

MINUTES

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE WELLINGTON VILLAGE COUNCIL

**Wellington Village Hall
12300 Forest Hill Blvd
Wellington, FL 33414**

**Tuesday, January 26, 2021
4:30 p.m.**

Pursuant to the foregoing notice, a Special Meeting of the Wellington Council was held on Tuesday, January 26, 2021, commencing at 4:30 p.m. at Wellington Village Hall, 12300 Forest Hill Boulevard, Wellington, FL 33414.

Council Members present: Anne Gerwig, Mayor; Tanya Siskind, Vice Mayor; John T. McGovern, Councilman; Michael Drahos, Councilman; and Michael Napoleone, Councilman.

Advisors to the Council: Jim Barnes, Manager; Laurie Cohen, Attorney; Tanya Quickel, Deputy Village Manager; Ed De La Vega, Assistant Village Manager; and Chevelle D. Addie, Village Clerk.

- 1. CALL TO ORDER** – Mayor Gerwig called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m.
- 2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** – Mayor Gerwig led the Pledge of Allegiance.
- 3. OVERVIEW & READOUT OF DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, EQUITY & BELONGING REPORT**

Mr. Barnes indicated this is a special meeting scheduled as a follow up to discuss the details of what has been completed so far and steps going forward. He introduced K. Michael Slater, Diversity Consultant. Mr. Barnes discussed the agenda and expectations for the evening. He gave a brief overview of the meetings held to date.

Mr. Slater thanked Council for the opportunity and thanked the people who participated in the process. He explained the purpose of the meetings and stated everyone was cooperative, positive and open during the process. He reviewed the Executive Summary of the report. He stated Wellington is a destination that people want to be a part of and where they want to be. Mr. Slater referenced the third paragraph and stated misunderstandings can occur just by “being”. There does not have to necessarily be mal-intent. Understanding each other cross culturally and otherwise is a very strategic factor and sometimes intent versus impact are two different things. He said how to achieve the right intent comes with having the dialogues that the Village has started. He stated they researched this by talking with the communities and with the citizens of Wellington. They all agreed that they came here for quality of life, great schools, good and great amenities, policies that promote sustainability and maintain economic values of property, well organized governance, ideal weather, equestrian culture, worry-free living and safety. He briefly spoke of Wellington’s history i.e. special districts, planned communities and stated all of those mixed collaborations send different messages based on when people came

to Wellington. He said this leads to multiple sets of emotional rules that people have about what living some place is. Mr. Slater stated the biggest two for Wellington is: belonging and increasing the sense of safety (when do people feel like they belong and what is the definition of safety). He commented that the definition of safety is a national question not just a Wellington question. Mr. Slater stated there are four elements for Wellington's community where citizens live, work, worship, learn and play. Within those elements, there is diversity, inclusion, equity and belonging. Belonging and equity are the newest. Wellington can have conversations regarding belonging and equity because Wellington is a destination. People came to Wellington with an intent: an intent to contribute, an intent to be a partner, and an intent to enjoy. Mr. Slater stated equity speaks to the fairness of an environment. He stated Village cannot control bias of individuals in a community but can state the expectation for Wellington so that persons know what they are coming into.

4. QUESTION & ANSWERS

Mayor Gerwig asked Mr. Slater to explain what is meant by "membership community".

Mr. Slater explained the difference between membership (rules come down from a membership committee-privilege) and citizenship (rules go up-rights).

Mr. Slater resumed the review of the report and showed Council a slide of Wellington's Cultural Demographics. He stated Wellington is a diverse community and the questions are: does everyone feel that they belong in this diverse community and how to balance this to make sure that those who have always been in the community understand that they are welcomed and wanted too. Mr. Slater stated it is not a competition, it is an "and". He stated Wellington has changed and some of things Wellington is experiencing are growing pains.

Mayor Gerwig stated there are people here with real needs who cannot afford to move and discussed things the Village has done to assist residents.

