

City of Dover Human Relations Commission Strategic Plan 2015-2018

I. INTRODUCTION

The establishment, purpose, powers and duties of the City of Dover Human Relations Commission (hereinafter, “the Commission”) are provided for in Part II of the Dover, Delaware Code of Ordinances, Chapter 58-Human Relations Article II Human Relations Commission.

Broadly representative of racial, religious, gender and ethnic groups residing in Dover the nine volunteer members of the Commission are all residents of the City of Dover. They are appointed by the president of the Dover City Council, based upon recommendations from and subject to confirmation by the Council.

The Commission has begun a strategic planning process to better define its strategy, focus, and direction over the next three years: 2015-2018.

In developing the first phase of this planning process the Commission has organized its three-year long- term strategic objectives around the components of its mission and its commitment to competency, transparency, and public accountability.

II. MISSION

Committed to a philosophy of inclusion, intergroup cooperation and fair treatment, the City of Dover Human Relations Commission works to ensure that the City of Dover has and utilizes policies, programs, ordinances, organizational practices, specialized resources and appropriately trained employees to support diversityⁱ, inclusionⁱⁱ and cultural competencyⁱⁱⁱ in its organization and services.

Additionally, by involving all segments of the community, the Commission promotes an understanding and appreciation of the benefits of diversity, inclusion, and positive intergroup relations among residents of varying backgrounds in the city; and, advocates for an environment of fairness and respect.

The Commission works with the City Council and the City Administration and other community organizations to strengthen inter-group relationships and to eliminate discrimination; and, to anticipate, prepare for and resolve incidents of intergroup conflicts and disputes within the city.

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III. VISION

The Commission's vision is a city whose government, organizations, groups and individual citizens value diversity, inclusion, respect and trust.

IV. LONG-TERM OBJECTIVES

Mission component:

- A. Work to ensure that the City of Dover has and utilizes policies, programs, ordinances, organizational practices, specialized resources and appropriately trained employees to support diversity, inclusiveness and cultural competency in its organization and services.

Long-term Objectives

A.1 In cooperation with the City of Dover Manager and its Human Resources Department evaluate the current "state and climate of diversity and inclusion" and cultural competency within Dover's government organization, services and vendor relationships; and, make recommendations to the City Manager and the Dover City Council which identify policies and best organizational practices which support diversity, inclusion and cultural competency within city government, its services; and, vendor relationships.

A.2 Building on its partnership with the Dover Police Department, identify additional human relations approaches and lessons that can be integrated into the Dover Police Department's ongoing Community Relations strategy.

Mission Component:

- B. By involving all segments of the community, the Commission promotes an understanding and appreciation of the benefits of diversity, inclusion, and positive intergroup relations among residents of varying backgrounds in the city; and, advocates for an environment of fairness and respect.

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Long-term Objectives

B.1 Assess how the community of Dover is organized and identify organizations, churches, fraternities, sororities and other organizations with whom the DHRC should establish partnerships; and, to enter into agreements with these organizations to more effectively carry out its mission.

B.2 Provide a report to the Dover City Council and to the public which analyzes the current “state and climate of diversity and inclusion” and cultural competency within the Dover community and makes recommendations for programs, policies and practices that support diversity, inclusion and cultural competency.

B.3 Identify, support and participate in programs and events within the city of Dover which celebrate its diversity or promote greater understanding of the issues, concerns and needs of our diverse population. (e.g., the African American and Hispanic Festivals and the Dover Public Library’s Created Equal Project)

B.4 Create and implement an external education process and program that provides the public with a better understanding of diversity, inclusion; and, human relations issues; and, conflict management; and, that develops skills in effectively fostering greater understanding, inclusion and fairness in the city.

Mission Component

C. Works with the City Council and the City Administration and other community organizations to strengthen inter-group relationships and to eliminate discrimination; and, to anticipate, prepare for and resolve incidents of intergroup conflicts and disputes within the city

Long-term Objectives

C.1 Define when a diversity, inclusion and or a human relations issue^{iv} exists and specify the types of these issues that will be accepted by the Commission; and, identify and implement a process for receiving and responding to such issues by taking action to correct or improve the situation.

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C.2 Develop an understanding with the State Human Relations Commission that will delineate the roles and procedures of the two Commissions in the solution of alleged discrimination complaints which fall within the jurisdiction of the State Human Relations Commission and identify and maintain specific ways the two Commissions will work together.

C.3 Review the City of Dover's Code of Ordinances and make recommendations to the Dover City Council that will improve the city's efforts to eliminate discriminatory behavior.

C.4 In cooperation and partnership with city officials, law enforcement, clergy, community organizations and public and private mediation services, assist in developing plans for monitoring sources of intergroup conflict and for responding to and managing community conflicts and disruptions in Dover; and, participate in managing community conflicts in accordance with these plans.

