



Village of Vernon Hills

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION CONSULTATION FOLLOW UP

Ordinance 2020-096

Village President

Roger Byrne

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Kristen Svendsen, Human Resources Specialist

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Andrew Jennings, Director of Comm Dev
Patrick Kreis, Chief of Police

INTRODUCTION

In reflection of the Village's mission and community expectations, during the summer of 2020, the Village sought an external review of policies and practices in relation to the delivery of services and opportunities, to ensure an equitable, consistent, and just environment is achieved for all. During the September 1, 2020 Village Board Meeting, Ordinance #2020-096 was approved authorizing a Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) consultancy for the Village of Vernon Hills. This consultancy has been extended for FY 2023, providing an opportunity for external review of progress on recommended action items from the initial report, continued assessment of the Village's efforts to provide exceptional service to all stakeholders, ensure opportunities for participation with municipal government for all, and to ensure equal opportunities for those seeking to serve the Village of Vernon Hills.

SCOPE OF SERVICES

The initial scope of services for the D&I initiative included:

- Internal inventory and external assessment and review of Village and Department policies and practices (Recruitment, Promotion, BOFPC Rules, Village Rules/Practices, Adoption of Shared Principles, VHPD Engagement Strategies, etc.)
- Review of correlations between workforce and community demographics
- Facilitate meetings with Village and Department Staff regarding community expectations for Diversity and Inclusion within Village government
- Facilitate and support community engagement as needed; special projects, and development of a Diversity and Inclusion Vision Statement
- Provide updates, suggest improvements, and publish final report to the Village Board / community.

The scope of services during FY 2023 included monitoring efforts to ensure equitable service delivery, opportunity to serve; periodic meetings with Department-heads and Village staff to obtain updates on recruitment and selection processes, community engagement, communications, and to be available as a resource to the community as needed.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The following have been the strategic objectives for the Diversity & Inclusion initiative:

- Demonstrate leadership and commitment to Diversity & Inclusion
- Communicate strategy
- Be transparent
- Foster a connected culture
- Be an Equal Opportunity Employer
- Fair and unbiased selection processes
- Encourage employee engagement
- Career Development
- Discuss value of mentoring

- D&I training for senior staff
- Build a diverse talent pool
- Strive for broader outreach and recruitment
- Engage diverse partnerships / professional associations
- Identify ways to ensure diverse voices are represented in programming, communication, events, training, committee representation, etc.
- Educate staff on diversity and how to diversify the organization
- Promote a workplace where background, perspectives and experiences are valued
- Improve representation of women and minorities at all levels of the organization
- Ensure that all D&I initiatives, actions and results are transparent
- Create an inclusive work environment that fosters creativity and innovation

INTERNAL INVENTORY & ASSESSMENT OF VILLAGE POLICIES

During the December 8, 2021 Village Board Meeting, Dr. Watkins presented his initial oral report regarding the Village's efforts to ensure consistency and equity in the delivery of services, equal opportunity in the workplace, and policy and practices that support diversity and inclusion. Dr. Watkins noted Village policies and procedures are regularly updated and reviewed by external sources including legal counsel specializing in workplace policy, (O'Halloran, Kosoff, Geitner & Cook LLC) the Village's Risk Management Administrator. The Village also has corporate counsel and labor attorneys, in which staff have immediate access for both routine and more serious matters.

Regarding police policies and procedures, the Vernon Hills Police Department subscribes to Lexipol, a subscription-based service that provides policy and procedure guidance for police, fire/EMS County Jails and city government. This program comes with an updating service, daily training bulletins and implementation services. As the Lexipol system draws upon numerous resources, written by subject matter experts, to be state-specific (also reviewed by attorneys) the Village can be ensured best practices are in place for the critical functions conducted by the police department. Findings on community demographics and correlations to workforce demographics were presented, utilizing US Census estimates for Vernon Hills. Once the 2020 Census was complete, we were able to more accurately define community demographic trends and establish benchmarks.