5. REVIEW OF ARTICLE "THE FORGOTTEN DIMENSION OF DIVERSITY"

In response to Mayor Gerwig's comments, Mr. Slater stated there are individuals who, due to circumstances beyond their control and who experience situations without many alternatives, do need help. He stated this is another reason to have a diversity strategy. He said humanity is a big part of running an organization, township or village. Mr. Slater stated our humanity is questioned when we do not take care of each other.

Mr. Slater stated the Village does not have a lack of diversity nor a lack of effort. He said they assessed community issues that impact the Village and evaluated the Village's rules and regulations and found no malfeasance. He said they interviewed leadership, community members, designated employees and contractors to obtain a cultural scan. Most of the culture is willing and open if they know what to do. In addition, they conducted data collection and assessment of events, determined need gaps in areas of inclusive equity and best practices and formulated recommendations based on these assessments to address current issues and facilitate achievement of goals. This conversation is still in progress. He further highlighted Wellington's strengths. People who did not know each other invited others to lunch, etc. In addition, there are people who care about the Village, have some concerns and those concerns should be heard. The official documentation and communications that support the Village of Wellington is clear, concise information and the language that is used is not biased. It is open

mindful language to those in the community. Citizens of Wellington feel that the Village's government is transparent and operates well in many aspects. The biggest conflicts seem to be with certain things on social media and misunderstandings based on lack of relationships. Mr. Slater stated regarding areas for growth and development, Wellington should increase its ability to be inviting. He briefly referenced understanding public safety and what public safety means. Mr. Slater stated the Council lacks visible diversity. It does not mean Council is not capable of managing diversity, they just need to be aware that others may notice this and everyone has to manage this. He stated inclusive citizenship for all residents must be intentional and all members want to feel respected, engaged and heard. In addition, the Village should be prepared to ensure that communities can safely gather and engage in cultural celebrations, post-pandemic. Mr. Slater complimented the Village for what has been done to engage the community to date. He stated from a safety and social justice standpoint, the community expressed a desire for an effective and harmonious relationship with PBSO. PBSO indicated that they are interested in that relationship. He referenced the "Good, Better, Best" chart and stated Wellington is better than most places. Most community members love Wellington and want to make sure that there is equity (everyone is treated as best as possible). Mr. Slater stated this is case by case and not easy to do. However, good neighbors, good administration, good follow through and constant communication make that possible.

Mr. Slater referenced the Awareness Chart (Awareness, Insight, Empathy, Strategy and Commitment). He said the Village is now at empathy and stated the Village needs a strategy to invest time and resources to achieve effective resolutions and create a plan of best practices. This will reduce the amount of discomfort and almost eliminate distrust and will allow for proactive communication. The commitment is to weave it into the natural way of Wellington. Wellington has some of these traits already.

Mayor Gerwig stated the Village staff is very responsive and receptive to residents' desires.

Mr. Slater reviewed the list of recommendations for the Village: 1) Continue with community DIEB initiatives in education, leadership and employee training; 2) Establish a Wellington Economic Development Advisory Board.

Mayor Gerwig briefly referenced the Village's Safe Neighborhoods Initiative.

Mr. Slater continued reviewing the recommendations: 3) Reserve community spaces that are dedicated to specific use, thus facilitating the creation of new groups and gatherings; 4) Implement hiring practices and provide employment opportunities to develop a workforce that reflects the demographics of the citizens; 5) Engage law enforcement as community partners and increase participation in public safety methods; 6) Continue to celebrate all the cultural richness of the diverse components of the Wellington community; 7) Increase the impact of recreation facilities by forming leagues that embrace communities of color and assist with having multilingual referees.

Mayor Gerwig ask how many soccer fields does the Village have in parks.

Mr. Barnes replied that the Village has approximately 25 soccer fields.

Mr. Slater resumed reviewing the recommendations: 8) Ensure communication is in languages representative of the community as well as increase social media to reach out to every age group; 9) Double the capacity of community and human services staff; 10) Use ongoing data

mining to ensure customer service issues are resolved to the highest possible level of satisfaction; 11) Continue offering events that provide “learning to live together” intercultural engagement; 12) Fund emerging Wellington community grant activities, small local businesses and homeownership at new levels; 13) Engage in constant proactive forward planning and 14) Empower the community to play an active part in formulating the future of Wellington.

