

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL

AMES, IOWA

SEPTEMBER 14, 2022

The Special Meeting of the Ames City Council was called to order by Mayor John Haila at 3:06 p.m. on the 14th day of September, 2022 in the Water Treatment Plant Conference Room, 1800 East 13th Street. City Council Members present were Bronwyn Beatty-Hansen, Gloria Betcher, Amber Corrieri, Tim Gartin, Rachel Junck, and Anita Rollins. *Ex officio* Council Member Bryce Garman was absent. City Manager Steven Schainker, City Attorney Mark Lambert, Assistant City Manager Brian Phillips, Assistant City Manager Deb Schildroth, and Human Resources Director Bethany Ballou were also present.

COUNCIL TRAINING SESSION BY JOSHUA BARR – MITIGATING POTENTIAL HARM TO COMMUNITIES UTILIZING COMMUNITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT TOOLS IN THE POLICY & DECISION-MAKING PROCESS: Mayor Haila introduced Joshua Barr, of Raising the Barr, LLC. Mr. Barr described his background and expertise and asked the Mayor, Council Members, and City staff to briefly introduce themselves. Mr. Barr explained that the objectives for the training would be to: 1) Create context for understanding why we need to work to achieve racial equity, 2) Introduce the Racial Equity Assessment Toolkit, and 3) Provide an opportunity to practice using the toolkit.

Mr. Barr described several key turning points in U.S. History with respect to racial equity, including the Civil War, late 1960s, 2008 housing crisis, COVID-19 pandemic, U.S. Capitol insurrection, and the murder of George Floyd. He then illustrated the differences between inequality, equality, equity, and justice, and stated that justice was addressing the system to ensure equal access to both tools and opportunities.

The presentation turned to the demographics of the state of Iowa, with Mr. Barr describing the diversity of Iowa as compared to the rest of the nation, and the projected growth of the state's population from different racial groups based on birthrates. There is a cycle of populations leaving where there is no investment by the community, which causes more populations to leave.

Mr. Barr indicated that change at one end of the spectrum is individual-level mitigation. These individual acts are downstream change and have limited effects. Institutional change, which uses existing tools in ways that affect outcomes, is mid-stream change. Structural change is upstream change, which transforms systems.

The meeting recessed at 4:08 p.m. and resumed at 4:16 p.m.

Mr. Barr explained that people naturally default to what they believe should be right, even when presented with facts to the contrary. He emphasized that one purpose of the racial equity tools is to ensure that we consider what might be in our "blind spots." The six purposes of equity assessment tools are: 1) Identify issues and barriers to goals and minimize them, 2) Identify any potential blind spots or biases, 3) Intentionally seek to decrease unintended outcomes, 4) Increase consciousness and awareness, 5) Get input from the community, and 6) Create conditions where all people in the community have the opportunity to thrive.

The presentation turned to when equity toolkits should be used. Mr. Barr suggested they should be used: 1) When there are certain community goals to be met, 2) When we know or suspect there is a problem, 3) When we want to see if we have a problem, and 4) When we want to analyze a new service, policy, procedure, or budget decision.

Mr. Barr asked the City Council to write down issues they want to address in the community. He read aloud a selection of the issues submitted. There were several submissions each related to housing, mental health, transit, climate change, economic equity, and feedback from residents.

Mr. Barr then turned to the three types of equity tools. The first tool he introduced is “Targeted Universalism.” The first step in this tool is to define a universal goal. The second step is to measure how the overall population fares relative to the universal goal. Then, the performance of population segments relative to the universal goal is measured. Step four is to understand how structures and other factors support or impede group progress relative to the universal goal. Finally, targeted strategies can be implemented to allow each group to achieve the universal goal based on their need and circumstances. Mr. Barr compared this process to the NFL draft, where the team that needs to most help is the team that gets the most desired talent in the following year, to level the playing field.

City Manager Schainker indicated that one of the challenges with implementation is that there may not always be data measuring the performance of different segments of the population. Mr. Barr suggested that Iowa State University students may be a useful resource to research such data. Council Member Betcher indicated that her impression was that the answer to the inequity identified in step four is often money. This is a perennial challenge to addressing issues we might face in the community.

The second model presented by Mr. Barr is “Results-Based Accountability.” This model starts with the end in mind by asking: “What conditions do we want for our community?” After that question is answered, you must ask:

- How would you measure if you are better off?
- How can you measure the quality and quantity of your work?
- How are you doing regarding these measures (quantitative and qualitative trends)?
- Who are the partners and what are their roles?
- What works (best practices, processes, and/or policies)?
- What do you propose to do, in what timeline, and in what budget?

Mr. Barr explained that racial equity tools pay attention to race and ethnicity while analyzing problems, looking for solutions and defining success. The tools analyze data and information about race and ethnicity, understand disparities and why they exist, look at problems and their root causes from a structural standpoint. The tools also shed light on racial dynamics that shape social, economic, and political structures. They also point to intersectionality.

Mr. Barr stated the rationale behind a focus on race as opposed to other aspects of diversity as a key driver of equity issues. He indicated that race has been a principal force in building, sustaining, and shifting social and political structures in the United States.

The Council Members discussed the challenges they have experienced in engaging with the public, and what they perceive has led to those challenges. Mr. Barr suggested it may be helpful to have a list of individuals in the City organization who are ambassadors to specific populations or communities. It is important to ask who is not in the room and identify how to connect with them. Mr. Barr noted that everyone wants to be seen, heard, and acknowledged. This is a way to build back trust and increase engagement.

Mr. Barr explained the importance of having all the components to manage complex change, which are: vision, skills, incentives, resources, and an action plan. Council Member Betcher mentioned that her impression from the training is that each of the tools described requires engaging and asking the community. Council Member Junck stated that she wondered how many aspects of the current Municipal Code have been adopted without considering equity.

The meeting recessed at 6:07 p.m. and resumed at 6:29 p.m.

COUNCIL GOAL UPDATE SESSION: Mr. Schainker reviewed the status of the goals adopted in January 2022 and emphasized that staff is not requesting to add new goals.

Council Member Gartin asked whether this would be a good time to propose a program to fund rehabilitation projects in low- and moderate-income homes. Mr. Schainker responded that this proposal would be best brought up again during the Council's Budget Guidelines session in late November. Council Member Corrieri indicated she would discuss this issue with the Story County Trust Fund and would suggest a proposal to partner with the City should be sent by the Trust Fund to the City Council.

Mayor Haila inquired about the status of the Baker Subdivision. Moved by Gartin, seconded by Corrieri, to direct staff to provide an update to City Council on Baker Subdivision with regard to the development of single-family homes.

Vote on motion 6-0. Motion declared carried.

Mr. Schainker reviewed the progress towards completion of the Climate Action Plan tasks. Council Member Gartin asked if there was interest in revisiting the list of initiatives pertaining to greenhouse gas reduction he had sent to the Council several months ago.

Mr. Schainker asked if the Council wished to review how well members have interacted with one another in the past year.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting adjourned at 7:52 p.m.

Brian C. Phillips, Assistant City Manager

John A. Haila, Mayor

Renee Hall, City Clerk