Another observation was the finding that the Village Administration and Department-heads are invested in fostering and maintaining their sections as equitable and inclusive environments. Department-heads readily acknowledged there needs to be an improvement in their efforts to attract and hire individuals from under-represented groups. Both staff and Department-heads understand recruitment and retention are not just an individual or a department's responsibility, but rather a "team approach" that will include support from the Village Board.

Village Staff understands the need to demonstrate leadership and commitment to Diversity and Inclusion, by establishing policies and practices that support a workplace that is welcoming to all people of various race, ethnicity, and background.

In addition, Village staff understands this philosophy must emanate from the top and it must be embraced and demonstrated through recruitment, selection, retention, and promotion.

There is a strong commitment on behalf of the Village through its recruitment, training and mentoring of tenured employees, and programs that support professional development. The Village supports career development, to include a formal program for both sworn and civilian employees; ensuring opportunities are available for professional development and preparing one's self for advancement. The Village program also includes incentives and tuition reimbursement for those seeking enhanced formal education opportunities.

WORKPLACE CONVERSATIONS

During the initial report to the Village Board, several recommendations were given to include taking time to digest the report. Since this report, the Village Manager during the initial assessment (Mark Fleischhauer) retired. Over multiple occasions, Dr. Watkins met with the new Village Manager (Kevin Timony), and new Department-Heads, to learn of the challenges and opportunities that exist.

Staff has continued to refer back to the report, and continue to have conversations and make improvements where possible. One recommendation was to review the Village's Mission and Vision statements, and to consider updating or modifying the existing statements by adding key words "welcoming" and "inclusive." The Village Mission Statement was addressed with this language included. The new statement reads:

The Village of Vernon Hills will be a safe, welcoming, inclusive, aesthetically appealing, fiscally viable, family-oriented community with excellent education, social, recreational, and cultural opportunities fostering on a strong and diverse residential and business community with concern for ecological stewardship and cooperation with other governmental bodies and agencies.

Given our nation's focus on law enforcement and its governance, a suggestion was made that the Board of Fire and Police Commission (BOFPC) consider efforts to make its composition more representative of the changing community. In 2021, Ramesh Kanapareddy was appointed to the BOFPC adding diversity to this important component of municipal government. In addition, a new vacancy occurred in 2022, giving the Village an additional opportunity to interview candidates. Brett Moberg was appointed to the the Commission.

The BOFPC continues its work toward adopting a less biased and more technologically useful Law Enforcement candidate testing solution (NTN). This solution in and of itself has geographically broadened and diversified the applicant pool, streamlined the testing and ranking process, and provided benchmarking data for the Village and the Police Department.

SWOT ANALYSIS

During the initial meetings with staff in which the topic of D&I conversations were undertaken, effort was given to identify strengths and weaknesses as well as opportunities and threats to the organization's success in being considered diverse and inclusive. This exercise, known as a SWOT analysis, provided an extensive list of elements that supported and/or provided challenges for the organization. One of the most apparent threats (and opportunity) was the anticipated turnover of both staff and Department Heads which was scheduled to occur due to retirement. Over the last several years, the Police Department experienced significant turnover, which created opportunity for advancement as well as recruiting opportunities. Within the last couple of years, the Community Development Department experienced significant turnover. We anticipate Public Works will experience similar organizational change with its personnel.