6. REVIEW OF ARTICLE “HOW COMPANY LEADERS CAN PROMOTE RACIAL JUSTICE IN THE WORKPLACE”

There was brief reference to this article later in the meeting.

7. DISCUSSION ABOUT PROGRESS AND NECESSARY TOOLS FOR LEADERS TO EFFECTIVELY MANAGE THE ONGOING DIEB COMMITMENT IN WELLINGTON

At this point, Mr. Slater went into discussion regarding next steps.

8. DISCUSSION ABOUT THE FUTURE AND NEXT STEPS IN SUCCESSFULLY MAINTAINING A SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT OF INCLUSION AND BELONGING FOR WELLINGTON

Mr. Slater highlighted the next steps: 1) Arrange for a meeting of elected officials to review this report in detail; 2) Communicate intention to the public through all available media and in multiple languages; 3) Invite and provide opportunities for suggestions of activities to encourage community engagement; 4) Provide citizens with continued learning activities via Zoom and in-person to encourage greater familiarity and understanding of the mutual goals for Wellington to be a place where there is equity in safety for all residents; 5) Conduct online classes to clarify Village policies and provide continued education for the citizens on new initiatives; 6) Establish a dialogue forum with the Palm Beach County Sheriff’s Office to extend the access of citizens and increase the sense of comfort and better communication; 7) Develop concrete plans to diversify all leadership groups to reflect the ethnic and other cultural composition of Wellington and 8) Meet with Village Council to discuss ongoing methodology of managing and maintaining a collaborative DIEB vision for Wellington.

Councilman Drahos thanked Mr. Slater for coming out today and stated he enjoyed the previous discussions with him. He stated everyone in Wellington wants to see forward progression. He said from his perspective in order for there to be forward progression of a permanent nature, it needs to be organic rather than forced. He asked Mr. Slater for recommendations on how to accomplish the outlined goals in an organic way to achieve permanent success.

Mr. Slater stated leadership institutes and leadership workshops on how a town runs that invites the whole town to come creates a natural environment of people wanting to come and work together. He reiterated that Councilman Drahos is correct. The organic way is a more natural way. Mr. Slater indicated that embracing community organizations and new spiritual groups that come and inviting them to use certain facilities make them feel organically welcome and they organically want to invest and do more. He said that Wellington has some of these elements already starting. He stated the question is how to make sure the elements do not die and that new ones evolve. Wellington has a community of activism where organic works best as long as they have access to facilities and conversations with leaders but the Village has to be intentional with that conversation.

Mayor Gerwig stated Wellington used to have a citizens' academy.

Mr. Barnes provided a brief overview of the past citizens' academy.

Mr. Slater stated that Wellington has to make sure they are strategic about this process.

Councilman McGovern asked, as to the entirety of the report, what was the breadth and depth of the data collection during COVID and was it sufficient. He asked if a more focused data set would have been collected had Wellington not been relegated to conducting the community forums via Zoom.

Mr. Slater replied yes and said if there had been time for surveys, to be present in-person and data had been collected in neighborhoods. However, he stated that the Village still received good data because everyone was open. He briefly discussed other forums he would have liked to have and said it is important to not stop collecting data.

Councilman McGovern asked if Mr. Slater recommends that these are formal things that the Village continues to do as next steps.

Mr. Slater recommended that the Village always communicates and listens and be honest about what the Village can and cannot do.

Councilman McGovern asked if the 4th recommendation indicates that there is a deficiency in that area now or is this for the Village to look at more closely going forward.

Mr. Slater stated the Village can look more closely at this going forward.

Vice Mayor Siskind inquired about the statistics regarding new hires.

Mr. Barnes stated staff will provide the statistics.

Councilman McGovern asked Mr. Slater to explain his recommendation about doubling the capacity of the community services staff.

