

## Working on Equity Enhancements

# City Fleet Department

By Donna Collingwood, Department of Civil Rights

“All fuel pumps at First Street are now open.”

You’ve seen the emails. You think you have an idea about Fleet Service and what they do, just like I did. But like me, maybe you didn’t know they service ALL City vehicles other than Metro buses and vehicles used by the Water Utility. That includes: fire trucks, police cars, snow plows, ambulances, city cars, and more.

There are many areas in the department that will benefit from an equity lens, says Mahanth Joishy, Superintendent of Fleet Service.

One area of opportunity is the vendors that Fleet Service works with, and that is a priority for Mahanth. They purchase a range of products and services: decals for vehicles, vehicle dealerships, auto body shops, tire installers, parts suppliers, vehicle diagnostics, shop equipment, and much more. Mahanth is interested in doing a request for information from any automotive businesses that are minority or women owned. “I would love to tap into any market, whether in Madison, outside Madison, or the Milwaukee and Chicago markets if they provide service, diversity, and high quality vendors. I think there’s an opportunity to work with DCR and the Mayor’s office towards this goal, as well,” he said.

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photo Mark VanderWaal

Tyson, Andy, Jonathan, Katie, Terrell, Nathaniel, Mark, Carlos, Dale, Roger, Randy, Mahanth

## RESJI Poster Campaign

A major component of the Racial Equity and Social Justice Initiative (RESJI) is educating City staff—including all of us who work on the initiative. There is always more to learn.

One of the ways we attempt this lofty goal is through our poster series. We’ve produced eight posters to date, mostly about the terminology of racial justice.

The posters are a collaborative effort of the RESJI Communication Team. Like all RESJI action teams, this team consists of City workers volunteering their time on top of their regular workload.

We send posters out to every office where City staff work. This allows the message to reach those who do not have computers. The hope is for all City employees to be part of this effort to move our City forward.

The posters aren’t time sensitive, like other flyers and posters competing for space on our bulletin boards. Our goal is to have a particular poster up for at least two months.

We send out talking points with the posters. Respectful dialogue is encouraged. The RESJI Communication Team is currently working on a process for facilitated conversations around these sometimes sensitive issues. Stay tuned. 🇺🇸

The department has had some success in diversifying their workforce. Fleet Service is typically the realm of white males, not only here, but also in New York City, where Mahanth lived and worked before moving to Madison. “It’s very difficult to get women of any color to apply to work in our industry,” he said. But the department has made some progress through actively recruiting, and hiring the most highly qualified individuals.

In the last year the hiring of Katie Sprecher as the first-ever female Fleet Technician, Marissa Seeley as the first-ever female High School Apprentice, and Rachel Darken as the new Administrative Assistant, to replace Cathy Mott after her retirement, has doubled the number of female employees in the department—from two to four.

Through their apprenticeship program, they have been able to attract students of color. Since 2018, seven high school students have worked with Fleet Service, four of them of color. This fall there will be four apprentices as the program continues, 2 new and 2 returning as Seniors. The students who are interested in becoming full-time mechanics would then go on to a technical college such as MATC. The hope is that some will come back and work for Fleet Service in the future. These connections are laying the foundation for a more diverse future workforce. Fleet has also revised the test for full-time Fleet Technician. Senior staff believe this, along with the Apprentice Program, will result in a more diverse pool of candidates. Also important is the environmental aspect of their work. In 2020 the Fleet Department will move its headquarters building to Nakoosa Trail and consolidate some of their facilities as part of the move. This will create efficiencies and help reduce carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, and other emissions as cars and trucks will need to take less trips from East to West, and back for servicing. “We hope to improve local air quality,” said Mahanth. “Industrial and trucking routes affect urban areas where economically disadvantaged people live—causing a rise in asthma rates, among other things.”

A related issue to environmental sustainability is safety. The department has a goal of improving the safety of the fleet, meaning traffic safety. They want to see less accidents, using GPS to tracking to improve driver behavior. Traffic safety also disproportionately affects lower income people, according to Mahanth. They are more likely to take public transportation or walk, and so they are more vulnerable to being struck by moving vehicles while on foot.

While they don’t yet have a department equity team, Rachel Darken and Robin McAlister-Sims work with the HR analyst Tameaka Bryant to ensure equity in position descriptions and hiring practices.

