




Thomas A. Golden, Jr.
City Manager

MEMORANDUM

TO: Lowell City Council and Mayor Sokhary Chau

FROM: Thomas A. Golden, Jr., City Manager 

CC: Conor Baldwin, CFO; Shawn Machado, Assistant City Manager; Inneabelle Dominguez, Administrative Assistant to the City Manager

DATE: May 23, 2023

SUBJECT: **Informational Re: Human Rights Campaign and MEI Index Re-evaluation**

In February 2023, the City Manager's office reached out to the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) to request a re-evaluation of the Municipal Equality Index (MEI) survey which had been conducted in Lowell in 2020. The City of Lowell received the lowest score on the MEI at that point in time. The MEI examines how inclusive laws, policies, and services are of LGBTQ+ people who live and work in the city. It rates cities based on non-discrimination laws, the municipality as an employer, municipal services, law enforcement and leadership on LGBTQ+ equality. There is a Scorecard provided by the HRC, which allows municipalities to set goals regarding the efforts of the City to support the LGBTQ+ community. The Scorecard also serves as a rubric upon which the City can track information and make adjustments to outdated services and policies provided to the community. The Manager's office has been using this Scorecard as a guide to navigating the improvements which need to be made in order to raise the MEI index score for the City of Lowell.

The Legal Coordinator and Program Manager for Municipal Equality Index at HRC has met with the City Manager's office and agreed to re-evaluate the City of Lowell. The Manager's office has participated in MEI Webinars and meetings with HRC to better understand the process. To prepare for the re-evaluation process, the Manager's office has been working with the Law Department to review policies, laws and city services to determine the inclusivity of the LGBTQ+ community and ways to improve shortcomings in this area. The next MEI index score for the City of Lowell will be determined by HRC year-end 2023.

In addition, an LGBTQ+ Inclusive Diversity Training will be held for all city staff in the fall of 2023. This training will be conducted in a similar fashion to the recent DEI trainings held in conjunction with Middlesex Community College and will be facilitated by MCC professors working in the LGBTQ+ and DEI fields. There is an additional MEI Webinar on Municipal Services which will be held in November 2023, which the Manager's office has signed on to participate in. The City is moving in a positive direction to improve the MEI score.