

# the review

January / February 2021

the official magazine of the  michigan municipal league

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Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

# the review

The official magazine of the Michigan Municipal League

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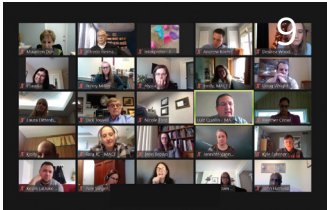
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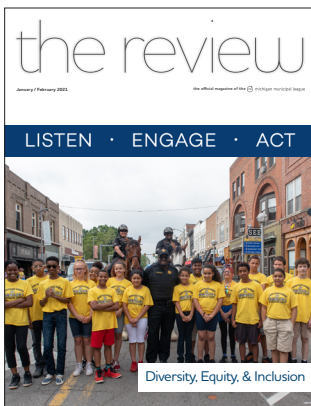
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# the review

The official magazine of the Michigan Municipal League

Volume 94, Number 1

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## Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Is More Important than Ever

What a year it has been! Our lives were disrupted in so many dramatic and profound ways. Not only are we reckoning with a global pandemic unlike any before seen in our lifetime, but also a racial wake-up call that has jarred the American conscience. The economic and social fallouts have been substantial. In addition, the nation faced a presidential election to decide the future trajectory for this country with deep ideological divides. Although we are all anxious to move on and leave 2020 to the historians, there is no doubt we will continue to face enormous challenges in 2021 and beyond. With a new presidential administration on the horizon, many unknowns will continue to challenge our country.

As the pandemic began to take hold, it became clear that people of color were dying at much higher rates than white people in the U.S. Lack of access to healthcare and economic resources hit minority communities especially hard. People of color continue to disproportionately serve as frontline workers, denied the safe opportunity to work remotely. These realities have highlighted, yet again, that we cannot turn a blind eye to the deep-rooted racial issues that confront us. These are times that call for transformative changes. Within a nation built with racial and social injustices entrenched in its structures and systems, those of us who are not members of minority communities play a role in maintaining the status quo, whether consciously or unconsciously. Victories such as the Voting Rights Act and the Civil Rights Act, passed over 50 years ago, were hailed as unprecedented legislative progress—but both fell far short of bestowing the full rights and privileges that they were originally intended to provide. These rights continue to be fought for—often bitterly—today.

As the leader of this organization, I feel that we need to and can do so much more. First, I wanted to step back and engage in my own introspective journey—to reflect on how my own unconscious cultural biases might be playing out in everyday life and actions that I can take both personally and professionally. As a nation, it is important that we do this as well. A first step can be to listen with an open mind, seek out and engage in those uncomfortable and often painful conversations, and question how our own personal behaviors contribute to systemic racism.

Over a decade ago, when the League first began talking about the concepts of making communities more economically sustainable and vibrant through placemaking, one component was the importance of being welcoming to all. That message, of course, continues to be very relevant today, but we needed to put more teeth into it. It is important that we look at placemaking through an equity lens and focus on the human experience by building trust, so that people have a sense of belonging and power to help shape their communities. Too many people are being left out. The Michigan Association of United Ways' ALICE Project delivered a report stating that 43 percent of households in Michigan struggle to afford basic necessities. A disproportionate number of those are minority households. Structures, systems, policies, and laws unfairly impact minority populations. These systemic roadblocks prevent social and economic progress and full participation in our communities.

To help address these issues, the League has expanded its efforts on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Alfredo Hernandez, equity officer at the Michigan Department of Civil Rights, who presented at our virtual Convention in September, defines “equality” as sameness—everyone is given the same thing. In contrast, “equity” is fairness—something we need first, before we can enjoy equality. Diversity is people of different races or cultures, and inclusion is the state of being incorporated within a group. Hernandez offered some powerful lessons on how we can work to achieve Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion as well as on reshaping internal structures, practices, and policies. You can learn more about his important work in this issue. You will also have the opportunity to learn what other communities around Michigan are doing as they take steps to make their communities more equitable.

The League hopes that we can begin to make some demonstrable progress in 2021 and beyond. You will find extensive resources, tools, and strategies on our website to guide you. It is our responsibility as local leaders to actively listen and engage with all of our citizens if real change is going to happen. It is time for all of us to seize this moment.



Daniel P. Gilmartin  
League Executive Director and CEO  
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# CULTIVATING A WELCOMING WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT

By Tedi R. Parsons

The Michigan Municipal League’s long-term commitment to Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) goes as far back as 1978, when the Michigan Women in Municipal Government (MWIMG) was created. Their journey to inclusion continues to this date. To help the League advance other areas of their ongoing DEI efforts, I had the privilege of presenting workshops to League staff on a variety of topics in 2020. One topic we covered recently is microaggressions and micro-affirmations. Here is an overview of what we learned.

