

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Commission Update to City Council

January 22, 2026

Outline

Commission History

Summary of 2023 DEI Report

DEI Report Recommendations

Current Commission Activities

Progress on Recommendations

Proposed 2026 Activities

Summary of Commission History

February 2022

City Council resolution adopted to establish the Commission

May 2022

Equity and Diversity Commission appointed by City Council – 14 members

June 2022

Equity and Diversity Commission voted to change their name to the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Commission; City Council approved via a resolution

July 2022 – October 2023

Commission gathered data, hosted listening sessions, conducted stakeholder interviews

October 2023

Conducted public hearing on initial report

December 2023

Presented the final report and recommendations to City Council

February 2024

Public hearing on report recommendations; City Council authorized staff to proceed with implementation

April 2024

City Council resolution to permanently establish the DEI Commission

Fall 2024

New Commission members appointed by City Council

3. The Commission shall have the following duties:
 - a. Partner with the City's efforts to move the Commission Report recommendations and strategies forward.
 - b. Provide expertise and guidance to the City Council and city leaders on the ways in which the City engages with the community.
 - c. Create a sense of DEI permanence by partnering with the City to better incorporate DEI within City events, language, and interactions.
 - d. Advise City Council and city leadership about points of impact affecting current and future Commission recommendations and suggest accountability measures to achieve those recommendations.
 - e. For those recommendations that are outside the role of city government provided services, advise City Council and city leadership about the best path for acting on the recommendations, including ways to coordinate with small businesses, corporations, nonprofit leaders and citizens.
 - f. Communicate concerns of community members related to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion to the City Council and city leadership.
 - g. Conduct periodic reviews of relevant DEI strategies and recommendations based on current research and potential changes in the Staunton community.
 - h. Provide (at a minimum) an annual written report to City Council.
 - i. To perform such additional functions or duties as may be so identified as to specific matters by the City Council or City Manager or designee.

Summary of 2023 Report: Data Analysis

Analysis Framework: National Equity Atlas (NEA)

- Defines an *equitable community as one where ALL residents – regardless of race, nativity, ability, gender, or zip code – are fully able to participate in the community’s vitality, contribute to its readiness for the future, and connect to its assets and resources*
- 29 unique Equity Indicators across 4 focus areas

Demographics: A “snapshot” of the make-up of our city

Economic vitality: “What does the community offer to its citizens?”

Readiness & Well-Being: “Do citizens have the experience, skills, and resources to thrive?”

Connectedness: “Are citizens connected to their community and to economic opportunities?”

Summary of 2023 Report: Data Analysis

Data Type	Number of Sources Collected
External Reports	64
In-Depth Interviews and Focus Groups	28
Community Listening Sessions	6
Survey Responses	30
Other Community Events	3

DEI Commission Recommendations

Goal A: Invest in Long-Term DEI Commitment

Goal B: Promote Values of DEI in City Policies, Procedures and Staff Representation

DEI Commission Recommendations

Goal C: Promote and Model Values of DEI for the Community and Broader Region to Increase Community Engagement and Foster a Stronger Sense of Belonging

Goal D: Prioritize Increased Opportunities for Residents to Gain and Sustain Economic Vitality

DEI Commission Recommendations

Goal E: Support Community Well-Being with an Enhanced Focus on Vulnerable Residents

Current Commission Activities – Subcommittee Structure



Data & Research

The Data and Research subcommittee will advise City Council and city departments on best practices for promoting inclusive and equitable policies reflective of our diverse community.

This subcommittee will continue ongoing data collection and research and draft a work plan to address the recommendations published in December 2023.



Community Connections

The Community Connections subcommittee will connect, engage, and build relationships with community members and organizations.

This subcommittee will plan and lead community engagement efforts and connect the broader community to city initiatives and community resources.

