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MEMO

AHRC B-1

To: Mayor and City Council
From: Brian Phillips, Assistant City Manager
Date: May 23, 2017
Subject: Municipal Equality Index Request

The Ames Human Relations Commission submitted the attached memo regarding the Municipal Equality Index to the City Council in February 2017. At the February 28, 2017 City Council meeting, the City Council directed that this memo be placed on the Council agenda when the Human Relations Commission delivered its annual report. Since the annual report is being discussed at the May 23rd City Council meeting, the memo from the Commission speaking to this Municipal Equality Index is attached.

To: Ames City Council

From: Ames Human Relations Commissioners

cc: Brian Phillips, Ames Assistant City Manager

Date: 2/23/2017

Re: Human Rights Campaign's Municipal Equality Index

In summer of 2016 the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) released their 2016 Municipal Equality Index (MEI) scores for cities across the country. Among the nine cities in Iowa surveyed, the City of Ames scored 68/100 points in the survey and was one of the lowest scoring cities. This survey provided the City with areas of improvement and serves as a roadmap to better the lives of LGBTQA+ people who live in and work for the City of Ames.

Over the last several months, Commissioners Joel Hochstein and Heidi Thompson have been working with representatives from Ames PFLAG, city and university employees, and citizens to review scores provided by the HRC related to the City of Ames. The recommendations below are a direct result of this collaboration. These recommendations are broken down into specific areas as identified in the MEI.

Section II. Municipality as Employer

Recommendation #1: We would request that Council refer to staff a directive to work with the city's health insurance provider, Wellmark, on ensuring that current insurance options provide for routine care that is gender-affirming. Examples include hormone replacement therapy, gender confirmation surgery, and other medically necessary care. Wellmark currently has a plan identified by the HRC as supportive of these benefits. That plan can be found [here](#) on the Wellmark website. We would request that this directive include an analysis of the above plan and its impact on employee health costs. Ultimately, we would recommend that this plan be added to city employee coverage.

It's worth noting that Cedar Rapids was the only city in Iowa that met the requirements in this area to receive full points. The action group reached out to Cedar Rapids to gather information regarding their ability to receive full points in this area. It was determined that the Cedar Rapids city healthcare plans would be changing on January 1, 2017 to include the above cited Wellmark plan. Cedar Rapids personnel reported that they did not expect to see any significant change in employee costs due to the addition of the plan.

Recommendation #2: We would request that Council refer to staff a directive to create a city non-discrimination ordinance that requires contractors to have inclusive non-discrimination policies that includes age, race, creed, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, religion or disability (mental or physical).

The MEI states that “cities who take fair workplaces seriously also require city contractors to have inclusive non-discrimination policies.” While the city currently uses the “Special Conditions Affirmative Action Compliance” form as a requirement for contracts over \$25,000, this policy document does not include sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. The action group believes that businesses, organizations, and events supported by any amount of city funding should have a non-discrimination policy that includes sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression among other social identities. While this may increase administrative processing by city staff, we believe this change would be an accurate reflection of the values of the City of Ames.

Recommendation #3: We would request that the Council refer to staff a directive that they research LGBTQA+ venues in which the City can post job postings in an effort to directly recruit LGBTQA+ employees. Once identified, job postings for all full-time openings should be posted in these venues.

III. Municipal Services & Programs

Recommendation #4: We would request that the Council refer to staff a directive that would research and implement the creation of an Equity Advisor as a permanent, full time staff member. This Equity Advisor would be responsible for analyzing city services and policies to ensure equity. This Advisor would serve as a contact person for various targeted populations that are protected from discriminatory practices as outlined in Section 14 of the Ames Municipal Code. It is worth noting that most cities larger and some close to the same population size as Ames in Iowa have a similar full-time position as a part of city staff.

While the MEI only has points for an “LGBTQ Liaison in the Mayor’s Office,” conversation by commissioners indicated concern for having a liaison for only one group and not for others. This recommendation is reflective of the commission’s conversation for a position that can advocate for and include many diverse populations.

IV. Law Enforcement

Recommendation #5: We would request that the Council refer to the Chief of Police a directive to identify a LGBTQ+ Police Liaison. Conversation at the commission again was directed around including other marginalized populations in this type of liaison activity. It may be advantageous of the Ames Police Department to create a liaison program similar to one in its infancy at Iowa State University and partner with ISU PD staff on training and other outreach initiatives. Among the cities surveyed by the MEI four other cities (Cedar Rapids, Davenport, Des Moines, and Iowa City) received full credit in this area. Ames Police Department should consider outreaching to these departments to see how they have outreached and/or created liaison programs/task forces related to LGBTQA+ people and other marginalized populations.