## Microaggressions: The New Face of Bullying and Harassment in the Workplace!

Today’s businesses must create and foster an open, affirming, and welcoming environment. Employees want to work for a company that promotes and embodies an inclusive mindset and culture, where the innovators, free-thinkers, and creatives can prosper and succeed. Sometimes, microaggressions can get in the way, causing others to feel bullied, nullified, and excluded. Some are calling microaggressions the new face of racism in the workplace. Microaggressions can serve as another form of discrimination and harassment, which may be more subtle and harder to identify. They can be presented as behaviors that are

not necessarily meant to cause harm or be malicious but can wreak insult or injury to another person or marginalized group. Microaggressions can be everyday verbal, nonverbal, and/or behavioral insults or snubs that may perpetuate a worldview of privilege and superiority. They are often automatic and unintentional, which is usually a result of unconscious or implicit bias. Whether intentional or not, microaggressions can communicate a hostile, derogatory and/or negative message and, left unchecked, can derail an organization’s diversity and inclusion efforts.

Other forms of microaggressive behaviors include microassaults, microinequities, and microinsults. They can present themselves as overt or explicit acts or criticisms, by way of verbal and/or nonverbal attacks. These verbal or nonverbal attacks are meant to hurt the intended victim through name-calling, avoidant behavior, and/or other purposeful, discriminatory, prejudiced, and hateful behavior.

Microaggressive behaviors, in any form, can be the gateway that leads to severe anxiety, depression, and/or sleep difficulties, including insomnia, diminished confidence or a lack of self-worth, a feeling of helplessness, loss of drive or concentration with an ability not to care, or may even lead

to workplace violence. Today's businesses must do everything they can to recognize workplace microaggressions and implement effective ways to ensure they are properly dealt with and removed.

### Addressing microaggressions in the workplace:

- Consistently reevaluate your company's policies and procedures to ensure that microaggressions are not impacting the organization on systemic levels, causing any harm and/or an adverse impact
- Recognize and understand that dismissive attitudes are harmful and damaging to both the organization and team members
- Take time to engage in self-reflection to identify times that you may have exhibited microaggressive behaviors at work
- Participate in ongoing diversity training and professional development
- Avoid making assumptions about others and labeling groups and/or individuals
- Use microaffirmations to make others feel welcomed and included, creating a fully inclusive environment

### Microaffirmations: Small Acts, Big Impacts!

Microaffirmations are subtle and small acknowledgements of a person's value and accomplishments. They can be achieved by nodding, smiling, making eye contact, remembering someone's name, and making people feel welcomed and confirmed.



Microaffirmations can have the power to counteract the negative impact of micro-aggressions or microinequities by bringing out the good in others. This involves more than simply being nice, it means being intentional, transparent, and truthful in all your interactions with others. Microaffirmations can be used to improve the overall culture in your organization and are especially powerful when given by a person with more social and/or economic capital than the recipient.

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### Putting microaffirmations to work:

- Lessen the amount of unconscious bias within yourself by acknowledging and affirming others' accomplishments
- Act as a role model, because when coworkers and employees witness small appreciative acts this allows them to see the effects and encourages them to replicate them
- Create a more productive and inclusive work environment, as appreciation is a core concern for all of us
- Provide consistent positive feedback, which can build on strengths and help correct weaknesses
- Provide unconditional support when others are in distress, (i.e: project fell through, missed a major deadline, did not win a project bid, etc.)
- Offer generous acts of listening and provide unconditional gestures of inclusion and caring

Dr. Mary Rowe, an adjunct professor of negotiation and management at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Sloan School of Management, coined the terms micro-

