

Racial Equity Task Force Amherst -- Input on Performance Objectives for the Town Manager

- **The Town Manager goals for FY21 document lists Policy Goals and Management Goals.** Rather than relegating **Race and Equity** to one issue area, weaving the lens of racial equity and social justice into every policy and management goal would provide a starting point for a substantive **inclusion of BIPOC residents**, as well as those of other marginalized groups, into Town Management and Governance.
 - **This entails asking how the Climate Action, Community Health and Safety, Economic Vitality, Major Capital Investments, Housing Affordability, and Racial Equity and Social Justice goals are informed by what the data--both qualitative and Council quantitative--in addition to resident testimony about the experiences, assets, and needs of BIPOC and vulnerable residents of Amherst for every goal area.**
- Such a revision could begin by using existing sources, both individual and institutional. Local and regional agencies have already conducted interviews with Amherst residents, as well as documented some of our experiences, assets, and needs. At this stage, **committing in writing to an inclusion of qualitative and quantitative data about BIPOC residents and seeking to answer the question of how each policy area will address these findings would suffice. *Let's not allow perfectionism to become the enemy of progress.***
- The specifics of the **Racial Equity and Social Justice Goal** should include:
 - The formation of a Council of BIPOC Residents with the budget and authority to hold public meetings and invite the participation of BIPOC residents from all walks of life in a format that includes people of all socio-economic and educational strata and of all abilities, with support for language interpretation, transportation, and child care.
 - The participation of Council Members and the Town Manager in anti-bias and anti-racism training provided by a third party selected in a transparent manner that follows MGL on contracting and which includes a majority of Council BIPOC residents on the contract review committee.
 - The participation of Council Members and the Town Manager in meetings with the Council of BIPOC Residents with the goal of examining racial inequities and injustices via both qualitative and quantitative data and through facilitated dialogue and testimony. Truth precedes Reconciliation and the meeting minutes of the August 5th GOL meeting provide ample evidence of the need for anti-racism/anti-bias training and for a process of learning about the experiences of many Amherst residents.
 - Once this foundational work has advanced, the Council of BIPOC Residents oversees funding for youth programming in the short-term, and planning for a Cultural Center in the medium term.
 - The Council of BIPOC Residents will pursue other specific programming ideas that have already been proposed.
 - The Goal of Community Health and Safety should be expanded to include Re-shaping the culture of Policing and a commitment to shifting funding from the Town budget away from policing in a manner that not only addresses social issues but that ensures anti-racism training and community dialogues continue, including the creation of a Civilian Review Board and the ability to highlight instances of differential treatment and enforcement.
- Each policy goal area should include a concrete action that both educates residents on the goal area and makes public participation more accessible in each goal area.
- **The Town Manager goals for FY21 document also lists Management Goals.** These are especially critical goals in which to weave in Racial Equity and Social Justice as they involve the day to day business of governance and create institutional barriers for the participation of BIPOC and other vulnerable residents. Each goal area should include a concrete action that both educates residents on the goal area and makes public participation more accessible in each goal area.

Racial Equity Task Force Amherst -- Input on Performance Objectives for the Town Manager

- The goal area of **Administration, Leadership, and Personnel Management** includes, “retaining, recruiting, and developing a highly qualified, diverse, and effective staff,” but no numerical goals are included and thus there is no way to measure the outcome. A baseline and a numerical goal are needed for this point, as well as qualitative data gleaned from exit interviews of BIPOC employees and an on-going safe way for employees to provide feedback.
- “**Multilingual/bilingual/bicultural**” should be added to the phrase, “highly qualified, diverse, and effective staff.”
- **Long-Term Vision Management** that does not include Racial Equity and Social Justice cannot yield the desired results of expanded participation in civic life and an enriched and just community life.
- The *Community Engagement goal* must weave in Racial Equity and Social Justice. How are BIPOC, speakers of languages other than English, people with various abilities, financial insecurity, varying documentation status, formerly incarcerated, housing insecurity, LGBTQ+ people, and other vulnerable communities empowered and supported in community participation and leadership?
- The **Relationship between the Town Council and many residents** is at a crossroads. There has been real damage done on the one hand, while communication has increased on the other hand. How does the Town Manager contribute to expanding rather than contracting local democracy and community participation? Council members proclaim their good intent yet we observe a number of failures to communicate with the public in a timely fashion that follows the spirit of The Open Meeting Law. Agendas and other documents must be improved for easier resident access and the Public Comment period must be expanded and prioritized to earlier in the agendas. The last-minute, haphazard, and occasionally unprofessional lack of preparation must stop. Finally, the tone that some Council members use in public recorded meetings has been caustic and even derisive. The Town Manager has a huge role to play in this area.
- Ultimately, in order to strategically elevate racial equity and social justice in the Town of Amherst's governance and administration, to help advance the agenda presented above, and to distribute the workload of the Town Manager, capacity must be expanded. Therefore, **we recommend the hiring of Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer**. Most large and complex organizations have such a job role, including many leading businesses and municipalities. Locally, our three largest employers all have a CDO in the upper echelons of their administrations. At UMass, Dr. Nefertiti Walker fulfills the role of [Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#). Dr. Norm Jones serves as Amherst College's [chief diversity and inclusion officer](#). The [Office for Diversity and Inclusion](#) at Hampshire College is led by two Co-Deans. The Worcester Chief Diversity Officer reports directly to the City Manager. ([Here](#) is the job description of the position). Framingham, a smaller municipality, also created a [CDO](#) position. The Town of Amherst needs to hire a CDO empowered to implement the agenda above, to develop a diversity and inclusion strategic plan, and to help guide the Town towards lasting inclusion and equity.