V. Relationship with LGBTQ Community

Recommendation #6: We would request that the Mayor, City Council, and other city organizations and departments be more visible in supporting the LGBTQ+ community. Examples of the types of support could include a Pride Month designation by the Mayor/Council in June (typically celebrated as Pride Month across the country), proclamations or public

statements supporting LGBTQA+ protections in state law, public statements to state and national legislators when bills discriminating against LGBTQA+ people are introduced, etc. These public, visible, and intentional statements inform citizens of the support they receive by their elected local leaders and provides a sense of inclusion and belonging. According to the HRC, “four in 10 LGBTQ youth surveyed said the community in which they live is not accepting of LGBTQ people and 60% of the youth surveyed said they heard negative messages about being LGBTQ from elected leaders.” It is vital to provide all citizens with a sense of inclusion and belonging. It is especially important for marginalized communities of all types to be supported publicly, visibly, and intentionally by our elected leaders.

In closing, we believe that Ames is a good place for LGBTQA+ people to live, work, and go to school. We hope that the City Council will strongly consider the above recommendations and to continue to involve the local action group and the Commission in this work moving forward. We all have a role to play in the inclusion and sense of belonging of our citizens.

I. Non-Discrimination Laws

This category evaluates whether discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity is prohibited by the city, county, or state in areas of employment, housing, and public accommodations.

	STATE	COUNTY	CITY	AVAILABLE
Employment	5 5	0 0	5 5	5 5
Housing	5 5	0 0	5 5	5 5
Public Accommodations	5 5	0 0	5 5	5 5
SCORE	30 out of 30			

II. Municipality as Employer

By offering equivalent benefits and protections to LGBTQ employees, and by awarding contracts to fair-minded businesses, municipalities commit themselves to treating LGBTQ employees equally.

	CITY	AVAILABLE
Non-Discrimination in City Employment	6 6	6 6
Transgender-Inclusive Healthcare Benefits	0 0	6 6
City Contractor Non-Discrimination Ordinance	0 0	3 3
SCORE	12 out of 24	
BONUS Municipality is a Welcoming Place to Work	+0	+2

III. Municipal Services

This section assesses the efforts of the city to ensure LGBTQ constituents are included in city services and programs.

	STATE	COUNTY	CITY	AVAILABLE
Human Rights Commission	5 5		5 5	5 5
LGBTQ Liaison in the Mayor's Office			0 0	5 5
Enumerated Anti-Bullying School Policies	3 3	0 0	3 3	3 3
SCORE	11 out of 16			
BONUS Enforcement mechanism in Human Rights Commission	+2		+2	
BONUS City provides services to LGBTQ youth	+0		+2	
BONUS City provides services to LGBTQ homeless	+0		+2	
BONUS City provides services to LGBTQ elderly	+0		+2	
BONUS City provides services to people living with HIV/AIDS	+0		+2	
BONUS City provides services to the transgender community	+0		+2	

IV. Law Enforcement

Fair enforcement of the law includes responsible reporting of hate crimes and engaging with the LGBTQ community in a thoughtful and respectful way.

	CITY	AVAILABLE
LGBTQ Police Liaison or Task Force	0 0	10 10
Reported 2014 Hate Crimes Statistics to the FBI	12 12	12 12
SCORE	12 out of 22	

V. Relationship with the LGBTQ Community

This category measures the city leadership's commitment to fully include the LGBTQ community and to advocate for full equality.

	CITY	AVAILABLE
Leadership's Public Position on LGBTQ Equality	0 0	5 5
Leadership's Pro-Equality Legislative or Policy Efforts	1 1	3 3
SCORE	1 out of 8	
BONUS Openly LGBTQ elected or appointed municipal leaders	+0	+2
BONUS Cities are pro-equality despite restrictive state law	+0	+4

TOTAL SCORE 66 + TOTAL BONUS 2 = Final Score 68
CANNOT EXCEED 100

PTS FOR SEXUAL ORIENTATION — PTS FOR GENDER IDENTITY + BONUS PTS for criteria not accessible to all cities at this time.
FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT CITY SELECTION, CRITERIA OR THE MEI SCORING SYSTEM, PLEASE VISIT HRC.ORG/MEI.
All cities rated were provided their scorecard in advance of publication and given the opportunity to submit revisions. For feedback regarding a particular city's scorecard, please email mei@hrc.org.