



Takoma Park City Council Meeting – April 10, 2019 Agenda Item 2

Report

Report on “What’s My Bias” Training

Recommended Council Action

Hear the report.

Context with Key Issues

The City contracted with Annie Mozer, a trained facilitator with SEED (Seeking Equity and Educational Diversity) and executive director of the local non-profit group What’s My Bias, Inc., to conduct a series of workshops for members of City committees and other residents.

Accompanying Ms. Mozer for the report will be Jennifer Olivia and Cherwanta Oliver, co-facilitators of the workshops.

Council Priority

- A Livable Community for All
- Community Development for an Improved and Equitable Quality of Life

Environmental Considerations

N/A

Fiscal Considerations

The cost for the workshop series was \$5,450.

Racial Equity Considerations

The workshops were arranged to educate a cohort of City committee members and other residents as part of the City’s racial equity efforts.

Attachments and Links

What’s My Bias, Inc. Report

What's My Bias, Inc. report to Takoma Park City Council

April 10, 2019

Annie Mozer, Executive Director and Facilitator

Jennifer Oliva and Cherwanda Oliver, co-facilitators

whatsmybias@gmail.com

Thank you to the City Council for supporting the work and What's My Bias. Thank you also to Mayor Stewart, and Councilpersons Kostiuk and DyBalla for joining in the workshops. Your presence, contributions and perspectives were deeply appreciated.

Overall explanation:

What's my Bias organizes workshops that challenge us to confront our own biases and privileges and to make changes both personally and community-wide. At the workshops we engage in meaningful exchanges, often prompted by videos or readings, about equity, inclusion, diversity and social justice. Everyone has a chance to talk about personal experiences and discuss how we may fall short of our goals, despite our good intentions. This can be a first critical step to making positive changes in policies, programs and other facets of our community. Our goal is that participants will gain skills and self-awareness and be able to connect with other community members to create a network of difference-makers.

Our most recent workshop, a group of 17 participants and 3 facilitators, had representatives from the following groups:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">● City Council● CHEER● MLK Committee● Tree Commission● Committee on the Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Safe Roadways Committee● Takoma Foundation● City's Housing and Economic Development Department● Youth Council
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Nuclear Free committee ● Friends of the Recreation Center ● Recreation Committee ● Community Vision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lunch and Learn ● Board of Elections ● Racial Equity Working Group ● Historic Takoma
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We met on six different mornings for 3 hours each time and added two evening events to view movies on related topics. In addition, we held an optional wrap-up meeting to discuss next steps - many of the people who attended that meeting are now part of the Racial Equity Working Group.

We adapted some of our exercises to include discussions about the racial and class inequities of the Heffner Center and the Community Kitchen. Interestingly, examples of **white fragility** surfaced in these discussions - for example, “there must be more to the story,” “there must be other options, or “wasn’t there already a park there?” White fragility is a term coined by the white anti-racist Dr. Robin DiAngelo that describes the defensive reactions of white people when presented with examples of (often personal) bias and prejudice.

We also heard from some members of our group that, regardless of their race, they feel unwelcome walking in Takoma Park neighborhoods that don’t reflect their own racial identity.

Many positives came out of the workshops. Several participants have already told me of changes they plan to make, both personal and community-wide. One man said he is now acutely aware of using language to be respectful of various gender identities. Others said they want to work and lobby on behalf of more programs for low-income communities and other marginalized groups.

Overall, we felt our workshops were a success. We are grateful for the opportunity to serve the City in this capacity and would welcome a chance to do it again.