COMPETENCY TRANSPARENCY and ACCOUNTABILITY

D. The Commission is committed to acting with a high degree of competency, and transparency and accountability both to the Dover City Council and to the community.

Long-term Objectives

D.1 Regularly provide an update on the Commission's activities, progress and accomplishments to the Dover City Council; and, provide opportunities for the Council to review and affirm the Commission's Strategic Plan, including a process which encourages Council members to identify specific diversity, inclusion and human relations issues that may be particularly critical or relevant within each City Council District.

D.2 Improve community awareness of the Commission and a better understanding of its role by developing, implementing; and, maintaining a comprehensive communications plan which creates a process for routine communications to the community, including supporting policies and procedures for managing communications and for using supporting tools, such as, a web-based hub of information and resources.

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D.3 Create and implement an internal education process and program that provides the Dover City Council, the City Administration and the members of the Commission with a better understanding of diversity, inclusion; and, human relations issues; and, conflict management; and, that strengthens their skills in effectively fostering greater understanding, inclusion and fairness in the city.

D.4 Provide due notice and access to the public by conducting all meetings in accordance with the Delaware Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and City of Dover procedures.

D.5 Identify and seek funding from other governmental, philanthropic or private organizations to more effectively carry out its responsibilities.

V. IMPLEMENTATION AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Once the Commission adopts these proposed long-term strategic objectives the Commission will develop and implement specific work plans for each long-term strategic objective within the assigned year or years. These work plans will include short-term goals/priorities/initiatives with specific performance measures and action items to be accomplished within shorter time periods.

The Dover Code of Ordinances centralizes decision making at the Commission level. However, it is suggested that a functional committee structure be utilized to move these long-term strategic objections into actual performance.

Each of these Committees shall consist of at least three members of the DHRC and may include outside advisors, citizens, and City staff members to more effectively develop and execute the work plans. Individual Commissioners may serve on one or more Committees.

These functional Committees are advisory, not decision-making. They are transparent and accountable to the Commission and the community at large. They will meet on a regular basis to develop, implement and monitor work plans for the specific long-term strategic objectives assigned to the committee. Their work plans will be presented to and adopted by the full Commission prior to implementation.

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The Commission may assign one or more long term strategic objectives to the Commission “acting as a whole”.

Additionally, in order to respond to an emergent human relations issue that may not be identified in this plan, the Commission may from time to time create an additional functional committee. Such committees are intended to convene, and make recommendations for action to the full Commission; and, then disband when they are no longer relevant or needed.

Based on the set of proposed long-term objectives identified in this strategic plan, it is suggested that the following functional committees be established:

Government Policy, Programs, and Practices Committee—to develop, implement and monitor work plans for Objectives A.1, A.2, C-3 and C.4

Community Engagement Committee—to develop, implement and monitor work plans for Objectives: B.1, B.2 and B.3.

Education Committee—to develop and implement plans for Objectives: B.4, D.3.

Communications Committee—to develop, implement and monitor work plans for Objectives D.1, and D.2.

The Commission as a “whole” to develop implement and monitor work plans for Objectives: C.1, C.2, D.4 and D.5.

Actions History

10/13/2014 - Approved by City Council

09/23/2014 - Introduced at Dover Human Relations Commission

09/08/2014 - Draft prepared by Eugene B. Ruane, City of Dover Human Relations Commissioner

¹ It is critical that the Commission agree on a definition of **diversity**. Howard J. Ross, one of the nation’s recognized leaders on diversity and organizational change notes that “diversity has generally represented an acceptance of difference, a lack of discrimination due to difference, and a presence of different kinds of people in organizations”. However, he argues that in this narrow view, diversity “has been related to as a means to erase or fix problems” rather than as a “way to create a new future vision”. The focus of this limited understanding is “the level of challenges (or “illness”)” that some people face: “bias, discrimination, lack of access, oppression, physical and emotional violence, and soon.” The response was then on “passing laws and then instituting compliance measures to make it illegal to continue these practices.” The goal was to “create a

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state of social diversity, where people were not denied their rights, were more appropriately represented in organizations, and were not actively discriminated against.” He calls this approach “the health-care metaphor” focused on efforts to “create organizations in which people are no longer “sick”. (Howard J. Ross, *ReInventing Diversity Transforming Organizational Community to Strengthen People, Purpose, and Performance* (Lanham, Maryland : Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. 2011, page 33)

