

City of Concord United Committee

February 11, 2021

Whereas:

The City of Concord is strongest when all persons in our community have equitable access to economic opportunity, hiring and promotion, affordable housing, public safety, public transportation, sidewalk and road connectivity, parks and greenways, broadband and digital infrastructure, and more.

The residents of the City of Concord are now 66% White, 19% African-American/Black, 12% Latino/Hispanic, 5% Asian, and Native American (numbers are rounded up). Our diversity also extends beyond race to include gender, wealth, national origin, and other identifying characteristics. Our Cabarrus County public-school students are even more diverse: 49% White, 21% Black, 19% Hispanic, and 6% Asian.

Our City offers all its services and provides opportunities to all people without regard to race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or age. The City of Concord through its policies and actions has built bridges across racial lines and is significantly more inclusive than a generation ago.

The year 2020-2021, however, has highlighted historic disparities between some segments of our community. Many persons of color in our community have especially struggled against systems that have not been and are not now level for all people. The pandemic and economic crisis have exacerbated these differences.

The City of Concord has the potential to reduce racial inequities throughout Concord. Being a just community includes review of possibly existing practices, actions, procedures, enforcement of existing City policies, and possibly changing policies and practices with the aim of achieving more equitable outcomes for all people in our City.

The ultimate vision is for the City of Concord to improve the quality of life over which it has responsibility that enables every segment of our population irregardless of race in our City to be stronger.

Therefore, be it resolved:

Concord United Committee for Racial Equity

The Concord City Council shall establish a City of Concord United Committee with a focus on racial inequities within the City of Concord.

While the first focus of the Committee is on racial inequities in Concord, the Committee may also discover other inequities, such as gender, religion, or sexual orientation, which it may wish to explore. The work will be organic; the Committee will grow into understanding other inequities in our community.

The Committee may also be asked to join other wider conversations about inequities in our County among many organizations. As a catalyst for other municipalities, the City can help determine where this future work is housed. Before moving in such directions, however, the Committee should first consult with the Council to determine if and how to proceed with a broader agenda with more persons.

The Committee will be a public body under NC General Statute and bound by open meeting laws. They cannot have illegal meetings. Minutes must be taken at each meeting. Their meetings must provide notice to the media and any other person(s) who request to be notified when a meeting is to be held.

This Committee will consist of diverse persons in our community who are:

- civil (all speak openly and honestly),
- democratic (all voices are heard and all listen),
- and moral (all affirm the sacred worth of all people).

Goal

The goal of the Committee is to hear many voices, reflect on ways to respond to concerns, and offer potential opportunities for the City of Concord to address racial inequities.

The Committee shall first focus on areas that the City of Concord itself has authority over, such as the City's departments and various activities. While many people also seek racial equity in our health care, schools, judicial systems, and other critical areas, ultimately the City itself has only general moral responsibility over these institutions and other services.

The Committee will set its own agenda but must focus on those areas where the City has the responsibility to move the City forward.

To ensure the above, the first meetings of the Committee will include an "educational component" helping the Committee understand its role as a public body. This training may include presentations from the Mayor, City Manager, City Attorney, the NC School of Government, the NC League of Municipalities Racial Equity task force, and others. City staff may also share with the Committee where the City is now working to address racial inequities.

The Committee's methodology is to listen to our community and compile observations, best practices, and facts about the current realities in our City regarding race that may not be otherwise widely apparent. The Committee and our citizens should speak the truth and seek reconciliation.

The Committee is encouraged to visit with existing persons and groups within our City who have already studied these issues and bring context and history to the work. At the discretion of the Committee, the Committee may also receive training and resources about these issues.

Robust, honest, and challenging conversations will indicate success. The Committee will research, poll, and conduct public forums to listen to what the citizens of our City believe would promote equity within the City of Concord. They may also discover positive, measurable changes that may be offered.

This work may include data collection in the City's rules, organization, budgets, and departments that may reveal inequities. With the support of the Mayor and Council, the City Manager and staff at his direction will assist with that work.

The Committee shall share with the Concord City Council and our whole community written summaries of their findings. The Committee will work closely with the City's public relations staff to provide timely and accurate communication about the Committee's work.

In addition, the Committee may offer to the City Council possible recommendations for future actions. Such potential recommendations shall not be official positions of the City but reflect the perspective of the Committee itself.

The Concord City Council shall not be under any obligation to enact any recommendations, but with further community conversations may take action.

Membership

The Committee shall include persons from differing communities, with a special focus on African-Americans/Blacks, Hispanics/Latino, Asians, and Native Americans.

All members shall be residents, workers, or property owners within the City of Concord.

At least half of the Committee members shall be persons of color.

Two members may be members of the Concord Youth Council.

Members shall have three-year appointments following initial appointments. At the discretion of the Council, there may be multiple terms of service. The City Council will appoint new members when openings are available. The terms of office may be staggered. One-third of initial appointments will be for 1 year, one-third of initial appointments will be for 2 years, and the one-third of initial appointments will be for 3 years. Subsequent reappointments or appointments will be for 3 years to keep the Committee with staggered appointments. The Council-appointing committee will make every effort to keep at least half of the Committee members represented by persons of color.

At the end of each term, the City Council shall have the right to continue the Committee or not, as well as reappoint current members or add new members.

Persons throughout Concord may nominate persons to serve. All nominations are due by March 30, 2021.

Applications shall be submitted to the City Clerk on the Council's standard application form for committee/commission appointments.

Nominations shall be received by a committee of three Council members named by the City Council, who will then make recommendations to the entire City Council for election.

Based on the above nominations, the City Council at the May 2021 Council meeting shall appoint up to 24 persons, including two or more co-chairs, to serve. The Council may initially appoint 12-15 members, and then add additional members through future nominations.

No member of the Committee shall be paid for their work.

No elected officials of the City shall serve.

All members shall serve with voice and vote.

Meetings

The first meeting will be within the first sixty days of the election of the Committee.

All meetings must observe the North Carolina Open Meeting laws. All meetings shall be open to any member of the public who wishes to attend. In the interest of transparency, the Committee shall not meet in closed session under any circumstances.

The Committee shall appoint one member to act as secretary. The secretary shall keep full and accurate minutes of all official meetings. Such minutes may be in written form or, at the option of the Committee, may be in the form of sound or video and sound recordings. The minutes shall be public records in accordance with the North Carolina Public Records Act.

During this time of pandemic, the Committee must follow any restrictions set forth by the Governor or by City Council regarding mass gathering limitations, the wearing of masks, and other restrictions.

The initial work and first report shall be completed within the first year. Again, the Committee will work with the City's public relations staff to share this information.

Administrative Support

The City Manager shall name a city staff person to facilitate the Committee's meetings, budgeting, and other administrative responsibilities.

The Committee will work only through the City staff liaison assigned to them. Individual Committee members cannot individually reach out to staff to gather information. All requests for information from the Committee must flow through the staff liaison.

Any documents the Committee seeks can only be publicly-available documents and not documents deemed confidential by NC General Statutes.

Budget

Based on need, the City of Concord, at the direction of the City Council, may support the work of the Committee with funds necessary for reasonable expenses. If additional monies are needed, the Committee may apply to the City Council.