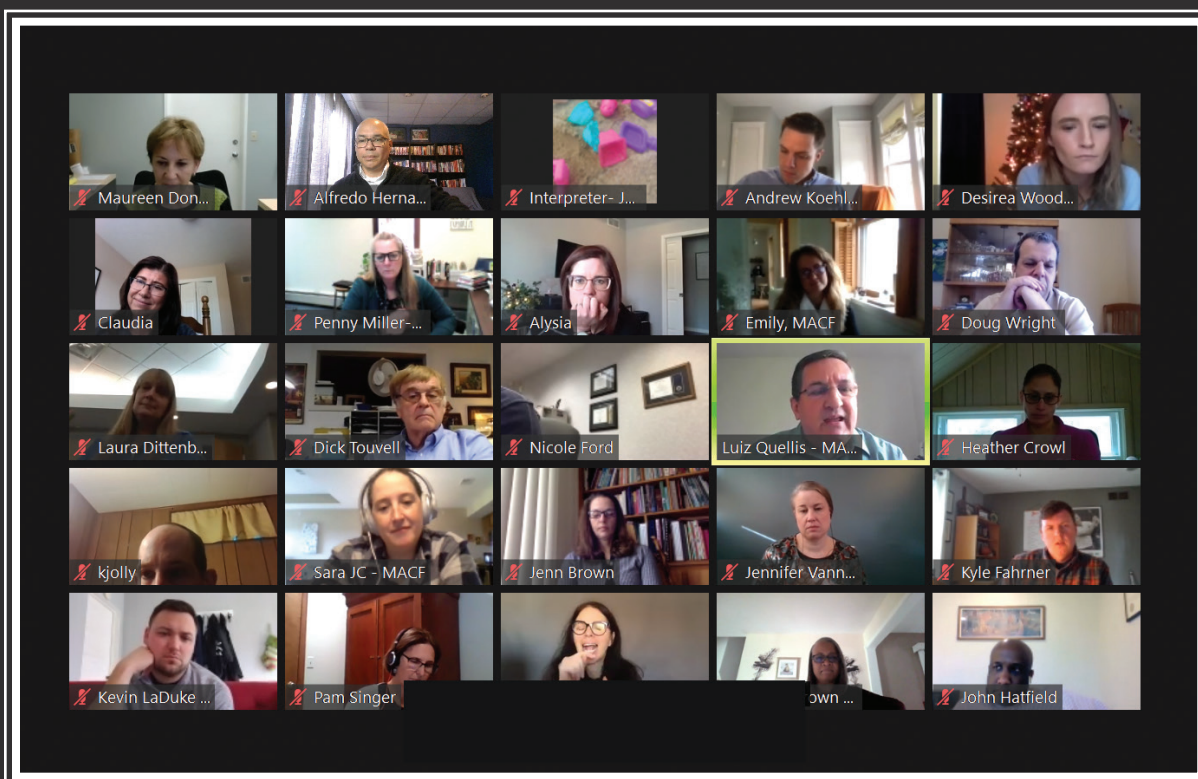
inequities and microaffirmations in 1973. She described micro-affirmations as "Small acts, both public and private, often unconscious but very effective which occur wherever people wish to help others to succeed. Tiny acts of opening doors of opportunity."

More than ever before, businesses must roll-up their sleeves and get in there and do the hard work of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. This means expecting an attitude of openness throughout the entire organization, encouraging and empowering everyone to be part of a fully inclusive culture. Doing this will provide visibility, where others can realize the benefits and importance of diversity and inclusion in the workplace. Above all else, be **COURAGEOUS** enough to interrupt microaggressions and micro-aggressive behaviors and turn them into microaffirmations. 

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# W O K E

## Michigan Ramps Up Equity Efforts



*The Midland Area Community Foundation participates in an Implicit Bias Workshop presented by the Michigan Department of Civil Rights.*


By Alfredo Hernandez

**A**s a society, our country stands for principles that honor, value, and respect the worth and dignity of every human being. We acknowledge that systemic discrimination was practiced and socially accepted in our past, and even recognize that abolishing slavery brought in Jim Crow instead of justice and equality for all. Some also see as undeniable that, even after the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act of 1976, discrimination continues.

Over many decades of living in a society where explicit discrimination is unlawful and no longer socially tolerated, we have become accustomed to viewing prejudice as something practiced only by people not committed to justice and fairness.

Yet, when we ask individuals practicing discrimination why they engage in the prejudicial treatment of others, more often than not we encounter responses that reject allegations of discrimination and/or personal preferences toward treating others unfairly.

The fact is that often when we think of discrimination, it is not difficult to view it as created and practiced by others. Yet, the field of research on implicit bias reveals that there are socio-cultural and biological factors that shape the disconnect between conscious values and unconscious biases, and as experts recognize this dissonance, many strategies to mitigate unintended consequences are taking place at the state level, including implicit bias training for all state employees.