Mr. Ross promotes a broader understanding that goes beyond simply prohibiting discrimination and getting people in the door. He states that a diversity focus or program “means creating opportunities for people to be a part of the fundamental fabric of the way the organization functions---decision-making, responsibility, leadership—and then creating organizations that are culturally competent, culturally intelligent, and culturally flexible.” We have to “really develop a sense of inclusion” and “a certain level of competence in understanding the needs of various people we are working with and serving”. This requires a “systematic approach to incorporating an awareness of diversity and skills related to diversity into everything an organization does.” (Ibid. 34)

(Author’s Comment: A brief internet search of diversity programs has revealed that many organizations have adopted the broader approach that Mr. Ross has formulated. These programs reframe the conversation to focus on fair treatment and respect, and away from discrimination and “protected classes”. An example from CUNY Queensborough Community College in New York City is attached. See: Definition for Diversity in Exhibit 1.)

ⁱⁱ **Inclusion** “is not simply a function of how fully involved people are in the structures of their organizations and societies”. It is “a function of connection”. “It is the ability of people to feel integrated into the cultural dynamics, leadership, and decision-making structures of the organization”. (Ibid., 38)

ⁱⁱⁱ **Cultural competency** is “the organizational ability to have and utilize the policies, appropriately trained and skilled employees, and specialized resources to systematically anticipate, recognize, and respond to the varying expectations (language, cultural, and religious) of customers, clients, patients, and co-workers of diverse backgrounds.” It requires a certain amount of “**cultural intelligence**” in that “people need to have knowledge of both distinctions of culture and of the specific traits of different cultures”. It requires a certain amount of “**cultural humility**” in that we need to be able to recognize that our cultural models may simply be different from , rather than better than, those of other people.” And, “people also require a degree of “**cultural flexibility**” “to facilitate interaction with others on their own terms.” (Ibid. 38)

^{iv} Queensborough Community College in New York has included a description of when “a diversity issue exists” in its Definition for Diversity. See Exhibit 1.)

Exhibit 1 City of Dover Human Relations Strategic Plan 2015-2018

Definition for Diversity CUNY Queensborough in New York City

Definition for Diversity

The concept of diversity encompasses acceptance and respect. It means understanding that each individual is unique, and recognizing our individual differences. These can be along the dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other ideologies. It is the exploration of these differences in a safe, positive, and nurturing environment. It is about understanding each other and moving beyond simple tolerance to embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of diversity contained within each individual.

Diversity is a reality created by individuals and groups from a broad spectrum of demographic and philosophical differences. It is extremely important to support and protect diversity because by valuing individuals and groups free from prejudice, and by fostering a climate where equity and mutual respect are intrinsic.

"Diversity" means more than just acknowledging and/or tolerating difference. Diversity is a set of conscious practices that involve:

- Understanding and appreciating interdependence of humanity, cultures, and the natural environment.
- Practicing mutual respect for qualities and experiences that are different from our own.
- Understanding that diversity includes not only ways of being but also ways of knowing;
- Recognizing that personal, cultural and institutionalized discrimination creates and sustains privileges for some while creating and sustaining disadvantages for others;
- Building alliances across differences so that we can work together to eradicate all forms of discrimination.
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Diversity includes, therefore, knowing how to relate to those qualities and conditions that are different from our own and outside the groups to which we belong, yet are present in other individuals and groups. These include but are not limited to age, ethnicity, class, gender, physical abilities/qualities, race, sexual orientation, as well as religious status, gender expression, educational background, geographical location, income, marital status, parental status, and work experiences. Finally, we acknowledge that categories of difference are not always fixed but also can be fluid, we respect individual rights to self-identification, and we recognize that no one culture is intrinsically superior to another.

A diversity issue exists when

An issue (policy or business practice - formal, informal, internal, or external) has a different **impact** on a particular group (i.e., impact on men vs. women, black vs. white, American vs. foreign, urban vs. rural, married vs. single, etc.)

Exhibit 1 City of Dover Human Relations Strategic Plan 2015-2018 Definition for Diversity CUNY Queensborough in New York City

It happens more frequently to a particular group (i.e., different groups may have dramatically different "numbers" - turnover, terminations, promotions, discipline, few or no role models, etc.)
It is more difficult for one group to overcome (i.e., upward mobility for a particular group within an organization - "glass ceilings")

A diversity issue exists where the policy or business practice has an impact exclusive of difference (not inclusive of difference). Is there a trend or pattern (intentional or unintentional)?

Having a diversity issue is not necessarily a bad thing. Doing nothing about it given you have knowledge of the issue is where organizations go wrong (negligence). Being in denial about these issues do not make them go away. Ignorance is not bliss inside or outside the courtroom. The real question is why do we have this issue and can we take action to correct it or improve the situation.

Source: <http://www.qcc.cuny.edu/diversity/definition.html> Queensborough Community College in New York CUNY