



Thomas A. Golden, Jr.
City Manager

Ineabelle Dominguez
Administrative Assistant

MEMORANDUM

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

FROM: Melissa Desroches, Executive Assistant to the Manager; Inneabelle Dominguez, Administrative Assistant to the City Manager

CC: Shawn Machado, Assistant City Manager; Conor Baldwin, Chief Financial Officer; Doreen Burgess, Assistant to the City Manager; Mary Callery, HR Director; Corey Williams, City Solicitor; Michael Vaughn, Chief Procurement Officer

DATE: July 25, 2023

SUBJECT: INFORMATIONAL: Human Rights Campaign (HRC) Policy Changes to the City of Lowell New Hire Packet

In February 2023, a letter was sent on behalf of the City Manager's office and the City Council to the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) requesting a re-evaluation of our Municipal Equality Index (MEI) survey score. The MEI is a nationwide evaluation of municipal law. It examines how inclusive municipal laws, policies, and services are of LGBTQ+ people who live and work there. Cities are rated based on non-discrimination laws, the municipality as an employer, municipal services, law enforcement and leadership on LGBTQ+ equality. The MEI rates a total of 506 cities on 49 different criteria from every state in the nation. In Massachusetts, the five largest cities are chosen for evaluation, Lowell included. In 2020, Lowell was evaluated and scored lowest in the state, which is why the re-evaluation is requested.

In addition to requesting the re-evaluation of the MEI index score, the Manager's team has participated in various webinars with the Human Rights Campaign in order to fully understand the scope of the re-evaluation. Members of the team have been in contact with the Legal Coordinator at HRC for guidance and support in this process. During the webinars, the MEI Index Scorecard was explained in great detail. One of the important pieces is making sure the language in the City of Lowell's policies are LGBTQ+ friendly.

The City Manager's Office has been working in conjunction with the Law Department, Human Relations Department and the Purchasing Department on a project to review and update various policies utilized in the HR Department, including the New Hire Packet. An update has been made to the "City of Lowell Employment Application Questionnaire." An additional document has been added to the packet, as "Voluntary Self-Identification Form," which is used in most municipalities and provides individuals with the voluntary right to provide self-identification



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information such as gender identity, disability status, veteran status, EEOC race/ethnic identification categories. The City Manager has signed off on the new, updated policies.

To complete this project, the Manager's Office researched other municipalities such as Worcester, Arlington and Cambridge to get an idea of what those policy packets included. Worcester seems to be the closest fit based on demographic information and the same Plan E form of government.

The team has also been in contact with the Lowell Police Department (LPD) and Lowell Public Schools (LPS) as part of the process for updating and gathering information in regards to policies geared towards the LGBTQ+ community. The LPD is committed to fair and impartial policing for our community and have several policies supporting the LGBTQ+ community, including a Transgender, Intersex, and Gender-Non-Conforming" policy which establishes protocol for interactions with the abovementioned citizens. In the "Workplace Harassment Policy," there is a section specifically geared towards Human Rights Violations and defines it as such: Any action, verbal or physical, or any omission which has as its intent, the contempt, ridicule, degradation or demeaning of a person based solely upon race, religion, physical handicap, gender, sexual orientation, sexual identification, or national origin." The LPS also has policies in place that protect students and their families. Social workers provide counseling and groups for students transitioning and also gender-affirmation contracts.

In addition to updating the new hire packet, the team also reviewed and updated language in various purchasing documents which are utilized in the Procurement Office. These documents provided to vendors during the order/contract process. The documents already state "The City of Lowell is an Equal Opportunity Employer." An additional statement has been added as follows: ***The City of Lowell does not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, or physical/mental disability.***

Please let me know if you have any questions.