

MINUTES  
CULTIVATING CULTURES COMMITTEE  
(EQUITY AND INCLUSION ADVISORY COMMITTEE)  
Meeting of December 1, 2021  
TEAMS Meeting

**Members**

Stephanie Banner - Human Resources - ABSENT  
April Blathers - Veterans Benefits/Claims  
Leslie Busby-Amegashie - Veterans Benefits/Grants  
Larry Graves - Veterans Benefits/SAA  
Kevin Hampton - Veterans Museum  
Shantell Henderson - Veterans Benefits/VORP  
Russ Horton - Veterans Museum  
Jeff Hughes - Veterans Benefits/Cemeteries - ABSENT  
Jeanne Lind - Veterans Homes - ABSENT  
Patrick Meyer - Veterans Homes  
Shannon Miller - Public Affairs  
Matt Niehaus - Enterprise Services - ABSENT  
Kristy Smith - Veterans Benefits/Cemeteries  
Linda Reek - Veterans Homes – ABSENT  
Victoria Simonson - Human Resources - ABSENT  
Carla Vigue - Public Affairs - ABSENT  
Angela Zilliox - Human Resources – ABSENT

**Others Present (not all inclusive)**

No public participants

**WDVA Present**

1. Call to order, roll call

The meeting of the Cultivating Cultures Committee – Equity and Inclusion Advisory Committee was called to order by Russ Horton at 2:08pm. Roll was called and a quorum was present.

2. Certification of notice of meeting

The meeting was notified as being properly noticed.

3. Adoption of Meeting Minutes:

Russ Horton and Kevin Hampton shared the October 6<sup>th</sup> meeting minutes. No discussion was had. Shannon Miller moved to adopt the meeting minutes; Patrick Meyer seconded; motion passed by unanimous vote.

4. Bylaws Article III amendment:

a. Kristy moved to adopt the amendment as proposed at the previous meeting, and circulated via email. Shannon seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

5. Subcommittee chair reports:

Russ Horton informed the committee that these will be these reports will be the regular standing agenda items and thus subcommittee chairs should be prepared to report or, if unable to attend, designate someone from that sub-committee to report.

*Appreciation:* Russ Horton reported that there were two things that the subcommittee was looking into: 1) exploring methods to get the “catch a coworker” up and running again on the intranet site; 2) Looking into restarting the ‘Years of Service Appreciation’ program (multiples of 5 years of service). Kristy mentioned that the cemeteries are great examples of demonstrating a need for that recognition. Leslie mentioned that there used to be a plaque with 30 years or more of service that was hanging at Central Office in the past. Could we lower the threshold a few years to better reflect the current work force and trends?

*Diversity:* Larry Graves, Chair reported that he met with Angie Z in the end of November. Request is the same: would welcome a charge from OOS or CCC; Larry doesn’t feel it can just be his own agenda; needs help setting that tone and it should come from somewhere other than one single person; can’t change it alone. Leslie asked for clarification and Larry explained that the expectation was set that the charge for this sub-committee was to review policies and procedures for the Department and that needs to be directed – an individual employee can’t/shouldn’t just pick a random police/procedure and start critically evaluating it for diversity inclusion without direction from OOS or governing entity (such as CCC). Russ asked how can we help? Offered that the executive team can talk with OOS and asked if Larry would be willing to participate in that meeting. Russ will look into it and set that up. Leslie offered assistance as well.

*Involvement and Input:* Patrick Meyer, Chair reported that the subcommittee has met. There still is a need to figure out a way to approach employees with a survey to gauge how employees want to engage Department leadership. Perhaps other subcommittees would like to add to the survey. There is a feeling that employees are struggling with feeling like they’re being heard. As always, hoping for more employee involvement will help with that.

*Morale and Fun:* Shannon Miller, Chair reported that the Return to Work bingo went well. Yay! She reported that they will be doing a survey for all CCC to contribute to. Carla or Russ will send

that out. Other subcommittees can still contribute by December 8<sup>th</sup> (target date to send it out then before the holidays). Working on developing the Ugly Sweater photo contest and corresponding prize.

*Wellness:* No official subcommittee report. Larry was able to provide a brief description of some initiatives since he works with that committee as well. The Wellness Committee is working on sponsoring a wellness workshop to start in mid-January. Email will go out in December. It is put on by a DOR employee. 8 weeks on Thursdays over the lunch hour 45 minute sessions. Done via Teams.

6. Old Business:

*Increase employee participation:*

Larry asked Patrick if he could expand on ideas that have been floated around in that subcommittee. Patrick reiterated that they're looking for an opportunity to be more involved. We need to keep in mind that it's important to have a diversity of work location and type of work. He highlighted the challenges that still need working on for a solution – emphasizing that we want to accommodate the most comfortable ways for all to get involved. Russ was surprised to learn that one of the challenges is that not everyone in the Department has a computer workstation for their job. In regards to the survey, Patrick asked if it would be confidential and safe from reprisal. Leslie advocated that employees shouldn't be afraid to give an opinion and that message needs to come from Department leadership. It's been a problem for years. Shannon confirmed that the survey monkey will be anonymous – maybe the work location would be identified (King, CO, etc.), and that there should be a part about “if you'd like to join this committee feel free to email \_\_\_\_\_”. Leslie asked if there was some way for information/comments/etc. from employees could come to this committee and then on to OOS instead of straight to OOS; in order to assist with that reluctance due to fear of reprisal. Russ mentioned that he has talked with OOS and it's hard to balance to strive for anonymity but also allow leadership a chance to respond/follow-up to make improvements. Shannon mentioned an Ombudsman idea again. Perhaps one nominated by employees and not at SLT level. Patrick commented that Leadership teams change and the ombudsman needs to be trusted and willing. Russ posed that maybe an ombudsman could be shared with DOR? The executive committee will take this to OOS.

7. New Business:

*Return to Work Opportunities:*

Russ and Shannon mentioned that return to work event went well especially with many new employees attending. Shannon said that knowing which day most Central Office employees are in the office would be good in order to accommodate more of such events since we're still working in a hybrid model. Russ said that maybe each division could share that with OOS about their employees so that we can plan that. Patrick reminded the group that it really isn't an issue with the Cemeteries or Homes since everybody is there everyday. Shannon dropped off the call.

8. Public Input: None

9. Future Agenda items:

Under Old Business we should add the Survey questions, and we can remove the Employee Participation and Engagement item since that will be discussed in subcommittees and can be brought up there. In New Business we should add the survey results review.

10. Adjournment

Russ thanked everyone for meeting. A motion to adjourn at 2:53 by Leslie, Patrick seconded the motion. Motion carried on a unanimous vote.

Russell Horton, Chair