Another note from the SWOT analysis featured in the initial report was the lack of diversity amongst applicants in certain career fields. This was noted in the 2020/21 report when mentioning policing, but this trend was even more evident in later recruitment processes for Community Development, Finance, and Public Works. There were no applications from females seeking employment for the Public Works Director / Engineer position.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Village (and Village staff) were also encouraged to interact with community members to build “grassroots” initiatives that foster diversity, equity, and inclusivity. The Community Engagement component discovered a few persons seeking to engage with the Village. As I stated to the Village Board at the outset of this consultancy, *“This should not be a one off initiative, simply checking the box will not move the dial. Like gardening, one must plant, water, and tend if we expect growth! Changing thoughts and behaviors takes time, monitoring, and support to maintain gains and momentum.”* In the year(s) since this statement, the Village has participated in several initiatives to engage with members of diverse communities. The Village has worked with members of the Pride Community and has a series of meetings that led to the development of a Pride Proclamation (to be read during Pride Month of each year); and annually features banners designed by representatives of the Vernon Hills Pride Community. These banners are flown during Pride month of each year.

COMMUNICATIONS (2022)

- The Village has participated in cultural events to include Filipino Pride Day, which was conducted at the Vernon Hills Seniors Organization. Guests prepared authentic food and information on the culture of the Philippines was presented.
- The Village has had representation at the Sullivan Center for Darshana - “A Glimpse into the Hindu Civilization.” This event was presented by the Dharmic Organization of the United States and allowed members of the Village and elected officials to meet members of the Village’s Hindu community.
- The Village continues to partner with Ms. Seema Keshav and members of Go Green Vernon Hills – Lincolnshire. This organization seeks to collaborate with the municipality, schools, and businesses on a variety of environmental issues related to sustainability.

- During the first quarter of 2022, the Village joined the Greenest Region Compact, which is sponsored by the Metropolitan Mayor's Caucus and provides a framework for municipalities to help them with sustainability efforts.
- The Village participated in Hawthorn District 73's Community Resources Fair on April 23, 2022. The Village sent staff who were bilingual and able to communicate in Spanish.
- The Village acquired a Kwanzaa display, to be placed alongside the other holiday displays at the municipal golf course.
- The Village created the Vernon Hills Honors Military Banner Program to recognize veterans (and active duty service members) from Vernon Hills. This program is in partnership with the American Legion and has the purpose of recognizing the veteran community.

COMMUNICATIONS (2023)

~ JANUARY 2023 ~

- Martin Luther King / Ali Day Recognition & Education



- Female hired in the Community Development Department
- Military Honors Banner Program Education



~ FEBRUARY ~

- Black History Month Recognition & Education

Home

Posted on: February 6, 2023

[DRAFT] February is Black History Month

Did you know that the story of Black History Month has roots in Chicago?

According to the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH), in the summer of 1915, University of Chicago Alumnus Carter Woodson traveled from Washington, D.C. to Chicago to participate in a national celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of emancipation sponsored by the state of Illinois. That experience stayed with him as he became a life-long proponent of African American studies. In 1926, he organized the first Negro History week, which was the precursor to Black History Month, which launched in 1976. Read the longer history of Carter Woodson and Black History Month, written by Howard University's Daryl Michael Scott, on the [ASALH website](#).

CLC Black History Month Events

Locally, the College of Lake County offers a variety of resources and special events designed to celebrate Black History Month. The CLC celebration culminates in the 38th Annual Salute to Gospel Music Concert, featuring special performer Jekilyn Carr, planned for February 25 in Waukegan. Tickets are available through the [CLC Online Box Office](#). Learn more about College of Lake County resources on the [CLC website](#).

Additional Resources to Learn More:

- National Endowment for the Humanities: [Virtual Bookshelf: Black History Month](#)
- [Gov: Black History Month](#)
- [History: Black History Month](#)
- [ASALH: Origins of Black History Month](#)
- [National Geographic Kids: Black History Month](#)
- [Wikipedia: Black History Month](#)

~ APRIL ~

- Two females, appointed by Mayor Byrne, to the Planning & Zoning Commission
- Hispanic female hired in the Police Department

~ MAY ~

- Military Appreciation Month Recognition



Home

Posted on: May 12, 2023

The Village Honors Our Military

The Village proclaims May as Military Appreciation Month. As part of that appreciation, the Village unveiled the second group of honorees who will be spotlighted through our Military Honors Banner Program. Banners featuring these heroes are already in place on light poles in the Village along the July 4 Parade Route (Deerpath and Sullivan Drives).



