

June 24th, 2021

Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion Final Report

Thank you to the council and the Mayor for forming this Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion. Thank you, also to our committee members for their time and thoughtful work. Careful consideration has gone into the creation of this report. We met with the Chief of the Pitman Police Department, the Deputy Chief of the Pitman Police Department, the Head of Public Works, the Town Clerk, the Vice Chair of the Memorabilia committee, the Director of Curriculum for the District, and town business owners. Additionally, we conducted a survey of residents and Public Works employees. We encourage the council and Mayor to work towards the goals and standards outlined in this report. We hope that this document may serve as a blueprint for future progress.
Lauren Canna, Chair

Part One: Borough Staff, Commercial District, Education, Policing, Public Image

Borough Staff

We found that the borough staff training protocols are well-intentioned, if somewhat boilerplate. There is room for these protocols to conform with the times.

We recommend:

- The Borough should employ a Human Resources professional to be involved in the upcoming creation of a new employee manual.
- The Borough should institute more robust training in diversity and inclusion for all borough employees who interact with the public as representatives of our town. This would include sensitivity and bias training around interactions with POC and LGBTQ members of the community.
- The Borough should employ ASL interpreters for public town events.

Commercial District

Informal observation shows that considerable improvements can be made to public areas. Over 50% of buildings in the commercial zone are not wheelchair accessible. Many businesses would require major reconstruction to bring them into compliance. We recommend:

- The Borough should conduct a professional review of all public buildings, parks and recreational facilities, commercial district access points, and storefronts for ADA compliance.

- The Economic Development Council should develop a plan with the Chamber of Commerce to research grants that will help building owners bring their stores into compliance over time.
- The Borough should support a goal of total ADA compliance within the commercial district.
- The Borough should encourage ADA compliance by collaborating with the zoning/construction officer and historical commission to gradually tighten 'grandfathering' loopholes for building owners in the commercial zone.

Education

Pitman Public School Administration is being proactive in developing a curriculum that integrates diversity and inclusion.

We recommend:

- The Borough should advocate with the Board of Education, the Superintendent, and school principals for the continued development and expansion of curriculum that integrates diversity and inclusion.
- The Borough should advocate for sensitivity training for athletic staff to combat systemic insensitivity when engaging with rival teams from other districts.
- The Borough should advocate with the Board of Education, the Superintendent, and school principals for the adoption of a policy that calls for greater racial and ethnic diversity among the staff.
- The Borough should advocate for greater emphasis on sportsmanship, civic-mindedness, and character development for area youth. We recommend encouraging participation from the guidance staff, teachers, athletic directors, school and community leaders.

Policing

The Committee is grateful to the Pitman Police Department (PPD) for being candid and working with the Committee and looks forward to the great strides the Department is making in pursuing their accreditations that they discussed during the interview. The Committee recognizes that the department has continual opportunities to improve interactions with non-white citizens. The current Chief and Deputy Chief are committed to advanced training of all officers from the New Jersey Crisis Intervention Team to help

guide interactions between law enforcement and those living with a mental illness along with training in diversity, equity, and inclusion. As a result, the Committee has recommended the following goals:

- The Borough should support PPD in achieving a 25% non-white male police force of fully-qualified officers by 2031. The department should aim for diversity in race, gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation.
- The Borough should support all officers in receiving Crisis Intervention Training. All officers should also receive regular training in inherent bias, microaggressions, and diversity, equity, and inclusion. While training can be funded with forfeiture funds, the Borough should support financing such training with other funds and help the Department secure grants if necessary.
- The Borough should work with the PPD in developing a record keeping system to track checkpoint stops even when no ticket or complaint is issued. The record should include race, gender, date, and reason for stop. (This should be checked with the County Prosecutor's Office and the Attorney General's Office along with the Borough Solicitor for potential Open Public Records Act and privacy issues. There are already several requirements for the police to have a checkpoint including approval by a superior officer, prior advertising of the checkpoint, adequate signage for the checkpoint, specific procedures for the officers at the checkpoint, and pre-approval by the Prosecutor's Office.).
- The Borough should not hire police officers who have been fired from another department, or who have resigned with a disciplinary record, to avoid perpetuating the protection of police officers with a history of incidents
- The Borough should make a concerted effort to sponsor recruits at the Police Academy thus widening the pool of prospective officers to include candidates who cannot self-finance their training.

Public Image

We strongly recommend the commission of a new town seal. We respect the previous seals - both the informal slogans and images used in the late 19th century to promote the town's growth and construction and the formal seal created for the town's 50th anniversary in 1955. However, we have heard from residents through the survey we conducted that a change is overdue. The utmost care should be taken in its commission.

To that end, we recommend:

- This commission must be done by a professional artist who understands symbolism as well as our town's history.
- The commission should not be left to the unpredictability of a public submission contest.
- The commission should not be issued to a student considering the potential political backlash that a change in symbols can create.
- This commission should promote the town's natural features, a slogan, or an image that projects a future ideal.

The Borough should consult with public relations professionals in an ongoing effort to promote and brand the town in a way that encourages people of color - and all people - to visit, travel through, and move to Pitman.

To that end, we recommend:

- Signage that promotes DIE-Comm standards, including efforts to quell or circumvent signage or messaging that doesn't promote DIE-Comm standards.
- Web and print images that promote DIE-Comm standards and signify an active effort to promote future diversity.
- The Borough should continue to support inclusive efforts such as commemorative months, pride events, ethnic and culturally diverse events.
- The Borough should include the PPD in their public relations efforts

Part Two: Creation of a Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity Committee (*DIEComm*)

Membership

This committee should be comprised of a council liaison and volunteer committee members approved by council who serve in an ongoing way. The DIEComm chair would guide and manage the committee.

DIEComm would uphold certain universal community standards (DIE-standards).

The expectation that public leaders, regardless of political party, will strive to:

- Promote and not impede the rights of all people.

- Ensure and not obstruct access to public places, events, and positions of service.
- Recognize and protect the inherent worth and dignity for people of all races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, gender identities, national backgrounds, languages, income levels, and abilities.

DIE-Comm Responsibilities:

- Promoting DIE-standards of religious diversity, tolerance, and inclusion through regular outreach with the council of churches, church leadership, and clergy.
- Promoting DIE-standards of racial and ethnic diversity in our community through regular engagement with realtors to combat potential bias and subtle steering practices.
- Promoting DIE-standards of celebrating diverse populations according to nationally-recognized commemorative months through media and community events.
- Promoting DIE-related curriculum and programming by meeting yearly with representatives from the educational administration and library staff.
- Engaging with the Board of Education liaison to advocate for DIE-standards in hiring practices.
- Engaging with the Personnel liaison to promote DIE-standards in hiring, employee relations, and EEO compliance, including regular consultation with a state EEO/AA officer.
- Engaging with the Public Events liaison to serve as an ongoing point of contact to advocate for DIE-standards for town events.
- Engaging with the Memorabilia liaison to oversee the creation and addition of a museum exhibition that educates on the history of the town's founding regarding its role in racial exclusivity.
- Engaging with the Chamber of Commerce liaison to promote DIE-standards and ongoing ADA compliance efforts.

- Engaging with the PPD to audit community interactions in an effort to promote DIE-standards.
- Conducting public and employee surveys in an ongoing way to determine public opinion and employee satisfaction regarding DIE-standards.
- Steering bold public relations efforts to promote Pitman as a welcoming and inclusive town, including the funding and commission of the new town seal, ongoing digital media campaigns, signage, and advertising.