

DATE: April 24, 2017

TO: Paul Spinelli, President
David Acosta, Vice President
Angela Calakos
Ronald Franceschini, Jr.
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FROM: The Vineland Green Team

RE: Vineland Municipal Boards and Commissions
Diversity Survey Results

Dear Members of City Council:

In 2016, the City of Vineland passed Ordinance No. 2016-35 which officially established a "Green Team," in order to pursue certification under the Sustainable Jersey program. The Green Team includes representatives from various city departments, the Chamber of Commerce, and a citizen representative. Their job is to coordinate the city's certification efforts under the program.

Launched in 2009, Sustainable Jersey is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that rewards and supports communities by providing the tools, training, and financial incentives needed as they pursue sustainability programs. New Jersey is the first state in the nation to have a comprehensive sustainability program for communities that links certification with strong state and private financial incentives, and a fully resourced program of technical support and training. The certification is free and completely voluntary.

Sustainable Jersey certification is a prestigious designation for municipal governments in New Jersey. Of the 565 municipalities in the state, 198 are currently certified. Maurice River Township and Commercial Township are the only two Cumberland County communities that have been certified to date. The City of Vineland made a previous attempt at certification in 2011, but was unsuccessful. Certifications last for three years, at which time municipalities must seek re-certification. The Sustainable Jersey program is overseen by a Board of Trustees, who works with a number of partners including the New Jersey State League of Municipalities, the Sustainability Institute at The College of New Jersey, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, and the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities.

Certified municipalities receive special priority access and notification of incentives and grants, and are eligible for the Sustainable Jersey Small Grants Program, which has funded over \$1,900,000 worth of sustainable projects across New Jersey since 2009. Additionally, other New Jersey State funding sources, such as the Department of Transportation, have begun to give priority to Sustainable Jersey certified cities.

The program offers two levels of certification, Bronze and Silver. Bronze certification requires municipalities to collect a minimum of 150 action points from at least six of 19 categories, as well as

implement at least two of 11 priority actions. Silver certification requires a minimum of 350 action points from at least eight categories, and at least three priority actions. All actions taken by municipalities to score points toward certification must be accompanied by documentary evidence for review by the project partners.

One of the two priority actions undertaken by the Vineland Green Team was a diversity review of the city's various Boards and Commissions. This action provides an assessment process that allows elected officials to consider the degree of inclusion and representation on the various entities in relation to Vineland's community profile. Diverse board membership encourages the exchange of different perspectives, facilitates innovative problem-solving, and supports social equity in the community.

The Vineland Diversity Survey template was adopted from an example provided by the Sustainable Jersey program. Vineland Community profile data was obtained from the United States Census Bureau's American Community Survey.

Boards and Commissions surveyed as part of this action included the Planning Board, Zoning Board, Recreation Commission, Environmental Commission, Library Board, Industrial Commission, Vineland Development Corporation Board, Vineland Downtown Improvement District Board, and the Police Athletic League Board.

The survey was administered by a sub-committee of Green Team members, and was conducted between November of 2016 and February of 2017. The instrument was distributed by City of Vineland staff liaisons to the various Boards and Commissions, and completed by members at regularly scheduled meetings. Additional surveys were emailed, as necessary, to reach members who may have been absent. The nine Boards and Commissions sampled totaled 65 primary and alternate members. Respondents were guaranteed anonymity as part of the process. We received a response rate of 97%.

CITY OF VINELAND MUNICIPAL BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS DIVERSITY SURVEY RESULTS

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

The following is a breakdown of the demographic data which was gathered through the survey and community review process:

Ethnicity

	<u>Survey Results</u>	<u>Community Profile*</u>
• Caucasian/White	58.7%	54.8%
• Hispanic/Latino	28.6%	30.4%
• African American	9.5%	11.3%
• Native American	1.5%	.1%
• Asian	1.5%	1.3%
• Pacific Islander	0	.1%

*Community Profile Data has been weighted to compensate for individuals who self-identify as more than one race.

Diversity is one of Vineland's biggest strengths. According to the survey findings, current appointees to the city's various Boards and Commissions do reflect the Vineland Community Profile. The differences of less than 4.0% in each ethnic group are not statistically significant.