Current Commission Activities



Data & Research

- **Focus on Goal B: Promote Values of DEI in City Policies, Procedures and Staff Representation**
 - Action B-1: Formally Review all City Hiring Practices, Policies, and Procedures Related to DEI, Including Staff Representation, Recruitment, and Procedures
 - Action B-2: Develop a Standardized DEI-Specific Onboarding and Training
- **Activities**
 - Review demographics of applicants and those hired by City, using quarterly data
 - Review of onboarding practices and NeoGov training platform
 - Discussions with City staff and Human Resources

Current Commission Activities



Data & Research

- Key Takeaways

Data align with what we are hearing from our community:
Demographics of City staff do not mirror City representation

Demographics	City Residents	Current FT Employees % (Count)
White	84.10%	95% (304)
Black	12.20%	4.1% (13)
Other race or ethnicity or declined to respond	3.70%	<1% (3)
Male	46.40%	66.9% (214)
Female	53.60%	33.1% (106)

Current Commission Activities



Data & Research

Why is this important?

- Diversity in the workplace ensures a stronger workforce with a variety of **different perspectives and skillsets**.
 - linked to higher and faster problem-solving and innovation
 - higher employee engagement and retention
- Broader positive impacts in the community
 - ↑ sense of belonging
 - ↑ civic engagement and participation in events
 - ↑ willingness to seek and engage city services and resources

Current Commission Activities



Data & Research

- Key Takeaways

This is a nuanced issue with no singular solution.

- Limitations of data: a good starting point but tells an incomplete story
 - gaps in data collection (self-reporting)
 - Diversity has many dimensions not captured by data
 - Other external factors: housing, workforce development or training opportunities, localized differences by job-type
- Equity considerations along the entire lifecycle
Recruitment → Hiring/Onboarding → Retention



Current Commission Activities



Data & Research

- Key Takeaways

Improvements to all aspects of the lifecycle are critical.

Do actions and practices support the bigger picture?

Recruitment: *How can postings and opportunities be shared equitably?
How can we attract a more diverse applicant pool?*

Hiring/Onboarding: *Are all hiring managers trained on implicit bias?
Have departments conducted a pay equity analysis?*

Retention: *Can employees bring their full selves to work?
Are employees supported with sufficient training and development opportunities?*

Current Commission Activities



Data & Research

- Proposed scaffold for improvements in accordance with best practices for DEI
- Ongoing: work alongside Human Resources and City staff to develop a detailed and realistic timeline and workflow for implementation

Early	1	Not yet, or learning stage
	2	Planned but not started or in initial/pilot stages of implementation
Established	3	Working towards this but not fully achieved
	4	Fully Achieved
Strong	5	In place with evidence of its use (e.g., policies, procedures, robust evaluation plan)
	6	Practices are sustainable and ongoing and may be shared with others as “best practices”

Current Commission Activities

Competency: *Recruit, hire, and develop a governmental workforce that reflects the populations and communities residing in Staunton*

Early	1	Promote job specifications and qualifications that emphasize value of experience in the local community and reflect the skills and characteristics to serve the broad community
		Develop inclusive job postings, that contain equal opportunity and anti-discrimination language
	2	Intentional and directed effort to share job postings with all community members and residents.
		Develop an equity or diverse lived experience job interview question bank to use using hiring process/interviews. If applicable, develop job role descriptions that allow candidates to highlight specific skillsets (e.g. working with specific populations)
Established	3	Staff with community experience occupy community-facing positions and leadership roles.
		Workforce development efforts and goals incorporate the unique needs of community and residents (e.g. career pipelines, tuition reimbursement, support for education and career growth)
	4	Develop goals and metrics to assess progress in equitable compensation and diversifying workforce.
		Written procedures exist to increase recruitment, hiring, retention, and promotion of staff reflective of populations served. Develop internal advisory/workgroups to develop, guide and implement diverse workforce recruitment efforts.
Strong	5	Staff diversity reflects the populations served at all levels of the organization.
		HR and hiring practices reflect reform of minimum requirements or qualifications to remove barriers (e.g. allowing equivalent experience to substitute for formal education, and/or broadening options for educational credentials)
	6	Internal structure or hired position promotes workforce diversity (e.g. DEI Officer) through recruitment, hiring, and retention.
		Hiring managers receive equity-related training, including implicit bias training on a mandatory and recurring basis. Periodic assessment and transparency around reviewing policies and procedures to ensure inclusion of diverse staff and prevention of turnover for staff with underrepresented backgrounds.