**Prejudice + Power = System of Advantage**

*Power is guided and sustained through dominant narratives*

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**Able-bodiedness prejudice + power = ableism**

**Dominant Narrative:**

*"Oh, I am so sorry..." "You're so inspiring!" "Well, the ADA ensures people with disabilities have full and equal access, so they don't experience the same type of discrimination as they did back then."*

**System:** connected parts forming a complex whole

**Power:** access to social, cultural and economic resources and decision making




The Michigan Department of Civil Rights conducts workshops across the state on implicit bias, civil rights, and equity.

## Intentional Steps

In government, we see increasing efforts focused on dismantling practices that produce discriminatory results. In Michigan, this extends to the highest level of the state—the governor's office—where we see intentional steps such as the establishment of an equity office across every state agency, the formation of a COVID-19 task force on racial disparities, and the appointment of an equity officer in the executive office. These inclusive efforts line up with the work that has taken place and continues to expand in the Michigan Department of Civil Rights (MDCR).

MDCR's primary function is to investigate complaints to determine whether unlawful discrimination has occurred. But MDCR's work also extends externally into strategies designed to strengthen trust between law enforcement and community, as well as educating sectors throughout the state on civil rights laws, sexual harassment, ADA compliance, antibullying, deaf, deaf-blind and hard of hearing accessibility, and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).

In January 2018, MDCR established its Equity Office with the purpose of overseeing internal and external initiatives focused on increasing levels of cultural competence and racial consciousness. Since August 2018, a core team made up of staff members at all levels and representing all job functions has gone through many hours of DEI work. This work has established MDCR as a reputable statewide source for implicit bias education and strategies to operationalize equity.

## Barriers to Inequity

The Equity Office recognizes that even though we would all like to see inequities dismantled, there are factors that impact our personal and collective capacity to do so. For instance, while most of us can acknowledge having personal biases, if we were asked to specifically describe what sexist or racist biases we have internalized, and strategies we are using to mitigate them, most of us still initially struggle to accept that we too have internalized such biases (in contradiction of our acknowledgment that everyone has them). When we are confronted with questions that ask for accountability through reflection and introspection, we often discover there is much personal and collective work to be done.

“... we can transition from acknowledgment of disparities to socially conscious work that intentionally nurtures and sustains inclusive communities that thrive in the innovation, creativity, and broader perspectives that reside in diversity.”


### Tackling Our Implicit Biases

As we work to transition from acknowledgment to transformation, we recognize that an in-depth understanding of how implicit bias impacts us, the work we do, and the people we serve becomes essential. Part of this work requires that we recognize that, as human beings, we are predisposed to form unconscious assessments and make decisions based on the most trivial categories. This human predisposition is not rooted in an explicit desire to exclude others, but on unconscious inclinations to gravitate toward what others perceive as safe.

In addition, we receive repetitive polarized messages that shape how we learn to view ourselves and how we learn to view others. These societal messages are inevitably impacted by residential segregation and a lack of meaningful exposure to diversity.

Furthermore, our brain follows cognitive scripts influenced in part by cultural conditioning and learned associations. Consider a simple math problem: if there are 3 apples and you take away 2, how many do you have ( $3-2=?$ ). Although most of us initially think the answer is 1, once we pause and pay attention to the pronoun (you), we recognize the correct response is 2. When our brain goes into auto pilot, far too often we end up with the wrong answer to a question to which we know the right answer. When our brain follows cognitive scripts, it simply fills in the gaps with what it knows. For example, it doesn't matter in what order the letters in a word are, the only important thing is that the first and last letter be at the right place. The rest can be a total mess and you can still read it without problem.

In summary, although explicit discrimination still exists and continues to be a problem, implicit bias impacts our decision-making process even when our intentions are good. As a result, we must actively engage in dismantling inequity by moving away from a focus on intent to one exploring the impact of our actions. Through strategies designed to mitigate the impact of implicit bias, we can

transition from acknowledgment of disparities to socially conscious work that intentionally nurtures and sustains inclusive communities that thrive in the innovation, creativity, and broader perspectives that reside in diversity. 

*Alfredo Hernandez is the equity officer for the Michigan Department of Civil Rights. You may contact him at 517.335.0781 or [HernandezA3@michigan.gov](mailto:HernandezA3@michigan.gov).*

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# BATTLE CREEK PULLS TOGETHER TO FIGHT RACIAL INEQUITY

By Dr. Nakia Baylis, Rebecca L. Fleury, Dr. Elishae Johnson, L.E. Johnson II, Jessica VanderKolk, and Kyra Wallace

**T**he African American Collaborative in Battle Creek stands as a collective voice for the African-American community in the city, and as a partner in the local and global movements for equity for marginalized communities.