Age

• 18-29	9.5%	21.6%
• 30-39	7.9%	17.1%
• 40-49	20.6%	18.7%
• 50-55	14.2%	9.2%
• 56+	47.6%	33.2%

According to the survey findings, the 56+ age group is somewhat overrepresented and the 18-29 and 30-39 age groups are somewhat underrepresented on the city's various Boards and Commissions when compared to the Vineland Community Profile. This is partially due to the fact that some members have been reappointed over successive administrations, and also that the 56+ population generally has more free time available to devote to public service. While the Green Team views the experience and wisdom that comes with age as a positive, improving the balance of representation is something that should be considered when evaluating candidates with similar qualifications for future appointments.

Education

	<u>Survey Results</u>	<u>Community Profile</u>
• High School/GED	7.9%	36.6%
• Some College	23.8%	17.0%
• Associates Degree	5.7%	5.5%
• Bachelor's Degree	33.3%	12.6%
• Graduate/Professional Degree	30.0%	4.8%

According to the survey findings, members of the city's various Boards and Commissions have a level of education that far exceeds the Vineland Community Profile. This can be attributed to the fact that some appointments require certain skill sets and background experiences that may supersede other factors and limit the available pool of applicants. The available pool may be further impacted by additional business, residency, or other requirements which are specific to individual bodies. Whatever the specific reason or reasons may be, we view this higher level of education as a positive.

Gender

• Male	60.3%	47.2%
• Female	39.7%	52.9%

According to the survey findings, males are overrepresented on the city's various Boards and Commissions in comparison to the Vineland Community Profile. However, with a differential of 13.1%, Vineland is actually doing better than many communities across the country, where the differential is at or above 20.0%. In fact, many communities, in states such as Iowa, find themselves unable to meet the gender requirements even though they have laws mandating gender balance on municipal Boards and Commissions. Additionally, there does not seem to be any consensus as to why this phenomenon exists in both large and small communities throughout the United States since most studies show that woman generally are more likely to volunteer than men. With that said, it is something that should be considered when evaluating candidates with similar qualifications for future appointments.

Religion

• Catholic	58.7%	15.6%
• Christian	23.8%	16.7%
• Jewish	6.3%	.5%
• Muslim	3.1%	.9%
• Eastern (Buddhist/Hindu)	0	.8%
• Unclaimed	3.1%	65.5%

According to the survey findings, religious affiliation on the city's various Boards and Commissions greatly exceeds the Vineland Community Profile. While we find these results interesting, the Green

Team would not propose, nor does the city currently consider, religious affiliation when reviewing appointments to these bodies

Marital Status

	<u>Survey Results</u>	<u>Community Profile</u>
• Single	25.4%	56.7%**
• Married	74.6%	43.3%

** Includes individuals who are widowed, separated, divorced, or never married.

According to the survey findings, members of the city’s various Boards and Commissions whom are married greatly exceeds the Vineland Community Profile. Again, while these results are interesting, the Green Team does not believe it is particularly relevant to an individual’s qualifications or ability to serve as a member of a municipal Board or Commission.

Languages Spoken

• English Only	52.5%	63.6%
• Two or More Languages	47.1%	25.8%

Although the question regarding language in the Vineland Diversity Survey was phrased differently than in the American Community Survey (ACS), we can estimate from the ACS data the number of Vineland residents who speak more than one language well enough to hold a conversation. Our estimate of 25.8% would indicate that the members of the city’s Boards and Commissions who speak two or more languages greatly exceeds the Vineland Community Profile. As with the education results, we view this as a positive.

BOARD OPINIONS

In addition to the demographic information, we asked members for their opinions regarding participation and diversity on the city’s various Boards and Commissions.

QUESTION 1 – *Do you agree or disagree that all members of the community have the opportunity to participate on a city Board or Commission without regard to any identifying diversity characteristics?*

• Strongly agree	49.2%
• Agree	34.9%
• Neither Agree or Disagree	4.7%
• Disagree	1.5%

- Strongly Disagree 6.3%
- Not Sure 3.1%

According to the survey results, an overwhelming majority of current appointees, 84.1%, agree that all members of the community have the opportunity to participate on one of the city's various Boards and Commissions, while only 7.8% disagree.

QUESTION 2 – *Do you agree or disagree that diversity is primarily about ethnicity and gender issues?*

- Strongly Agree 19.0%
- Agree 34.9%
- Neither Agree or Disagree 25.3%
- Strongly Disagree 1.5%
- Disagree 7.9%
- Not Sure 11.1%

According to the survey results, a majority of current appointees, 53.9%, agree that diversity on the city's various Boards and Commissions is primarily about ethnicity and gender issues, while only 9.4% disagree. A plurality of the respondents, 36.4%, had no opinion or were not sure.

