



Published August 5th, 2020

Racism, discrimination discussion; city leaders listening

By Pippa Fisher

In a meeting attended by approximately 160 people on Zoom and on the city's YouTube channel, Lafayette continued listening to people's experiences of racism and discrimination within the community in its second special task force meeting.



Circle of Education Co-Founder Tiffany Hoang, hired by the city as a facilitator, acknowledged the uncomfortable nature of the discussion at the meeting July 30, which she explained is why it is important to take the time to address how the community can be better together.

Hoang started with some definitions of terminology around racism and discrimination, before welcoming close to 20 people who shared instances when they felt discriminated against either intentionally or unintentionally, or in some cases stayed silent while witnessing discrimination.

Some gave suggestions for ways in which the city could take steps, with several pointing to having more affordable housing to encourage more diversity.

A survey was done before the meeting that collected over two dozen experiences - including those of discrimination based on religion, gender identity and race - and ideas for change from the public, either given anonymously or with a name, which is available on the city website. It relates stories of discrimination in the community, in the schools, and from the police.

And it also has the opinion of a few who say there is no such thing as racism in Lafayette.

Vice Mayor Susan Candell, chair of the Task Force to Effect Change and Action in the Area of Racial Equality in Lafayette commented after the meeting: "I know that we are all at different places on the spectrum of understanding racism in its many forms, and some likely still believe that we don't have any racist issues in our city, but I hope that last night you heard enough to move yourself on that spectrum."

Candell says she is especially thankful "to all of the very brave people who shared their stories with us involving racism in our city."

Task Force Vice Chair Council Member Cam Burks said at the meeting it was clear there was a "swift undercurrent of racism in our town."

According to the city, there will be another town hall meeting on racial equality held on Aug. 20. Details will be available on the city website.

Candell promised there would be action in the near future, and that any recommendations arising from these listening sessions will be taken back to the full council for approval.

"I look forward to working with our task force members, staff, and our full city council on our journey towards a more welcome and just city for all who live, work, or visit Lafayette," said Candell, adding, "I know we can become a better community for all."

Reach the reporter at: pippa@lamorindaweekly.com

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