During the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, members of the collaborative met with city and county leaders. Their goal was to decrease the negative impacts of COVID-19, which were anticipated to disproportionately affect the African-American community.

In response to the pandemic, the local chapters of the NAACP, A. Philip Randolph Institute, and the National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women's Clubs Inc. formed a sub-group to deliver groceries and medicine to senior citizens. RISE Corp., Sanctuary of Praise Church of God in Christ, and the Urban League also formed a sub-group, delivering groceries to families with school-aged children. Because the need was so great, RISE started a Friday food drive, weekly serving nearly 300 families. Alongside these immediate efforts, the Urban League began working with local philanthropic partners to develop a plan to address the long-term community economic impacts of the pandemic.

In the midst of the pandemic and our local responses, the racial tension across the United States took on a new form with the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis. Pandemonium broke out across the country, and we worried how our own community would express itself, as we watched riots erupt in nearby cities.

In Battle Creek, the African American Collaborative made a clarion call for solidarity, and for justice for George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and the African diaspora at large; hundreds of years of oppression had come to a head, motivating action.

On May 31, 2020, the collaborative organized a gridlock protest. The intent was to build a local solidarity movement, bringing community awareness to the systemic oppression of neighbors of African descent, educating concerned citizens about cultural and covert racism that is invisible to the racialized and privileged eye, and making a local demand for better. The gridlock shut down two downtown thoroughfares

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**...we are advancing authentic and meaningful relationships between city leaders and some of our community's most marginalized members.**

in Battle Creek, with an estimated 700 to 1,000 attendees. The protest ended—peacefully—in about 90 minutes. African-American officials spoke, and community members of all races and ethnicities spoke with support, meeting the protest's goals.

City leaders and the Battle Creek Police Department supported this and other peaceful protests and demonstrations. After the gridlock protest, young African-American leaders took the message to the streets, working to ensure that those who did not value their cause heard their voices. They walked eight miles through the southern, majority Caucasian part of the city, ending downtown at City Hall. They created a second gridlock, shutting down two more main thoroughfares for eight hours.

These events led to in-depth conversations between Collaborative and city leaders. The African-American Collaborative Systems team—Dr. Nakia Baylis, Dr. Elishae Johnson, L.E. Johnson II, and Kyra Wallace—met city leaders with three requests.

First, they suggested that the city needed a continued conversation with the African-American community to address local disparities and concerns. Second, they requested development of an Equity Alliance, in which Communities of Color could be thought partners with the city to advance equity on a consistent basis. Third, they suggested the city conduct an equity audit to ensure leaders have a thorough awareness of inequities and a plan to appropriately address them.

*Keith Matthews of Cool People speaks during the Let's Get Real Series on Aug. 31, 2020 at Friendship Park in Battle Creek.*  
©Alyssa Keown | The Battle Creek Enquirer via Imagn Content Services, LLC.



The Southwestern Michigan Urban League and the African American Collaborative, in partnership with the City of Battle Creek, debuted the Let's Get Real Series at Friendship Park. @ Alyssa Keown | The Battle Creek Enquirer via Imagn Content Services, LLC.

## Let's Get Real

The conversations advanced with the development of the Let's Get Real series to address the concerns, aspirations, and expectations of the African-American community in Battle Creek. The first of these community conversations was held Aug. 31, 2020, facilitated by the Southwestern Michigan Urban League and the African American Collaborative. They asked participants to consider the question, "How are you feeling about your experience as an African-American community member in Battle Creek?"

At least 50 people attended. Some who shared their thoughts and experiences were raw and angry, others were inquisitive and questioning, and still others shared stories and feelings. Participating and listening were City Manager Rebecca Fleury and Police Chief Jim Blocker, as well as Dr. Baylis, Dr. Johnson, Mr. Johnson, and Ms. Wallace.

Many comments focused on interactions with the police department, components of the justice system, the upcoming election, and a shared agreement that this would be the first of several conversations. Each one will help determine the focus of the next. We are planning the second conversation for January 2021. It will focus on the justice system in Calhoun County, including participants from the Battle Creek Police Department, Calhoun County Sheriff's Office, Calhoun County Prosecutor's Office, and Calhoun County courts.


## City Equity Audit

We have worked together on a scope of work for the city's equity audit, with three phases. First is a focus on policy and practice—a review of the city's human resources systems and police community relations. Second is creating an implementation plan based on the findings from phase one. Third will be the plan implementation.

City leaders believe the equity audit will examine internal and external city systems and how they interact with community systems. Fleury hopes the audit will reveal areas

of need, and any existing barriers. She also hopes the audit will examine current efforts, including implicit bias training, and curriculum development around diversity, equity, and inclusion, in partnership with the Michigan Departments of Civil Rights and Education.

