



Anti-Black Racism Working Group Meeting

Meeting date: Wednesday, January 27, 2021 – 6:30 pm

Location: Zoom/Online

Attendees: Bernadette Hood, Carwyn Holland, Debbi Lay, Nicole Facey, Stephen Linton, Romina Diazz, Samantha Adebisi, Sabrina Yung, Jackie Flowers, Sarah Sheehy

Absent: Charmain Brown

Minutes:

1. Welcome and Greetings

SY welcomed all to the meeting.

SY offered to be today's minute taker – All agreed.

2. Introductions and Opening Remarks

SY introduced CEO, Jackie Flowers and Board Chair, Sarah Sheehy.

All ABRWG members introduced themselves.

3. Review of Working Group Feedback from December Meeting

SA provided a re-cap of key points from the ABRWG December 16 meeting, to set the foundation for the evening's discussion.

Points of reference brought forward:

- The Anti-Black Racism Working Group (ABRWG) wants to address the purpose of the group and why the Library and the Library Board wanted to create this group.
- How does the Board plan on collaborating with the ABRWG? Why is it necessary for the Library to have this group? What is our role specifically when we collaborate with the Library Staff or Library Board?
- The ABRWG members want to bring forward recommendations for changes to the draft Terms of Reference (TOR).
- The ABRWG members want assurance that they would be brought into the decision-making process and that all recommendations would be acted on.

4. Discussion with PPL CEO and Library Board Chair

ABRWG Relationship to the Library Board

SS spoke about the Board's position. The Board wants a two-way conversation and recognizes that all the details are a work in progress. The Board will resume meeting this month (January) and SH will bring forward the questions raised this evening.

JF acknowledges this is the first time the Library has brought a working group together. The Break the Chains movement in Pickering highlighted that there was a need in the community to discuss and address anti-Black racism. The Library needs to address gaps and weaknesses but cannot do it without engaging individuals who identify as part of Pickering's Black community.

Regarding "how" the ABRWG will collaborate with the Library to confront anti-Black racism and move the dial, JF spoke to the answer not being finite. The Library wants to see that driven and shaped in collaboration with the ABRWG members.

SS expressed that this group is directly linked to the Board and intended to help the Board understand the voices in the community. The Board is seeking a better understanding of what is happening in our Library to ensure this Library is serving everyone in Pickering. That relationship could involve this group attending Board meetings and vice versa. Once recommendations are made, the discussion would be what the Board can do to help make those recommendations happen.

It was suggested that regular meetings should include meetings with Leadership and not just with a Library Liaison. It was also suggested that reports to the Board should be accompanied by meeting with Library Leadership and the Library Board. That would show the Library is really taking the group's efforts seriously.

JF and SY confirmed that more details from the survey results can be shared (with sensitive information redacted) when the ABRWG begins focusing on each priority in greater detail to develop work plans and recommendations. This may lead to the ABRWG identifying gaps and further community consultation needs, which staff would support.

It was identified that the data needs more youth representation.

Honorarium/Addressing Exploitation and Clarifying Staff Responsibilities

Concerns were expressed regarding exploitation and a recommendation was put forth to consider compensation for the working group volunteers. While the group members don't agree unanimously with the recommendation, members do want the specific tasks and responsibilities of the working group to be more narrow, more manageable within the time of the monthly meetings. Members very much want to add their voice and make an impact.

Clarity is needed regarding what research, consultation, and other tasks outside of the meeting, will be carried out by staff versus working group members.

Clarification was provided. Research or consultation for example, would be something staff would facilitate. The group's role would be to use that information to inform their discussions during meetings. They could also recommend or request additional research and consultation for staff to complete. The group agreed this needs to be captured and defined in the TOR.

Composition, Representation, and Impact on Decision-Making

A concern was raised regarding the lack of representation of the oppressed group, when it comes to the final decision making. Without adequate representation, the process lacks a chance of truly making changes. Members feel the group lacks the ability to vote in the final decision. The decision-making processes and the people sitting at those tables lack representation for the Black community. The ABRWG wants to ensure their experiences are taken seriously at the decision-making table. Members do not want to just be heard.