“Our entire senior staff is committed to these goals and ideals. The 8 most senior staff at Fleet Service are all in new positions, through promotion or outside hires. We have a brand new data analyst, the first one to ever join Fleet, and the only one any Public Works department has. We hired the best qualified candidate and he happens to be Latino,” said Mahanth. “I’ve already given him a ton of work to do.” He feels they are making inroads towards the division looking more like the City in terms of diversity, but they still have a long way to go. “Our work in this area is certainly not done yet,” he said.

They give tours to students from Madison College and area high schools, hoping to strengthen community connections and get the word out about their apprenticeship program. They are currently working on their City web site, and hope that the web site will further help get the word out and make Fleet Service a more inviting place for ALL community members. 🇺🇸

## Additional Fleet staff



Photo: Mark Vander Waal

*L to R: Marissa Seeley (first-ever female high school apprentice), Rachel Darken, Robin McAlister-Sims, and Katie Sprecher*

## Contracting Equity: We Can Do More

*By Mary Modjeski, Madison Public Library*

As a member of the purchasing team for Madison Public Library, I attended the presentation, Framework for Contracting Equity on June 17th 2019, and I came away with a new understanding of my role as a public servant. I learned that the purchasing decisions we make affect our community, not just based on the things we buy but also who we buy them from. The City of Madison has programs in place that encourage contracting equity, but as a city employee I can do more.

I can encourage library staff to purchase goods and services from minority and women owned businesses and seek out organizations that provide lists of diverse contractors. I can ensure our invoices are paid in a timely fashion since cash flow can be a problem for small businesses, and I can provide feedback on the effectiveness of our existing programs along with suggestions for improvement.

More [Contracting Resources](#) are available on SharePoint under the Contracting Equity tab. 🇺🇸

# Allyship Important to LGBTQ+

By Abbie Kurtz

In her RESJI presentation *The Words We Use and Why*, Ticia Kelsey, LGBTQ+ Senior Advocate from OutReach Inc., explained that often LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and others) people are labeled with derogatory words. The LGBTQ+ community are now defining themselves – who they are and how they want to be seen.

**The language.** Kelsey introduced us to a number of concepts: gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation. Sexual orientation, she explained, is who you're attracted to, while gender identity is who you are on the inside, reflected by your gender expression, how you present yourself on the outside. Gender is cultural – in some cultures you are both male and female, some neither. Sex assigned at birth is not just the familiar male and female; it can be intersex, meaning you are born with male and female genitals.

When I was in high school, we didn't even have words for kinds of gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation, much less these concepts. I remember a boy in one of my classes who had long hair, and always came to school wearing make-up and a dress. He was constantly harassed, but that didn't deter him from expressing who he was. I admired him for that, and wish I'd said something supportive to him.

**Perfection not needed.** It's okay if you get it wrong, Kelsey says. There are so many words to describe a person's gender identity: cisgender, transgender, genderqueer, non binary, agender, bigender, gender non-conforming, as well as the familiar man and woman. But even more important than knowing what the unfamiliar words mean,

is being an Ally. An Ally is a person who shows support and promotes equality for LGBTQ+ people. Being an Ally includes not assuming you know what a person's identity is. You should use the words a person uses to identify themselves to affirm, support, and respect who they are. And, there's a conversation to go with that. You can introduce yourself, with your pronouns, to give a person a safe space in which to share theirs. An Ally teaches in a polite way, and doesn't assume someone is being offensive deliberately – they may just not know or understand.

Kelsey said that since our mission as city workers is to help the public, it's our job to be Allies. She said that we all have biases. We should try to recognize we have them. We can choose to change them or not, but we need to leave our biases at the door when we arrive at work.

## How can the City be an Ally?

City employees can be trained by OutReach staff (Sun Prairie city staff went through this training); have LGBTQ+ reading material and OutReach Material available; use inclusive intake forms and assessment processes (not just male and female as choices for sex, for example); label family bathrooms as gender neutral; and use email signature blocks and nametags that identify preferred pronouns (she, her, hers/he, him, his/they, them, their). The City should stress that being LGBTQ+ makes you a member of a protected class.

That LGBTQ+ people be recognized and integrated into the power structure is crucial, says Kelsey. People living in rural areas, older people, and people of color are especially vulnerable. Forty-one

# An inside view of Imagine Madison's Resident Panels: Community leaders share ups and downs

By Nichole Fromm with Neeyati Shah, Carla Garces, and Kirstie Laatsch

[Resident panels](#) were a technique used by the City's Planning Division to gather input from historically underrepresented residents for Imagine Madison, our Comprehensive Plan. On June 24, 2019, an audience of about three dozen City employees came to a RESJI-sponsored discussion with leaders of four participating community organizations - Jay Botsford, Gloria Castillo, Carla Garces, and Eric S. Upchurch II - facilitated by Kirstie Laatsch of the Planning Division. They provided valuable lessons to City staff.

