy Springs is a topic the Task Force should be covering.

Member Desmond Curry stated recreation in the city seems to be fairly limited to tennis.

Member Olivia Rocamora stated these committees reflect our local perceptions and the national conversations. It is important to include law enforcement, whether that is its own committee or part of a larger committee.

Member Nicole Morris agreed. With SR400 and Roswell Road, the police and law enforcement tend to interact with a lot of community, whether they are coming through Sandy Springs or whether they live in Sandy Springs.

Member Jose Osorio commented that these subcommittees hit to what community members would benefit from. In terms of law enforcement, it is always good to hear from the community and to engage with them in positive activities. Regarding recreation, there may be partnerships where we could expand tennis. And also engage with Atlanta United and Atlanta Hawks, to help out with soccer or basketball. As far as Education, we need to make sure the entire community provides opportunities for students.

Member Sal Ortega stated that all of these committees are realistic and doable. Education is important. There are challenges that some parents face, particularly those who are not familiar with how the educational system works here. For example, often the students are left alone to navigate the college applications processes. Also, with recreation, we know that sports brings folks together. When you're playing no one cares about where you're from, just that you're part of the same team.

Chair Bostic proposed members begin by organizing themselves into two subcommittees, and that the subcommittees meet over the next month in public meetings. The **Recreation** subcommittee will be chaired by Member Desmond Curry, and include Members Sal Ortega, Clarissa Sparks and Joshua Heller. This is important for the community and the students in the community. Once recommendations are agreed upon, we would then forward to the Mayor and City Council to begin working on this yet this year, so when kids get out of school, we have already begun investigating. The **Housing and Transportation** subcommittee will be chaired by Member Olivia Rocamora, and include Members Jose Osorio, Nicole Morris and Bill Murray. This is also an important area. What are some of the things we ought to do about rental properties? How do we go about having people live in a community, have them move, get it renovated, then they can't live there again? Some people may want to have assistance in helping them purchase a home. Additionally, Members should look at transportation. How do we move around a city that has 110K people. In the meantime, I will get with the Superintendent Looney and have a conversation about all of the issues you all brought up regarding Education. We will invite him to the next time we are meeting, that we have a section

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of the program where he comes and tells us what his plans are for the summer for the work that needs to be done to 'catch students up,' to have them be at grade level and what does that look like through the remainder of this year and the summer.

DIT2021-005 Next Steps for the Task Force

Chair Jim Bostic stated once the Task Force has worked on the two initial subcommittees, the Task Force will talk about **Economic Development, City Activities, and Law Enforcement**. There will be new chairs for the new subcommittees. Mayor Paul is looking forward to receiving recommendations from the Task Force.

DIT2021-006 Discussion

Chair Jim Bostic stated the group can possibly meet in the second week of each month. At the next week meeting, the Task Force will have a conversation about what kind of recommendations or suggestions should go to the Mayor and/or Council. While it may be possible to have preliminary recommendations, there may also only be early findings rather any recommendations to discuss. In either July or August, the Task Force will not have a meeting to give everyone a break.

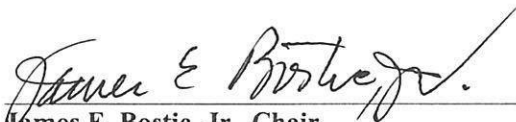
IV. Closing Comments – James E. Bostic, Jr., Chair

Chair Jim Bostic stated the chairpersons of each subcommittee will need to get their group together. Use this opportunity to talk to members of the community about things they would like for us to tackle on these two issues.

V. Prayer – Rabbi Joshua Heller, Congregation B'nai Torah

VI. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at **7:03 p.m.**


James E. Bostic, Jr., Chair


Raquel González, Recording Secretary