Mr. Slater discussed his recommendation and stated the staff is stretched because of capacity and there is more demand every day.

Mayor Gerwig stated this is more about "beefing" up the department more so than the number of staff. She mentioned that the Village has community partners.

Mr. Slater suggested speaking with the community partners because they can also provide information as to what they are doing and then the Village will know what the actual need is in the community. He referenced the article on socioeconomic class issues. He suggested that Wellington can always strive to be solution based.

Councilman Napoleone thanked Mr. Slater for the report. He stated it is nice to see the equity and belonging components highlighted because they are an important piece of the puzzle to review. He asked if during the community forums Mr. Slater has learned of any barriers to belonging that exist in Wellington and what the Village can do to eradicate the barriers.

Mr. Slater stated the biggest barrier was the perception of safety for those coming to visit and do not know their way around Wellington. He stated this is not just about PBSO but also neighbors. He stated the Village has to determine how to define, as a community, how to be neighbor, how to be safe, how to feel that you belong, how to manage disagreements and how to agree to disagree and still function. He stated there should be communication on what community standards are on how to treat each other and recognize who to call for certain things. The other barrier was getting people to feel that they are heard whether there is agreement or not and was it a good conversation. He commented that in planning for the future the Village has to also think about the diversity of ways people want to live.

9. PUBLIC COMMENT

1. Peter Bartuska stated he is trying to figure out as a pastor how to be a resource to serve the community if there is a need that they can address that the Village cannot. He asked how they can mobilize the rest of the churches to help or are there other things they can do to help facilitate this moving forward.

Mr. Slater provided examples of what churches have done to assist in communities.

Mayor Gerwig stated there is a faith based leadership group in the Village and borders are difficult and sometimes needs cross those borders. Therefore, the Village tries to work together with the faith based community anyway it can.

2. Tony Nelson stated he participated in three of the community conversations and he was disappointed at the number of people who participated. He stated he felt it should have been more people to attend and participate in the conversations. Mr. Nelson asked for recommendations to get more people to speak about how they feel and their experiences in Wellington.

Mr. Slater stated you have to target where people are and certain pockets to make sure communities are heard. In addition, people will increase with time when they see results. He stated sometimes people do not want to be involved in the foundation of something and the “we” comes somewhere in the middle of the process. He said people will show up to things that connect them to the dots and the Village will connect the dots by continuing to do this. Mr. Slater thanked Mr. Nelson for his attendance at the community forums. He stated people have to feel that they are safe and they can trust that things will happen. Mr. Slater indicated that this is sometimes a slow process.

Mayor Gerwig stated as COVID clears up she feels the Village will be able to have more multicultural celebrations. She stated there are some ideas on how to move forward and referenced the S.W.A.G. (Students Working to Achieve Greatness) program.

Councilman Drahos stated today is a step forward and one of many steps to come. He briefly discussed some activities the Village has done to promote inclusion. He stated is proud and happy that the Village is doing this.

Councilman Napoleone stated it is key to continue conversations with the community and the Village needs the feedback. He stated he too was disappointed in the turnout at the community forums. He said the forums were well publicized and he would like for the Village to find

additional ways to reach out. Councilman Napoleone suggested that the Village continues to have conversations on a range of topics.

Vice Mayor Siskind thanked Mr. Slater for his report and stated she enjoyed their meetings. She stated the Village should continue to take the pulse of the community. Vice Mayor Siskind thanked him for his recommendations and stated she looks forward to taking this to the next level.

Councilman McGovern stated regarding the recommendations there are things the Village already does, things that are theoretical and things the Village can actually and effectively do as next steps in this process. He stated he hopes the Village does them and said it is important that we have constant and consistent communication so that going forward the Village can build on the process and eliminate, if any, pockets of distrust in the Village which is becoming a larger city. Councilman McGovern thanked Mr. Slater.