Thank you to American Legion Post 1247 for their efforts on behalf of this program, and on behalf of all veterans.

Current and veteran service members, including family members of those who have passed, are encouraged to complete an application to be included in the [2024 Military Honors Banner Program](#).

To learn more:

- [Watch the Vernon Hills Honors Military Banner Program - 5/23](#) video introducing and honoring the 2023 group
- [Visit the Military Honors Banner Program](#) webpage to see the names of the honorees and view the photo banners

- Proclamation declaring Asian American and Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander Heritage Month including Village News Flash on website



Home

Posted on: May 10, 2023

Celebrating AANHPI Heritage

Beginning in 1992, the nation officially designated May as Asian American and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (AANHPI) Heritage Month.



Vernon Hills is home to an extremely strong and vibrant community of people who celebrate Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander heritage. The Village joins with the entire nation in recognizing the contributions and importance of this culturally and linguistically-diverse people who represent populations from many countries and islands.

The Village encourages all of us to not only recognize, celebrate and honor this important community, but to also learn more about the history and importance of AANHPI Heritage Month.

Resources:

- [White House Proclamation](#)
- [History, Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month](#)
- [FAPAC AANHPI Resource Center](#)
- [United States Census Bureau, Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Heritage Month](#)
- [National Education Association, Teaching Asian and Pacific Islander Heritage](#)
- [Asian Pacific Heritage Month](#)

~ JUNE ~

- Proclamation recognizing LGBTQ+ Pride Month



Home

Posted on: June 1, 2023

June is Pride Month

During the June 6 Village Board Meeting, Trustees will proclaim June 2023 as Pride Month in Vernon Hills.



The Village of Vernon Hills works to create a welcoming, inclusive, equitable, accepting and safe community for all people. The Village joins with municipalities and organizations around the world in proclaiming June as Pride Month. To that end, members of the community are charged with eliminating prejudice wherever it exists by accepting all residents as equal as we honor our diversity through this celebration of our LGBTQ+ community.

Thank you to members of the community for continuing to support and encourage an environment of respect, safety and celebration. Special thanks to VHS students for helping design banners that you will see placed on light posts around the Village.

Resources:

- [Library of Congress, About LGBTQ+ Pride Month](#)
- [Anti-Defamation League, LGBTQ+ Pride Month and Education Resources](#)
- [National Today, Pride Month](#)
- [CDC, LGBTQ+ Youth Resources](#)
- [GLAAD, LGBTQ+ Resource List](#)
- [The Trevor Project, Lifeline](#)
- [211 Lake County - search LGBTQ](#)

- Purchased Pride banners to place throughout the Village annually in June



- Designed and procured Juneteenth banners, in recognition of this new Federal holiday, to be displayed annually throughout the Village during the month of June



- Two (2) Hispanic Females hired in the Police Department
- Hispanic Male hired in the Police Department
- Asian Male hired in the Police Department

~ JULY ~

- Bilingual Hispanic Female hired in the Community Development Department.

~ AUGUST ~

On August 7, 2023, Dr. Watkins met with new staff to include Tom Lyons - Director of Finance, Chris Venatta – Director of Public Works – Village Engineer and Andrew Jennings – Director of Community Development. During this introductory meeting, the conversation included background on the D&I initiative, scope of services, objectives, workplace relations, equal opportunity, and community expectations.

