

To allow public access, anyone may access a meeting by telephone, Zoom, and/or the City of Norwalk YouTube channel. Specific instructions and links can be found at www.norwalkct.org/meetings

Members of the public can call in and listen to a meeting. They will not be able to speak or see any of the meeting participants. Each meeting will use a unique Meeting/Webinar ID.

Members of the public who wish to provide "live comments" will need to register in advance and use the Zoom meeting platform. All participants will be muted upon entering the meeting. To speak, click the "raise your hand indicator" and you will be called on by the host of the meeting during the public comment section.

Members of the public who wish to view the meeting, but are not participating, can view a live stream on the City of Norwalk YouTube channel. This stream is delayed by approximately 20 seconds.

Members of the public who wish to provide public comment are encouraged to submit those via email in advance of the meeting. For these comments to be read into the record, they should be submitted at least three hours in advance of the meeting start time. Please email Lamond Daniels at ldaniels@norwalkct.org to provide written public comment prior to the meeting.

**CITY OF NORWALK
COMMUNITY SERVICES & PERSONNEL COMMITTEE
MARCH 17, 2021.
VIA TELECONFERENCE**

ATTENDANCE: Barbara Smyth, Chair; Gregory Burnett; Dominique Johnson; Thomas Keegan; Diana Revolus; Kadeem Roberts; Nicholas Sacchinelli (7:22 p.m.)

STAFF: Lamond Daniels, Chief of Community Services; Ray Burney, Personnel Director

OTHERS: David Heuvelman, Common Council member; Kelvin Ayala, Director of Real Estate Development; Kim Bianca Williams, Director of Community Development; Natalie Pryce, Director of Business and Workforce Development, Led By Us

1. CALL TO ORDER/ ROLL CALL

Ms. Smyth called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. and called the Roll as indicated above. A Quorum was present.

2. PUBLIC COMMENTS

No members of the public wished to comment this evening.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM MEETING HELD ON FEBRUARY 17, 2021

The following corrections were made to the minutes:

Page 1 – correct spelling of roll

Page 2 – correct Mr. Daniel's name

Page 3 – 4th paragraph, change they to the

Page 3 – 6th paragraph - change sentence to - He said they used to have court for minor offences in Norwalk, but it has moved to Bridgeport.

**** MR. ROBERTS MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES AS CORRECTED
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

4. ACTION ITEMS:

**** MR. BURNETT MOVED TO AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY W. RILLING, TO EXECUTE ANY AND ALL DOCUMENTS NECESSARY TO APPLY FOR AND ACCEPT THE SCHOOL READINESS GRANT WHICH INCLUDES THE QUALITY ENHANCEMENT GRANT FOR THE PERIOD JULY 1, 2021 TO JUNE 30, 2022.**

Mr. Daniels introduced Ms. Jaime Zylo, the School Readiness Coordinator for the Norwalk Public Schools who gave a summary of this reoccurring grant. She said this grant serves 636 children throughout Norwalk and helps subsidize the parent tuition. Many of the families fall below the income level of 50% the State Median Income.

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

5. DISCUSSION AND VOTE ON THE EQUITY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL COMMISSION PROPOSED CONSULTANT: LED BY US & ASSOCIATES.

Community Services Department, Lamond Daniels

Ms. Smyth said this was a day of celebration. The community has been anticipating this announcement. Ms. Smyth said Led By Us is the right consultant to lead the City of Norwalk through this process.

Mr. Daniels read his prepared statement and said that over a year ago, he partnered with Mayor Rilling and held a Town Hall meeting. He said that tonight, the City is re-affirming their celebration of diversity.

Mr. Daniels reviewed the process and said they were disappointed with the original process and decided to re-launch the proposal. They made this decision because it was important to get it right and get a firm that understands the community. Mr. Daniels said he was very pleased with the quality of the proposals that came in. The review was done by a diverse seven member panel, including Ms. Smyth.

Mr. Daniels said that the Selection Committee through him and his office propose hiring Led By Us as the consultant leading the work to establish the Equity and Justice for All Commission.

Mr. Kelvin Ayala introduced the Led By Us team and gave an overview of their scope of service and fielded questions from the Committee members. He noted that this is about improving the quality of life for all residents and that Norwalk is poised to become a model city. Mr. Ayala said they look to listen, engage the residents and bridge the gap so they are meeting the needs of the constituents.

Mr. Roberts thanked Mr. Daniels and noted that as one who led the marches in the City of Norwalk, he feels like Led By Us is a group of amazing individuals. He said he is excited about this and that it means a lot. It was noted that Ms. Pryce is a Norwalk resident.

Mr. Sacchinelli joined the meeting at 7:22 p.m.

