



DATE: November 12, 2021
TO: Mayor and Village Board
FROM: Randy Recklaus, Village Manager
SUBJECT: Community Outreach Taskforce Concept

Background:

Last May, the Village Board received an update from Staff on the Village's DEI efforts. One of the items that was discussed was the development of a Community DEI Taskforce. The Board directed Staff to develop a taskforce concept that would not be completely Village driven, but rather incorporate different entities within the community, including the Village. Since that time, Staff has been considering options and have had some very preliminary discussions with some of our community partners on what kind of workgroup they might be willing to participate in and what its role might be.

I have prepared an outline of a two-phase concept for a possible taskforce concept. While no formal approvals or discussions have occurred, this concept has been discussed informally with my counterparts at School Districts 214, 21, 23, 24, the Park District and the Library.

Proposed Concept Discussion and Outline:

One of the first items that must be tackled for the creation of any body, is defining what its purpose is and is not. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is a wide-ranging topic that can include celebrations of culture, ensuring equal access to services and community decision making, and social justice initiatives among others factors. It would obviously be difficult to have a small group of individuals take on such a wide range of activities, particularly when the various members may have very different priorities for each. When looking at Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, it can be argued that *Diversity* is the state of having various distinct parts of a larger

system, *Equity* is the state of a system being fair and impartial despite the existence of diversity, and *Inclusion* is the action verb that can be used to ensure equity in a diverse system. Of the three concepts, Staff believes that *Inclusion* is the necessary first step, and likely the most straight forward, to tackle initially. If thorough, meaningful, and pro-active inclusion can take place, then better discussions and decisions can be made regarding diversity and equity in the future within the community as a whole. For that reason, Staff believe the focus of this taskforce should be on greater outreach and inclusion- at least initially. Here is a working purpose statement for a taskforce:

To ensure all residents of Arlington Heights have equal access to all community services, government decision making, opportunities, and information. To identify and break down identified barriers to equal access. To leverage the unique knowledge, networks, and capabilities of each taskforce member to benefit the community as a whole. To acknowledge, promote, and engage in non-traditional methods to ensure equal access for all residents. To identify and partner with other organizations that can help increase equal access within Arlington Heights.

So, the next question is: who should be represented on such a taskforce and how should members be chosen? This is one of the most difficult decisions to be made in this process. For this reason, Staff believes there should be a two-step process for starting and then growing the taskforce.

Phase 1: Establishment of the Core Group:

- The Core membership group shall be initially made up of a Communications/Outreach staff member from each local government in Arlington Heights (School Districts, Park District, Library, and Village). Other representatives of each organization may be brought on for small group work or presentations on best practices related to outreach.
- The Core Group will identify groups of individuals, and geographic areas that they have found are currently underserved and for which barriers to service exist.
- The Core Group members will share unique, non-traditional, outreach practices that have been successfully used by their agency to break down barriers and enhance service, access, communication, etc. for specific underserved or represented groups that can be utilized by other member organizations.
- The Core Group will identify new joint opportunities for shared services, outreach, and communication utilizing the unique capabilities of each agency.

- Each agency will incorporate best practices that it learns from the other agencies and connect with new underserved populations that have been identified.
- After establishing itself over the first several months, the Core Group will identify other governmental or non-governmental partner organizations or individuals that may be appropriate to become members of and/or work with the Taskforce in some capacity.
- The format and method of expansion of the taskforce will have be discussed at that time.

Phase 2: Broader Community Outreach Taskforce:

- Once formed, this broader taskforce will consist not only of Core Group members but also invited representatives of various non-governmental or governmental entities who have unique capabilities, networks, or access to increase communication between various underserved populations within the community and local government agencies.
- This group will host community listening sessions, discuss new strategies for outreach, and work together on joint projects in the furtherance of overall goals of the Taskforce.
- The Core Group may continue to operate on specific initiatives independent of the Broader Taskforce even after it is established.

Next Steps:

I would like to get feedback from the Village Board on this concept and understand if you would like me to continue working with our community partners on its development. As this is not merely a Village project, finding consensus with other agencies will be necessary. However, before I spend more time on the project, I would like to make sure that the Village Board supports it and that it meets the Board's goals in this area.

Please let me know your thoughts on the concept. I know this is an important component of the Village's DEI priorities, and Board support is crucial at this stage.

CC: Department Directors, Avis Meade