Current Commission Activities

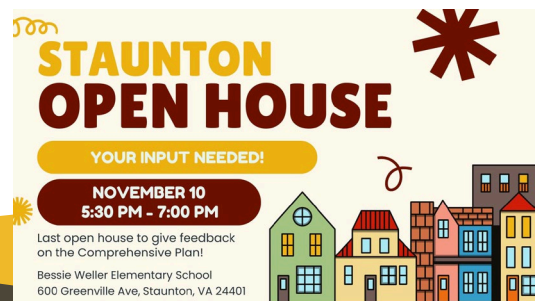
Competency: <i>Provide standardized onboarding and opportunities for staff to learn and discuss issues related to equity and diversity and how to incorporate their learning into workplace and community practice.</i>		
Early	1	Workplace policies support and encourage periodic training opportunities related to equity. Staff have the support to do their own research on equity practices if interested.
	2	Work with external partners to train department staff on their policies and practices (e.g. communication to diverse communities, outreach, cultural competency, implicit bias)
Established	3	Department-wide trainings, intra-departmental workgroups, and other programming related to equity available to all staff. Staff receive hands on training to respectfully and thoughtfully engage with underrepresented and marginalized communities
	4	Build sustainable workforce development plan to include equity-specific strategies for developing staff (e.g. mentorship)
		Encourage working groups and opportunities for staff to engage and learn from one another regarding equity knowledge and practices (e.g. employee resource groups, affinity groups)
		Highlight and sustain community partnerships that will serve as collaborators or advisors in evaluation, review and improvement of policies and procedures.
Strong	5	Significant development and investment into workplace culture where DEI principles are fully embedded and reflected in policy. (e.g. funding for trainings and program development)
	6	All staff, including leadership, complete standardized onboarding on a recurring basis. Those in leadership positions have opportunities to regularly expand and increase their foundational knowledge.
		Assessment and competency of equity practices are assessed by leadership and advisory community partners, with a focus on transparency and communication with the broader public.

Current Commission Activities



Community Connections

- *“Going Round the Circle”* – leverage existing community networks to uplift community events and connect resources
 - civic, non-profit, faith organizations, community groups including NAACP, Building Bridges, Black Business Collective, Augusta Health, SAW Housing, LGBTQ Center
- Education to boost resident engagement with City community surveys, Comprehensive Plan, Emergency Alert notifications
 - Exploring communication and community building beyond digital platforms
 - Physical areas of community gathering



Current Commission Activities



Community Connections

- “*Who We Are* campaign” – different perspectives and backgrounds with a shared mission
 - Raise awareness and encourage public engagement
 - Newsletter and updated website
- Seeking additional outreach and education opportunities
 - Staunton Pride 2025
 - Community feedback

Current Commission Activities



Community Connections

What have we heard?

- Concern around impact of distorted national conversation on DEI work
- Reassured by local ongoing commitment to support the entire community
- Commission needs a more visible presence and to continue building relationships throughout the community

Progress on Report Recommendations

DEI Recommendation

Progress

(Reflects strategies initiated by both the City and the DEI Commission)

GOAL A: Invest in Long-Term DEI Commitment

A-1 Hire or Name a DEI Officer Position

A-2 Implement a Permanent DEI Commission

- April 2024 resolution by City Council

GOAL B: Promote Values of DEI in City Policies, Procedures and Staff Representation

B-1 Formally Review all City Hiring Practices Policies and Procedures related to DEI

B-2 Develop a Standardized DEI-Specific Onboarding and Training

B-3 Conduct an Accessibility Audit of Facilities and Public Areas

B-4 Ensure Public Transparency and Accountability in DEI Initiatives

- Data review of applicant and hire demographics for city positions
- Proposed scaffold for improvements to recruitment, hiring, retention, and standardized onboarding
- Proposal before City Council for additional accessible doors at City Hall and improved wayfinding in City facilities
- Improvement of ADA bathrooms in City parks
- Support relocation of Office on Youth to a more accessible location
- Improvements to DEI Commission website
- DEI Commission representation in Housing Workgroup, Housing Commission, and Comprehensive Plan

Progress on Report Recommendations

DEI Recommendation

Progress

(Reflects strategies initiated by both the City and the DEI Commission)

GOAL C: Promote and Model Values of DEI for the Community to Increase Community Engagement and Foster a Stronger Sense of Belonging