Mr. Burnett asked Mr. Ayala what he saw as Norwalk's biggest challenge. Mr. Ayala said they re-build trust in the community. He said they hear all good things from a political lense, but they have to re-establish commitment and trust and let people know that their voice matters. He added that Norwalk is ahead of the times.

Mr. Keegan said that Mr. Daniels has a big heart and Norwalk is luck to have him involved with this. He said this is a very impactful issue, noting that this is a big

undertaking. He asked Mr. Ayala how long before they can expect to see any results. Mr. Daniels explained that the RFP was intentionally bold. Led By Us is going to help find opportunities and stay the course. These are complex issues, but they are not new.

Mr. Daniels said that they are not doing this alone. Norwalk Acts is a thought partner and the new Superintendent brought in a nationally know equity consultant. He said that the hope is that Led By Us will be the umbrella to bring a unified strategy so all residents feel connected.

Mr. Ayala explained that their goal and objective is to establish the Equity and Justice for All Commission and get it up and running at the tail end of the contract. During the first quarter they will meet with Mr. Daniels, the staff and government officials and establish a relationship with local organizations, including faith based and non profits. They are going to connect with the people in the City and put that all together. He noted there are a lot of moving parts. They are going to select immediate wins.

Mr. Ayala said they should expect communications within the first six to eight weeks. They are looking at civic engagement quickly.

Ms. Johnson thanked everyone involved and said there was a lot of excitement around this along with a lot of questions. She said that some of her questions were answered today. Ms. Johnson said people want to be sure that all groups have a seat at the table. She asked if community members will be able to provide feedback. Mr. Ayala said they have a lot of work to do to come up with a framework and timeline. He said if you are a Norwalk resident, they want to hear from you. He said everyone will have a seat at the table, but if there is a group or organization they miss, he asked to have that brought to his attention. Mr. Ayala said they want to hear from everyone.

Ms. Pryce reviewed their strategies and said they are going to look at the plans the City already created. She said they identified 15 different groups and from those, she created sub-committees. She noted there are a lot of stakeholders. Ms. Johnson said she wants the process to be equitable; people care about this.

Ms. Revolus said she hoped this was being done with direct intention. She said this is an economic problem and this happens to Black people. She said this is her issue and it is important to be intentional and listen to Black people. She asked to not muddy the water and move forward with this.

Mr. Ayala said their team has no intention of staying with the RFP if they are coming in as a token consultant. They take their work very seriously. They do not have to play the political game. They are here to listen to the voices of the constituents of Norwalk. Mr. Ayala said he appreciates the concern because they know the problems and see it played throughout the country. He said they know what the problems are.

Mr. Ayala said a major component is outreach and community engagement to get the message out to the community.

A member of the team said they have a dynamic approach to getting the message out to the community, including offering information in different languages. She said they want to be sure to communicate regularly with a constant flow of information. They want to get into the neighborhoods and meet the residents face to face. Ms. Smyth said to Ms. Revolus that it is one thing to talk about the problem, but it is another to live it.

Mr. Keegan asked about the cost of the project. Mr. Daniels said they bid it out for \$150,000 - \$200,000 and as of this morning, the Fairfield County Community Foundation will invest \$50,000 toward this. He thanked Ms. James. They will also be asking the Board of Estimate for \$100,000 to support this project. Ms. Smyth said the funds will come from the contingency.

Mr. Roberts said he received about 20 e-mails asking that in light of all the killings, what have you done within your community. Ms. Pryce said Led By Us was created because they were not allowed at the table. They launched different initiatives; their work is around economics. They run 10 week entrepreneurial programs and concerts. The money they receive gets reinvested into the community. She said they get very intentional to identify the underserved and marginalized residents on how to sit on boards. Ms. Pryce said less than 15% of Black and Brown people sit on boards. They plan to launch this program in the late spring. She said their position is to bring solutions to the table.

Mr. Heuvelman said he was incredibly excited by this and wants to work to move it forward. He added that youth need to be brought to the table. All too often the people at the table are Woke. He asked how to reach out to the other side. Mr. Ayala said it is very difficult and they do not have all the answers. He said he calls that the Unicorn approach. He said they will be coming in to facilitate and guide difficult discussions. Mr. Ayala said there are some people who may feel a Diversity and Equality Commission is not needed or that systemic racism does not exist. He said he wants to bring everyone to the table. He added that some people are afraid of someone removing their culture and identity.

Mr. Ayala said it is difficult, but there is room for everyone to be involved. He said they can't be afraid to have hard conversations.

Ms. Revolus asked Mr. Ayala if they have a principle-based structure. He said they use a framework. He said the extreme sides will come together around principles.

Mr. Heuvelman said he was very excited by this and feels it will be positive for Norwalk.

Ms. Smyth said that with this approval tonight, they will embark on the most important work they are doing in the City. She thanked Mayor Rilling, Mr. Daniels, the Selection Committee and Led By Us.