**Simplifying processes for people-powered planning.** "The City deifies process" to the detriment of relationships and results, observed Eric Upchurch, Chief Visionary at Opportunity Inc., and a key strength of the resident panel process was its simplicity. For example, rather than a lengthy Request for Proposal (RFP), applicants responded to two open-ended questions in a user-friendly Word document. Jay Botsford, Program Coordinator at Wisconsin Transgender Health Coalition, appreciated that it only gathered necessary information.

Some groups also experienced positive side effects. Gloria Castillo, a professional in sustainability and community engagement, said that it was the first time some of the people she worked with had an opportunity to feel heard. Carla Garces, a former co-director of the Latino Academy of Workforce Development, shared that participation in the panel process led to fruitful discussions within that organization.

Most importantly, the resident panels were run without City staff present and weren't recorded. This was crucial, because the presence of people with power inevitably shapes stakeholders' responses.

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## Calendar of Opportunities

8/19/2019

**Community Development Division:**  
Residents First. 1:00-2:00 pm, Room 206, MMB.

8/21/2019

RESJI Part 2, 9am-noon, MMB 153  
**Applying Racial Equity & Social Justice.**

9/16/2019

**Speaker Series: "Approaching MLK's dream"** Markus Bauer, UW-Madison professor, 1-2 pm. Does bias education work? There may be better ways to change behavior.

9/25/2019

RESJI Part 3, 9am-noon, MMB 153,  
**Transformative Leadership & Communication**

10/15 & 10/16/2019

**YWCA Racial Justice Summit**  
The summit focuses on systemic racism and convenes nationally-known keynote speakers and researchers, in addition to local experts and advocates.

## DCR Summer Interns

The Department of Civil Rights is getting help this summer from Binta Ceesay (left) and Treynasha Rolack (right). Binta is an AASPIRE intern and attends UW-Whitewater. Treynasha is a Wanda Fullmore intern and will be starting her senior year at East High School.



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**We need harm repair.** Several themes arose around what the City needs to do better. First, if we hope to gain trust, we must address and repair the harms of the past. Accountability, transparency, and communication are essential.

"The system should code switch," said Jay Botsford, meaning that communication should adapt to the audience and not vice versa. Botsford observed that too much time was spent in the panels explaining written materials to the participants, and suggested that adult education experts should have been consulted. Several speakers observed that there should have been more extensive training for panel facilitators.

More than one speaker pointed out that the resident panels came too late in the process. By the time panels were convened in 2017, it seemed like many major decisions had already been made. Gloria Castillo asked whether community leaders could have been included earlier, to shape the resident program from the start.

Another common observation was that the City could have been clearer about how the panels' input would be used. And the biggest question remains - now what? Circling back with participants and sharing out an annual report of implementation progress is next on the horizon.

**"It takes five years to build a reputation and five minutes to lose it"**  
We were also asked to consider the

## Key takeaways for engagement

- Simplify processes for people powered planning
- Address past harms of City government
- The Institution needs to code-switch
- Start early... no, even earlier
- Biggest question is: now what?
- Keep engaging and listening

sacrifices of community leaders. The emotional labor of taking part in such a process has a cost. And when results are outside community leaders' ability to control or influence, leaders put their own credibility and reputations at stake.

We heard that it is disappointing (to put it mildly) to engage with a City process on behalf of a group when there's no guarantee that the group will be seen and heard, let alone benefit. For example, Jay Botsford pointedly observed that the Comprehensive Plan makes no mention of what the City will do specifically to serve transgender residents. Therefore, it's crucial for City staff to manage expectations.

The work of imagining Madison is by no means finished. As City employees, we would do well to keep listening and follow-through on our promises to the community by implementing the [Imagined Madison Comprehensive Plan](#).

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percent of transgender people have attempted suicide. It's important to know how many LGBTQ+ people there are, knowledge that should be acquired through questions on the Census and other government forms, so enough social services can be offered. LGBTQ+ representation must include LGBTQ+ people of color. OutReach is trying to be inclusive, but has had trouble getting people of color to serve on their Board of Directors.

As Kelsey said, the LGBTQ+ community is not a fad; it is here to stay. We all do better, when we ALL do better. 🏳️‍🌈