~ SEPTEMBER ~

- A resident initiated contact with Dr. Watkins to voice concerns over the “*de-conversion*” process occurring within the Plymouth Farms HOA. The de-conversion process provides an opportunity for property owners to sell their unit(s) to a private entity, allowing the subdivision to transition from single-unit ownership to the entire subdivision becoming owned by one private party. There is Illinois law that covers this subject and a requirement that a specific percentage of owners vote in favor for de-conversion to occur. It was learned this percentage was obtained. One resident reported feeling renters were excluded from the process and not given a voice in the matter, and felt communication was not timely. Village staff and counsel has monitored the situation it does not appear the Village has standing in this process as this is a private sale between multiple parties. Dr. Watkins provided an opportunity for the resident to meet with Village staff to obtain additional information.
- On September 13, members of the Vernon Hills Police Department (VHPD) met with representatives of the Buffalo Grove chapter of Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (HSS), which covers the Vernon Hills community. The meeting was in recognition of Universal Oneness Day and involved an orientation to certain aspects of Hindu culture. Aside from the wonderful company, Department members were treated to traditional sweets and were presented with “Rakhis” (handmade string bracelets) affirming the bond of love and protection. Because of their role in protecting the public, HSS volunteers selected the VHPD, and members of their staff, to participate.



- Content was shared on Village communications platforms celebrating Rosh Hashanah – the Jewish New Year.
- Content was shared on Village communications platforms celebrating Hispanic Heritage month, along with links provided by the Department of education providing additional information.
- Content was shared on Village communications platforms, sharing information on an Ukrainian Welcome Event being hosted by Cook Memorial Library District – Aspen Drive Library.



~ OCTOBER ~

- Staff was approached by members of the Hindu American Foundation, requesting the Village engage to educate the community on the philosophy of Hinduism; contributions by Hindu Americans, and create awareness that October is Hindu Heritage Appreciation & Awareness Month. A proclamation will be prepared for the October 3, 2023 Village Board Meeting with members of the community joining.



~ NOVEMBER ~

- Content was shared at the Village Hall and with the Vernon Hills Senior Organization regarding the 22nd Annual Buffalo Grove Symphonic Band Fall Concert, held on November 11, 2023, honoring our military veterans and our brothers and sisters in the African-American community.



- Content was shared on the Village website regarding Native American Heritage Month.

Home

Posted on: November 6, 2023

Native American Heritage Month 2023

November is recognized as National Native American Heritage Month. The goal is to celebrate the traditions, languages and history of Native American, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and affiliate Island communities.



This formal commemoration has roots that reach back to the early 1900s when Dr. Arthur C. Parker, director of the Museum of Arts and Science in Rochester, New York, persuaded the Boy Scouts of America to set aside a day to honor our First Americans. During these early years, different organizations and states would celebrate various First American days at different times of the year, often linked to the quest to recognize Native Americans as citizens, which was not always the case.

President George H. W. Bush approved the first resolution designating November 1990 as "National American Indian Heritage Month." The designation has subsequently been renamed "Native American Heritage Month," "National American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month," and other variations in an effort to be more inclusive of the many First American people who create the foundation cultures of our nation.

In our efforts to continue to learn about and appreciate the great diversity of Vernon Hills and our nation, the Village encourages everyone to recognize and learn more about the history and culture of our First American neighbors:

- [Library of Congress Native American Heritage Month](#)
- [Smithsonian Native American Heritage Month](#)
- [Boys & Girls Clubs of America: 8 Ways to Celebrate Native American Heritage Month](#)
- [U.S. Department of the Interior: National Native American Heritage Month](#)
- [NCA: Native American and Alaska Native Heritage Month Lessons & Resources](#)
- [White House Proclamation 2023](#)

- Content was shared on social media regarding a Diwali event at Melody Farm Shopping Center.



~ DECEMBER ~

- Village Holiday Tree, Menorah and Kwanzaa Lighting



SEASONAL MARKETING CAMPAIGN

The Village of Vernon Hills social media pages select images reflecting a diversity within the community. Additionally, the Village's marketing partner, Visit Lake County, has created seasonal and promotional campaigns that reflect the diversity of the community.