We are in the early stages of developing an Equity Alliance in Battle Creek. As that begins, we are advancing authentic and meaningful relationships between city leaders and some of our community's most marginalized members. The "Let's Get Real" series is the start of a new way government interacts with its citizens. Though challenging, the unknowns around this new narrative have not stopped our forward movement.

This is new and exciting territory for Battle Creek. Some have kept their community's status quo, leaving marginalized members behind. Others have chosen to do nothing. To paraphrase the poet Robert Frost, we have chosen the road less traveled, and that will make all the difference for all people in the City of Battle Creek. 

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*Jessica VanderKolk is the communications manager for the City of Battle Creek.*

*Kyra Wallace is the chief executive officer for the Southwestern Michigan Urban League.*



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*Washtenaw County Sheriff's officers and members of the Junior Police Academy were a standout in a 4th of July parade.*

# THE FUTURE OF PUBLIC SAFETY

## REIMAGINING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

By Jerry L. Clayton & Derrick Jackson

**W**hen you look at the badge, what do you see? Do you see honor and integrity or fear and disdain? For many of us, how we view the badge is greatly influenced by the seats we sit in and the stakeholder groups we represent. Regardless of how you answer that question, what we hope to share with you today is possibility.

We know that during these times of debate and protest around police brutality, when it seems that there is a daily reminder of police violence, this work can seem hopeless or helpless. We know there is pressure for government officials to take immediate action, and in our roles as criminal justice leaders we feel that pressure each and every day. However, we want to encourage you to be thoughtful and deliberate strategists. Recognizing that we didn't get here yesterday, and we won't be out of this tomorrow, it is our deliberate steps that will help us reach the ultimate goal. We all know that shallow promises and rash commitments to change without real knowledge of organizational structures and systems and the origins of the problems we face will only lead to failure, or at best won't create a path towards the impactful and sustainable change we all desire.

### Intentional Community Engagement

We also know that if you're attempting to build community trust in the midst of a crisis, you're too late and are destined to face tremendous challenges. That's why, from our first day in office and for the last twelve years here in Washtenaw County, Mich., we have worked to intentionally and systematically build strong relationships between community residents and the police service professionals who are committed to serving them. Yes, we have instituted some of the traditional ways of engaging community members. But we have also been courageous and innovative in changing our organizational culture. We recognized early on what former Ford Motor Company CEO Mark Fields once stated: "You can have the best plan in the world, and if the culture isn't going to let it happen, it's going to die on the vine."

From the start, our executive team focused on leading cultural change by clarifying our basic assumptions and beliefs around who we are and why we exist. We worked to establish our core values and the behavioral expectations that guide staff performance. We also redefined community engagement as a foundational component of our Police Services operational philosophy. Members of our



organization know that our commitment to community leadership/partnership and engagement requires more than just implementing a few neighborhood programs or a special unit. For us, it is central to who we are and essential for our ability to “co-produce” public safety with our community partners.

Some of this may seem like semantics, but words matter and speak to our beliefs. It’s those beliefs and basic assumptions that feed our values, and those values show up in how and why we do the work that we do. For example, we do not employ law enforcement officers. We hire police service professionals. Our staff do enforce the law; however, their actions are in support of a larger mission. A mission that requires us to provide a variety of crucial services to our community beyond solely enforcement of the law.

### Solution-Oriented

We believe that we are not only crime fighters, but problem solvers. Yes, much of what we ask of our police service professionals is to solve crimes. But when exploring the root causes of that crime in collaboration with community partners, we develop solutions to community challenges that may require more than an arrest. Don’t get us wrong, our staff are not out attempting to be everything to everyone. In fact, some solutions do not require an arrest or the involvement of our staff beyond the initial discussion and referral to a more appropriate community resource. In other words, an arrest is but one tool at our deputies’ disposal. It’s our obligation to provide them with knowledge, skills, and alternative systems to be successful. In our county, our mission is to Create Public

Safety, Provide Quality Service, and Build Strong & Sustainable Communities. These words matter.

### Public Safety and Mental Health Preservation Millage

They matter so much in Washtenaw County that voters put their money where their mouth is and approved a Public Safety and Mental Health Preservation millage, a first-of-its-kind in the state of Michigan. Where some hear the defund police discussion as a race to the bottom that pits human services against police services, we understand that the two systems are inextricably linked and that police services is an extension of human services. When individuals suffering from a mental health crisis or substance use disorder aren’t provided with the appropriate care, many times they wind up interacting with the criminal justice system. Our millage funds weren’t



Washtenaw County Sheriff Jerry Clayton reads to kids at the Sheriff’s Office annual Open House.