Mr. Burnett said the language in the backup is different than what is on the agenda. He asked what they were voting on and said the motion does not indicate the length of the contract. Mr. Burnett was told this item was going to the Board of Estimate and Taxation for a special appropriation. Mr. Burnett said this motion should include that the funding will come out of a special appropriation.

- ** MR. ROBERTS MOVED TO AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY W. RILLING, TO EXECUTE AN AGREEMENT WITH LED BY US & ASSOCIATES FOR THE CONSULTANT FOR THE EQUITY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL COMMISSION FOR A TOTAL NOT TO EXCEED \$150,000 FOR ONE YEAR**
- ** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

6. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF REVISIONS TO ORDINANCE POSITION DESCRIPTION OF COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER AND REASSIGNMENT OF GRANTS COORDINATOR RESPONSIBILITIES.

- ** MS. REVOLUS MOVED TO APPROVE REVISIONS TO ORDINANCE POSITION DESCRIPTION OF COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER AND REASSIGNMENT OF GRANTS COORDINATOR RESPONSIBILITIES**

Mr. Burney reviewed the request to amend the position description for the Communications Manager. He explained that three years ago, creating the Communications Manager/Grants Coordinator position was the first act taken in the reorganization of the City's Administrative offices. He said the new position description carves out the Grants Coordinator responsibilities from this position. The Grant Coordinator responsibilities will be moved under Finance, by incorporating those responsibilities in an existing position. Mr. Burney said he is asking the Committee to approve the revised position description and move the Grants Coordinator function under Finance.

Ms. Smyth spoke in support of the revision. She said that Mr. Morgan has done an extraordinary job and has taken the initiative to elevate communications in the City of Norwalk. He has been working non-stop. Ms. Smyth said they need to talk about the Grants Coordinator position. She said Mr. Morgan is doing a great job, but he can't do it all. She said she wants to see engagement in the community with those who are not on social media.

Mr. Burnett said that when they looked at this position three years ago, they did not think there would be enough work for a full time Grant Coordinator and Communications Manager, but the position transformed itself. He asked who would handle the grant writing piece. In response to Mr. Burnett's question, Mr. Burney said this change will result in Mr. Morgan moving up to the next salary level. He said this is not a grant writing position; it is a grant coordination position. Each department has their own people who write grants. Mr. Burney said Mr. Morgan has been on top of the grant coordination opportunities. He said that in the short term, Mr. Morgan will continue to handle the grant coordination responsibilities until they are moved to someone else.

Mr. Sacchinelli said there is a need to expand the communications role. He said that he has concerns about the Grant Coordination side and asked if there will be a new job description. Mr. Burney said he will work with Mr. Dachowitz. He noted that the grant application process is working well and they have not missed any opportunities. He said that Mr. Morgan has been pursuing grants that fall within his area of responsibility and coordinating others.

Mr. Sacchinelli said this is an opportunity to re-visit the duties of the Grant Coordinator. Ms. Smyth said she had a narrative from Mr. Morgan about grants received, but not an actual list. There may be room to redefine what the Grant Coordinator does.

Ms. Johnson said she supported the need for a full time Communication position, but it would be a real value to have a Grants person. Mr. Burney said that Mr. Morgan is not going to give up his Grant Coordination responsibilities until a replacement is found. He said a new job description will be presented to the Committee.

Mr. Burnett said he was very supportive of the Communication Director position and more supportive of Mr. Morgan in that role. He said he is a key point of contact for the City of Norwalk. He said he did not know if this change was time sensitive, but asked if they could have the position description for this position as well as for the Grant Coordinator at the same time. He asked if there was a timing element to make a clear transition. Mr. Burney said they could not pursue the change in his responsibilities without this approval. In addition, Mr. Morgan has been doing a job and a half. If they move him to a director's position, that would increase his compensation. He has been doing the work for a long time and now is the time to do that. Ms. Smyth charged Mr. Burney and Mr. Dachowitz with completing the position description for the Grants Coordinator done as soon as possible.

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

Mr. Burnett asked if they could set a time parameter because it is not right to leave the Grant Coordinator responsibilities with Mr. Morgan. This needs to be tied up a little cleaner. Mr. Burney said Mr. Morgan nor the City is going to leave these responsibilities

hanging until they have someone else in place. He said he will talk to Mr. Dachowitz tomorrow and will get back to the Committee by the next Committee meeting. Ms. Johnson said that 30 days, with a set idea and actionable items would be great. She added that she did not want this process to be prolonged.

7. ADJOURN

**** MR. ROBERTS MOVED TO ADJOURN
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

There was no further business and the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 8:51 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemarie Lombardi
Telesco Secretarial Services

The next regular meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 21, 2021