*Lake County, Illinois is
Alive with Holiday Magic!*

Jump in the car and create lasting memories with spectacular shopping, delightful activities and a full calendar of dazzling events. This season, Holiday your way! Make your plans at VisitLakeCounty.org.



*Holiday
your
way*

illinois
LAKE COUNTY
ILLINOIS

PROGRAMMING

During the year, the Village provides programming for Seniors Organizations that is inclusive of the community.



SPECIAL PROGRAMS & EVENTS

Military Banner Program



The Village displayed LGBTQ+ Pride Month banners throughout the Village, reflecting a welcoming community.



Juneteenth



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Village shared and promoted content directed at persons who are seeking to learn English and become U.S. Citizens. This content was shared on the Village’s cable access, E-newsletter, message boards and social media.



FREE English Classes

Mundelein High School Adult Education offers English classes in local communities.

Registration begins August 21, 2023. Classes begin September 5, 2023. For information regarding class locations and registration in your area please call (847)949-2200 ext. 1399.

Learn English, Make Friends

- ✔ Beginner, Intermediate & Advanced
- ✔ 12 Locations
- ✔ 29 Classes
- ✔ Course runs September-May
- ✔ AM & PM Classes available

MUNDELEIN HIGH SCHOOL ADULT EDUCATION
 facebook.com/adulteducationMHS
 (847)949-2200 x1399 **CALL NOW**



FREE English Classes

MUNDELEIN HIGH SCHOOL ADULT EDUCATION

OPEN REGISTRATION DATES:

Monday, August 21st Vernon Area Library 9:15am - 12:00pm for Returning Students Mundelein High School 8:30pm - 8:30pm for Returning Students	Tuesday, August 22nd Fremont Public Library 9:15am - 12:00pm Vernon Hills High School 8:30pm - 8:30pm for Returning Students	Wednesday, August 23rd Vernon Area Library 9:15am - 12:00pm Open to New Students Mundelein High School 8:30pm - 8:30pm Open to New Students
Thursday, August 24th Cook Park Public Library 9:15am - 12:00pm Vernon Hills High School 8:30pm - 8:30pm Open to New Students Mundelein Admin. Building 9:00am - 12:00pm	Monday, August 29th Aspen Public Library 9:15am - 12:00pm Wednesday, August 30th Mundelein Admin. Building 9:00am - 12:00pm	Tuesday, August 29th ELA Area Public Library 9:15am - 12:00pm and 8:30pm - 8:30pm Wheaton High School 8:30pm - 8:30pm

CLASSES BEGIN:
 Mon/Wed Classes
 Wednesday, September 6th
 Tues/Thurs Classes
 Tuesday, September 5th

FREE

1399 W. Peasey Street Mundelein, IL 60060
 Phone: (847)949-2200 x1399
 www.facebook.com/adulteducationMHS



FREE CITIZENSHIP CLASS

Fall 2023

Mundelein High School Adult Education offers a FREE citizenship class to prepare eligible legal permanent residents for the US naturalization process.

Classes will be held on Mondays and Wednesdays @ 6:30PM - 9:30PM
 September 2023 - May 2024
 Location: Mundelein High School
 1350 W. Hawley Street Mundelein, IL 60060

Material covered:
 • NABO Application • Civics Questions • Reading & Writing Components
 Interview Techniques necessary to become a US citizen will be covered.

Anyone who anticipates applying for citizenship should take this class before taking the test!
 No testing or fee waiver available for repeat examinees (unless at least 2 years or in naturalization class for at least 2 years)

PREREGISTRATION IS REQUIRED!
 For information or to preregister call MHS Adult Education
 Ph: (847)949-2200 x1399 Email: AdultEducation@d120.org

MUNDELEIN HIGH SCHOOL ADULT EDUCATION



MUNDELEIN HS ADULT EDUCATION
ADULT ENGLISH CLASSES
FREE AND
CITIZENSHIP CLASSES
INFO: 847-949-2200 x1399