Officers from the Washtenaw County Sheriff's Office share a smile and a fist bump with local children.

allocated in order to build larger, separate silos between systems. Voters expected, funded, and now demand that our systems are seamless. Here are just a few examples of what this looks like in practice:

- Our crisis negotiators and SWAT Teams now consist of community mental health workers. They train together, deploy together, and work side by side to bring crisis situations to a peaceful resolution.
- We now have a 24-hour mental health crisis response team in our county so that officers can call upon them anytime they identify a behavioral health issue.
- In our county, there is also an Assessment Center. This is a 23-hour stay facility so that officers and community members do not need to arrest or transport someone in crisis to the hospital.

There are many more examples, but we think it's important to point out that we didn't just get here overnight. It has been twelve years of intentional and systematic engagement with our community in order to create a relationship, trust, and understanding. Sometimes we speak and educate, and other times we sit back, listen, and learn. Whether it is a one-time large town hall session with 800 people in the room or small intimate dinner settings where we meet regularly just to talk, they are all designed with a purpose. It's the work of our Community Outreach Team, a group of formerly justice-

involved individuals who now work for the Sheriff's Office. They are not informants or paid to sweep our floors, but experts on community. It's our 21st Century Policing Compliance Commission, made up of residents and staff who work together to ensure we are fully compliant with the recommendations of the 21st Century Policing Report. It's also the courage to add residents to our officer hiring panels so that community members have a say in who patrols their neighborhoods.

Community engagement is in everything we do. It's in the words we use, the people we hire, the skills we provide, and the systems we've built. Simply put, it's in our DNA. 

*Jerry L. Clayton is the sheriff of Washtenaw County. You may contact him at 734.395.7893 or [wyattk@washtenaw.org](mailto:wyattk@washtenaw.org).*

*Derrick Jackson is the director of community engagement for the Washtenaw County Sheriff's Office. You may contact him at 734.973.4503 or [jacksond@washtenaw.org](mailto:jacksond@washtenaw.org).*



Officer Simone Mack helps a child wrap a Christmas gift at the annual Shop With a Cop event.



Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has forced many changes in the workplace: working from home, Zoom meetings, social distancing when returning. All of this while you still need to provide communication to your staff and residents. During this time, Abilita—MML's endorsed communications technology consulting partner—may be able to help. They can advise on your remote options for voice, chat, and video collaboration with co-workers. In addition, they will find ways to reduce your telecom spending while freeing up staff time.

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# GENDER DIVERSITY

## AMPLIFYING WOMEN'S ROLES IN THE WORKPLACE

By Lisa Donovan

**T**he third time is the charm! That phrase was never more true than when applied to Frances McMullan. After years in local government, including three stints as interim city manager, she now holds the top spot as Ypsilanti's city manager. She's the first woman to hold that position as well as the first Black woman.

"This time I decided I've done this work, I'm ready, I can handle it," said McMullan, who was offered the city manager position in 2019.

McMullan's success represents what numerous studies have shown about the benefits of striving for gender diversity in the workplace. Encouraging women to join your organization opens the talent pool to the skills and abilities of nearly half the population. Adding women to the team brings in different viewpoints and approaches, which can spark creativity and innovation. Group collaboration gets a boost when women are involved, as does morale and opportunity. A more gender diverse workforce better represents the make-up of your stakeholders. And, having an inclusive workplace enhances your organization's recruitment and reputation.

**"We're perceptive and able to read between the lines. We're also creative thinkers and bring color and zest to an organization."**

**-Frances McMullan, Ypsilanti City Manager**

"Women bring great communication skills," said McMullan. "We're perceptive and able to read between the lines. We're also creative thinkers and bring color and zest to an organization."



### Ongoing Challenge of Gender Diversity

Despite all these advantages, gender diversity continues to be a challenge in modern workplaces, particularly in upper management. White men hold 68 percent of executive-level manager positions compared with 19 percent for white women, according to the Women in the Workplace 2018 report by Leanin.org, a nonprofit group dedicated to fighting workplace gender bias, and consulting firm McKinsey & Co. The statistics are even more stark for people of color, with only nine percent of men and four percent of women holding those posts.