After further discussion, it was determined the structure of the decision-making relationship between the ABRWG and the Board needs to be better clarified and once determined, outlined in the TOR.

It was suggested that if the group sees the need to include allies or persons who do not identify as Black or residents from outside of Pickering, those persons should be brought in as subcommittee. The process for such can be captured in the TOR.

Staffing, Hiring and Employee Training

As a matter of urgency, the group felt there is a need to start looking at our hiring practices and address that immediately. The group would like to know if the Library is open to accepting a Diversity Officer. What is the Library's plan for changing hiring practices?

SS shared that the Library's Human Resource team is now merged with City of Pickering. Noting, decisions and changes are made in accordance with that new structure and in alignment with City practices and policies. JF/SY clarified that Library Leadership still has influence on the hiring and recruitment, however as they are directly leading the hiring process during recruitment opportunities.

In terms of hiring, the group would like information on what questions are asked during hiring and want to know if the ABRWG can have a say in the hiring process.

In terms of employee training, in the fall. Library staff received training from external facilitator Jodie Glean. Staff learned what it means to be systemic and what it takes to overturn those forces. It was very encouraging to see staff engage with the trainer and the content. The training was also conducted with the Board.

The group asked if this working group would have a say in the Board membership/hiring. Concern was raised regarding the Board's representation of diverse voices, particularly Black community voices. Members want to meet with the Board to be the voice for the Black community at that table. Similarly, with Council – the moment meetings and decisions go in camera, you have lost the Black voice at the table. The group would like to be the voice at the table to say "consider this" in this movement of confronting anti-Black racism.

SS acknowledged hearing this feedback and will bring these sentiments forward to the Board at the next Board meeting (January 28).

The ABRWG would like to know the composition of the Board in terms of LGBTQ, BIPOC and other diverse identities. SS/JF: Diversity of the Board was identified as a strength – different backgrounds represented. The Board currently has two members that are City Councillors. All members are appointed by City Council. The Board of the Library is legislated. The Library CEO doesn't report to Council but to the Board. The Board is responsible for hiring and directing the CEO.

A concern was raised that the public photo (posted on the website) of the Board is not an accurate representation of the current membership and doesn't provide community citizens confidence of its diversity.

A concern was raised that Council appoints the Board, and that Council doesn't currently contain representation from the Black community, therefore the Black community doesn't have a say in the make up of the Library Board.

SS: Self-identification is included in the application process and on the form. City of Pickering made it a priority to increase the diversity in this last round of hiring, and the Board did increase visibility from various areas of diversity representing different identities in the community.

The ABRWG requested clarification on how the Board makes decisions. SS: The Library Board is a governance Board and does an open vote. All meetings are open to the public. A concern was raised around staffing issues being brought in-camera and the public not having access to that discussion. It was confirmed that such discussions (representation, general hiring procedures, etc) would not be brought in camera. In-camera would be a staffing specific issue, not HR hiring procedures and practices.

Land Acknowledgement

It was suggested that the Library should have something that boldly states respect and commitment for Black community members. There must be something pointed in that direction. An ABRWG member shared an example previously, of a land acknowledgement that captures a commitment to combatting anti-Black racism.

Developing the Terms of Reference (TOR)

It was discussed and agreed that the first step is to revisit and provide edits to the draft TOR. The draft provided in November was always intended to be only a starting point. The intention was for the group to discuss, edit, and shape it collaboratively, putting forth a TOR they felt suited the needs of the group and represented the agreed upon direction of the work to be completed.

JF suggested it would be helpful to have a ABRWG member present the revised TOR to the Board. The group agreed and will commit the next meeting to preparing a revised TOR to be shared with the Library Board at the February meeting.

5. Planning Next Meeting and Terms of Reference Follow Up

It was discussed and agreed that the group will use the next meeting to collaboratively revise the TOR and prepare it for presenting to the Board at the next Board meeting (February 25). All documents for the Board package are due one week in advance (February 18), so the group will endeavour to meet before the due date. SY to send out a Doodle poll after the meeting to determine a February meeting date.

Meeting adjourned.