Mayor Gerwig stated one thing that can be done better is each person putting themselves in another's shoes. She stated if the Village decides to hold a citizens' academy, a suggestion is to have PBSO involved to make citizens aware of PBSO's process and perspective and explaining to PBSO a citizen's perspective.

Mr. Slater stated he encourages full engagement all the time and having officers explain their process and procedures to community groups. He stated it is about relationships and anything that will build relationships is helpful.

Mayor Gerwig thanked Mr. Slater and stated she felt valued by Mr. Slater and she hoped Mr. Slater felt valued by Wellington.

Councilman McGovern inquired about the Resolutions that Mr. Barnes handed out to Council and asked if Council will take action on these items tonight since this has been noticed as a Special Meeting.

Mr. Barnes replied that the Council can take action. He stated prior to that, Mr. and Mrs. King, who participated in the community conversations, are in the audience and would like to comment.

3. Mabel King stated her concerns were that young people do not want to come back to Wellington. She stated they feel there is nothing here for them although they do feel safe in the community. She stated when she came to Wellington it was the safety that drew her here and said she loves Wellington. However, her needs have now changed and she wants to enjoy life here in Wellington but feels there are no activities here to entertain them. She stated they often travel outside of Wellington for entertainment. Secondly, Mrs. King said she always assumes the activities that are here in Wellington are not for her and she would like to see this changed in the community.

Mayor Gerwig asked about Jazz events. Brief discussion followed regarding types of events.

Mrs. King stated she is a part of the S.W.A.G. program and has seen great benefits come from the program and stated it is enjoyable. She suggested more programs like this.

Councilman Drahos stated he feels Wellington will be at the top of list when Mrs. King's children decide to have families of their own. He stated that was his experience.

Mr. Slater said that it was good to see Mr. and Mrs. King and agreed that there are other under currents in society that make you feel like home. He mentioned other organizations and community groups that provide a sense of home and stated Wellington can provide opportunities for those organizations to become a part of Wellington's infrastructure and provide other forms of entertainment. He said the Village has to have conversations about culture. He referenced the two articles provided to Council and stated he will constantly provide information to assist Council with talking points as leaders. Mr. Slater thanked Council for the citizens of Wellington and said he felt welcomed by them. He stated he shares the thought that there is more to do to communicate and get more people involved to organically grow a better Wellington.

Mayor Gerwig asked if Council needed to take action on the agenda items now.

Mr. Barnes stated the agenda items were from a prior meeting and staff would like Council to take action on the items.

Councilman McGovern asked if the budget transfer item is an "up to" amount.

Mr. Barnes explained the agenda items.

Councilman McGovern stated it is important that the next phase needs to be post COVID and to see if the Village can get larger groups of involvement.

Mr. Barnes said staff is looking forward to in-person meetings and bringing the meetings to the community to enhance and increase the number of data points to gain broader representation of the input.

Councilman Drahos stated he likes the idea of bringing in the youth to get their input. He stated he thinks this will be a worthwhile exercise.

Mr. Barnes stated the groundwork has been laid for that and there is a very willing and able team on staff. He stated there are a lot of interested students at both high schools and they have been involved even through COVID. He stated meetings have been held via Zoom and staff will be going to the schools to present Civics 101 and other types of programs.

A motion was made by Councilman McGovern, seconded by Councilman Napoleone, and unanimously passed (5-0), to approve Resolution No. R2020-64 (Diversity Consultant Services with K. Michael Slater).

A motion was made by Councilman McGovern, seconded by Vice Mayor Siskind, and unanimously passed (5-0), to approve Resolution No. R2020-66 (Budget Transfer for up to \$75,000 amendment to the FY 21 General Fund Budget to fund the contract).

Mr. Barnes stated the report will be placed on the website and thanked Mr. Slater for joining the meeting today.

Council thanked everyone for coming out this afternoon.

Mr. Barnes stated the Regular Council Meeting will begin at 7:00 p.m.

10. CLOSING

There being no further business to come before the Village Council, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 6:11 P.M.

Approved:

Anne Gerwig, Mayor

Chevelle D. Addie, Village Clerk