QUESTION 3 – *Do you agree or disagree that individuals from different cultures, backgrounds, and genders are actively recruited to serve on Boards and Commissions within the City of Vineland?*

- Strongly Agree 19.0%
- Agree 31.7%
- Neither Agree or Disagree 20.6%
- Strongly Disagree 3.1%
- Disagree 9.5%
- Not Sure 15.8%

According to the survey results, a majority of current appointees, 50.7%, agree that individuals from different cultures, backgrounds, and genders are actively recruited to serve on the city's various Boards and Commissions, while 12.6% disagree. A plurality of the respondents, 36.4%, had no opinion or were not sure.

QUESTION 4 – *Do you agree or disagree that diversity is well represented on the various Boards and Commissions within the City of Vineland?*

- Strongly Agree 15.0%
- Agree 42.0%
- Neither Agree or Disagree 12.0%

- Strongly Disagree 2.0%
- Disagree 14.0%
- Not Sure 15.0%

According to the survey results, a firm majority of current appointees, 57.0%, agree that diversity is well represented on the city's various Boards and Commissions, while 16% disagree. Slightly more than a quarter of the respondents, 27.0% were not sure or had no opinion.

QUESTION 5 – *Would you be comfortable initiating or participating in conversations or discussions with your Board or Commission colleagues, or elected officials within the City of Vineland, regarding diversity issues?*

- Yes I Would 53.0%
- No I Would Not 15.0%
- Depend on Context 32.0%

The Green Team is heartened by the fact that up to 85.0% of sitting Board and Commission members would be willing to have constructive conversations regarding diversity questions.

CONCLUSION

Serving on a municipal Board or Commission is a significant and meaningful way for citizens to participate in civic life. Numerical data gathered as part of the Vineland Diversity Survey demonstrates that successive Vineland administrations have done a good job of making appointments to the city's various Boards and Commissions that are broadly representative of the community profile in key areas such as ethnicity, gender, and age. While there are minor discrepancies, the Green Team does not believe that there are any existing "policies, practices, or procedures" that require corrective legislative or administrative actions. This finding is also in line with the personal opinions expressed by a large majority of current appointees to the city's various Boards and Commissions.

However, this does not mean we shouldn't take every available opportunity to encourage volunteerism and public participation in municipal government. For example, the following are easy to implement suggestions which could help the city recruit and maintain a diverse pool of qualified applicants available to fill future openings.

- Consider adding a statement to the city website specifying that "*The City of Vineland is committed to promoting diversity on its various Boards and Commissions...*"
- Utilize appearances before local clubs, organizations, and community groups to remind the membership about the important work performed by the city's various Boards and Commissions, and to encourage them to participate in this very important aspect of local government.

- In addition to the existing message posted on the “Public Meetings” page of the city website, regularly utilize other public information tools to encourage participation including the Government and Education Cable Channel 9, Municipal Utilities bill inserts, social media platforms, and press announcements.
- Place hard copies of a “Registration Form” for individuals interested in serving on a Board or Commission in public areas of City Hall such as the City Clerk’s office or the Mayor’s waiting area. Those responding would be placed on a waiting list for consideration as openings become available.
- Encourage current Board and Commission members to spread the recruitment message within their social networks and professional associations.
- Create a recruitment brochure and/or flyer that could be distributed to local clubs, organizations, and community groups.
- Consider producing Public Service Announcements for use on local radio and television outlets.

A more public effort at recruiting new applicants will create more visibility for the various Boards and Commissions, identify the valuable work they do, and promote the commitment of the individuals who do the work. Recruitment may also attract qualified individuals who have never before considered the idea of participating in local decision-making or public policy. The more that people are aware of real opportunities to serve on a Board or Commission, and the impact they can have on issues that are important to them, the more likely they are to seek appointment.

Diversity of life experiences is important in developing representative and balanced local practices and policies. A truly sustainable community is one in which all members achieve, participate, and thrive, and where they voluntarily contribute to improving the quality of life and enjoy economic, social, and other benefits of a prosperous and resilient community. Ensuring diversity on municipal Boards and Commissions provides the opportunity of offering different perspectives, sharing different life experiences, and helping to guarantee a fairer and more democratic decision-making process.