Address Broad Communication Gaps and Ensure Communications are

C-1 Diverse in Language, Tone, Access, and Platform

C-2 Develop a Staunton Equity Network

C-3 Create More Inclusive Communication to Increase Access to and Knowledge of Services for the Community

- Implementation of Recite Me technology on City website

- Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 compliance required by Spring 2027 - mandates digital accessibility ensuring local government websites and digital services are usable by everyone, in line with ADA standards

- Increased educational content on social media platforms

- Language services provided by City, including a Comprehensive Plan Stakeholder Meeting for the deaf community on January 28th

- Outreach materials, SAW Resource Guide that brings together individuals with resources

Progress on Report Recommendations

DEI Recommendation

Progress

(Reflects strategies initiated by both the City and the DEI Commission)

GOAL D: Prioritize Increased Opportunities for Residents to Gain and Sustain Economic Vitality

D-1 Address the Need for Affordable Housing

- Included in Comprehensive Plan update
- Future Land Use Map
- Established Housing Commission
- City leadership in SAW Housing Coalition
- Creation of Economic Mobility and Opportunity Special Assistant position (grant funded)

D-2 Enhance Public Transportation Services and Non-Car Options

- Bike lanes and ADA pedestrian improvements on Beverley and Churchville
- Proposal to conduct a citywide multi-modal study
- Future ADA and pedestrian improvements along Richmond and Greenville
- Implementation of HSIP/STARS Study in downtown to focus on pedestrian and ADA improvements
- Augusta and Edgewood sidewalk projects
- DEI Commission participation in inaugural Pitch Competition for minority businesses

D-3 Continue to Cultivate Industry and Business Opportunities, with a focus on Minority Businesses

- Expansion of the City's Enterprise Zone
- Small business survey conducted by Economic Development

Progress on Report Recommendations

DEI Recommendation

Progress

(Reflects strategies initiated by both the City and the DEI Commission)

GOAL E: Support Community Well-Being with an Enhanced Focus on Vulnerable Residents

E-1 Address the Intergenerational Needs of Staunton Residents

E-2 Build Community Awareness of the Diverse Lived Experiences of Staunton Residents and Community Needs

E-3 Foster Collaboration and Coordination between Local Programs and Services Providers Focused on Mental Health, Physical Health, and Health-Related Services

E-4 Pursue Equity in Criminal Justice

- Childcare needs assessment for SAW Region
- Parks and Recreation: development of programs for older residents
- Emphasis on representation from those with lived experience during Comprehensive Plan process and SAW Housing Coalition
- Co-sponsoring the African American and Multi Cultural Festival
- Historical Markers and signage at Montgomery Hall Park
- City representation on various boards and commissions: Youth, CAPSAW, VCSB, Social Services
- Support Blue Ridge Court Services on relocation to a more accessible location

Proposed 2026 Activities



Community Connections

- **Board and Commission Outreach:** establish collaborative working connections, public meet and greet event in Spring 2026
- **Community Mutual Aid Fair:** help meet immediate needs (food, housing, health care) and foster a sense of solidarity in addressing causes of inequality, Summer/Fall 2026
- **Youth Art Event:** Partner with Staunton Public Schools, with theme: “What does *Belonging* mean to you?” Fall/Winter 2026



Proposed 2026 Activities



Data & Research

- Continue to support City staff and Human Resources on operationalizing recommendations to diversify employee representation
- Explore improved data collection strategies and metrics
- Work with local providers/orgs to provide subject-matter expertise and training to City staff, including cultural competency, implicit bias, etc.
- Work with Community Connections to provide guidance for other Boards and Commissions on embedding values of inclusivity in their work

DEI Commission Members, past and present

FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

of the
*Diversity, Equity, and
Inclusion Commission*



Lou Boden
Sabrina Burress*
Joamarie Garcia
Mark Jeter, Vice-Chair*
Vicki Keyser
Jake Krug
Lindsey Lennon
Beth Nelsen
AnhThu Nguyen, Chair*
Nathaniel Riddle
Daniel Stuhlsatz
Jennifer Trippeer
Susan Venable
Zavia Willis

Keisha Nicholson
Raven Moore
Ian Callahan*
Cecilia Carpenter*
Charles Lawson*
Belinda Osorio Polgar*
Nat Slater*
Jordan Zipser*

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Engage the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Commission



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