



BOSTON CITY COUNCIL

Committee on Civil Rights and Immigrant Advancement
Ruthzee Louijeune, Chair

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REPORT OF COMMITTEE CHAIR

August 10, 2022

Dear Councilors:

Docket #0351, Message and order authorizing the City of Boston to accept and expend the amount of Thirty Six Thousand Two Hundred Fifty Dollars (\$36,250.00) in the form of a grant, for the Dialogue to Action, awarded by the Boston Redevelopment Authority to be administered by the Office of Resiliency & Racial Equity to fund programmatic activities to deepen participants' understanding of racism, in historical and present day forms and foster a sense of agency to change the system through actions at individual, interpersonal or systemic levels, was sponsored by Mayor Michelle Wu and referred to the Committee on March 9, 2022. The Committee held a hearing on July 21, 2022 where public comment was taken.

Summary of Legislation As Filed:

This grant will allow the Office and Resiliency & Racial Equity to use the funds through the Dialogue to Action for programs to provide education and understanding of racism in historical and present day forms. The grant will seek to develop ways to make changes through actions.

Information Gathered at the Hearing:

Lori Nelson, Chief Resilience Officer, Mayor's Office of Resilience and Racial Equity ("Office"), attended the hearing and testified in support of the grant. Ms. Nelson explained that the grant will be used for community impact projects which will examine how the community looks at reality and race matters to collectively move forward. The Chair inquired about the Dialogue to Action Initiative. Ms. Nelson explained that in the middle of 2019, the Office worked with the Hynes Foundation to explore dialogue with neighborhoods through collaborative projects by working with youth organizations. Ms. Nelson stated that there is information about the Dialogue to Action Initiative on the City's website. Ms. Nelson explained that Dialogue to Action provides education on race matters, has three staffers and also uses fellows. Ms. Nelson reviewed some of the external partners which include King Boston. Ms. Nelson described the takeaways from the initial pilot program which included the following: the importance of having historic places of race in Boston and supporting cultural differences through an inclusionary approach; unifying the community around a difficult topic; an, creating safe spaces so that people have a place for their voices to be heard.

The Chair asked if specific neighborhoods are targeted. Ms. Nelson explained that the goal in the initial framework was to target every neighborhood. Ms. Nelson stated that through coalition building, the objective is to target neighborhoods that may not have had these types of conversations. The Chair asked if any barriers existed, if the programs or discussions will be in

person, and if there are advertisements about the programs. Ms. Nelson explained that there can be hesitancy because successful programs requires transparency, that the programs will likely begin as hybrid with a move toward in person, and that the Office is working on a communication strategy and outreach to neighborhoods that utilize news outlets, both traditional and different news outlets, to spread the word about the programs. The Chair asked about the timeline. Ms. Nelson stated that the programs will likely begin in the Fall as the Office looks to engagement strategies to find partners and persons that have experience with these programs and know how to provide a dialogue and begin discussions.

The Committee discussed that information and education are key components of the Dialogue to Action Initiative. Comments from the public discussed civil rights matters in general.

Rationale and Recommended Action:

Passage of this order will allow the Office to use these funds to support Dialogue to Action's objectives. Having these funds will allow for the expansion and continuation of programs and resources to understand racism, historically and present day, and to implement personal and systemic changes.

By the Chair of the Committee on Civil Rights and Immigrant Advancement, to which the following was referred:

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submits a report recommending that this docket ought to pass.

For the Chair:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Louijeune', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ruthzee Louijeune, Chair
Committee on Civil Rights and Immigrant Advancement