

Timothy M. Hanna  
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Re: Resolution #6-R-21

To Members of the Appleton Common Council:

I am writing to you today to talk about culture. Because you are an elected member of the Appleton Common Council you are viewed as a leader in the community. As leaders in the community not only your decisions, your “votes” matter, but also your behavior and the way you go about the City’s business matters. Your collective actions go a long way in setting the culture in our community. It’s one of the reasons why we worked to develop the Code of Conduct so many years ago that you voted to reaffirm at the Common Council’s organizational meeting last week. How you treat each other matters. How you treat staff matters. How you treat members of the public matters. This collective behavior lends itself to building a welcoming culture of respect within the wider community that in turn leads to economic success for our citizens and the community as a whole.

From a big picture point of view and despite the hardships brought on by the pandemic we are still in a competitive economic situation. As a community, as a region and as a State we are in competition for people and talent. The fact is that amongst all the states in the country Wisconsin consistently ranks near, or at the bottom when it comes to racial equity. There are many reasons why this is just simply unacceptable.

The results of the 2020 US census will likely determine that as a country we will have a majority-minority population. The census will show that the makeup of the State’s population continues to diversify, especially in our school-age population. Despite this trend the State continues to struggle to attract a skilled and educated workforce to fill critical roles in our economy. These skilled and educated people are looking for communities that offer a high quality of life that includes opportunities to experience diversity in its broadest sense, i.e. arts, culture, cuisine, etc. They are also looking for places where they feel welcomed, respected, valued and supported.

In order to change not only the perception, but the reality that Wisconsin is not a welcoming place for all people, we need to begin to change the culture. And that cultural change can best be started at the local level. This is where you come in. Your actions, individually, as well as collectively serve to support the kind of community and culture so many people are looking for.

In the midst of all the personal angst over the process surrounding Resolution #6-R-21 I wanted to give you a somewhat broader perspective. I have attempted to give you an economic perspective around this issue. However, make no mistake, this is not just an economic issue, it’s also a human issue and is personal to many in our community...personal, not political. That should be taken seriously when considering your actions on this resolution. I urge your support for this resolution which will be another positive statement about what we expect life to be in a community where every person is respected, valued, supported and welcomed.

Thank you for your consideration and for your service to this great City.

Tim Hanna