*Photo Caption: Frances McMullan gets involved in a variety of community-minded activities, including the Black Women in Michigan Politics event.*

A similar situation exists in local government. Although women make up over 50 percent of Michigan's general population, only 16 percent of Michigan municipal managers are women. This deficit led the Michigan Municipal League to develop the aptly named 16/50 Project. The aim of the project is to advance and prepare women for greater responsibilities in the local government realm.



## Cultivating Women Leaders

The Women's Municipal Leadership Program (WMLP) is one of the project's key tools to accomplish that goal.

WMLP prepares women to make bold moves forward in their careers by offering a comprehensive curriculum on topics including municipal budgeting and finance, economic development, council-manager relations, and interviewing and negotiating. The program also develops leadership skills through coaching and mentoring.

McMullan was elated when she read about the League's new WMLP. "I've got to be in that class," she said. "I need something to put me over the line, to help crash the glass ceiling."

After a very competitive application process, McMullan became part of the first WMLP class in 2018. Since its inception, 84 women have now completed the WMLP and eight, including McMullan, have gone on to obtain top positions in local government.

By the time she was accepted into the WMLP, McMullan had worked in local government for almost 30 years. After graduating from Eastern Michigan University with a bachelor's degree in public administration, she worked for the City of Ann Arbor for 13 years in a variety of departments including transportation, building, and treasury. Eighteen years ago, she made the move to the City of Ypsilanti, where she primarily served as city clerk.

On three occasions during her tenure, she served as interim manager. The first time, she chose not to apply for the city manager position. The second time, she was one of two finalists but withdrew her name from consideration because she didn't feel adequately prepared. The third time —after completing the WMLP—she was ready and eagerly accepted when the Ypsilanti City Council offered her the city manager position.

"I can now say I've been exposed to valuable training with the credibility of the League behind it," said McMullan. "That carries a lot of weight with other managers and city officials who make those hiring decisions. It was exactly what I needed."

## Seeking Out Mentors

Along her career path, McMullan was fortunate to have several mentors to help guide her.

Winifred Norcross, former city clerk in the City of Ann Arbor, gave McMullan her first opportunity in the city clerk's office and provided her with a lot of insight into how things work in city government.

Willie Powell, former executive director of Ann Arbor's pension system, helped McMullan understand the principles of accounting and government finance.

Another mentor is Ypsilanti Mayor Lois Allen-Richardson, who was also a long-time Ypsilanti councilmember.

Allen-Richardson saw in McMullan a person who was diligent and worked well with council, staff, and residents. She invited McMullan to a variety of events to expose her to the broader world of local government and encouraged her to prepare to become city manager.

"Sometimes we don't see the potential in ourselves that others see," said Allen-Richardson. "I saw her potential."

Joyce Parker has also been instrumental in McMullan's career. As an executive recruiter for the Michigan Municipal League, Parker had the opportunity to work with her on a couple occasions in the process of filling the



*Photo Caption: Frances (far left) joins in on a groundbreaking ceremony for a new basketball court and play equipment at Parkridge Park.*

## WOMEN'S MUNICIPAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

PRESENTED BY THE 16/50 PROJECT




Ypsilanti city manager position. McMullan views Parker as a role model and a great source of information when she has questions.

"Frances was able to come into the position not only with an understanding of how the city operates, but with relationships that help her do a much better job in the community," said Parker, who is now the deputy state treasurer for the Michigan Department of Treasury. "She's a consensus builder and has taken the time to build the relationships that are necessary to work at that capacity."

McMullan is very appreciative of the people who have guided her along her career journey and tries to do the same thing for other women in the profession. She shares the knowledge she has acquired over the years and encourages them to get involved in clerk's or manager's associations.

"Sharpen your skillset so you're more confident," she advises. "Reach out to experts in different areas and pick their brain. You can learn a lot from other people's experience."

McMullan also gives kudos to her staff for helping her be successful in Ypsilanti. She was an outsider when she joined the team and needed to learn about the Ypsilanti way of doing things. From the clerk's office to the city manager's office, McMullan's staff has always been willing to share their knowledge and help acclimate her to the job.

"They embraced me and brought me up to speed on city and organizational culture," said McMullan. "They have been a very important asset." 

*Lisa Donovan is the communications specialist and editor for the League. You may contact her at [ldonovan@mml.org](mailto:ldonovan@mml.org).*



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Re-Imagining Community Engagement

### The Future of Public Safety Webinar Series:

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Available in several formats: PowerPoint, YouTube, and podcast—at [mml.org/dei](https://mml.org/dei).

The League has compiled the resources on this page in support of our members as we move together towards a better understanding of racial injustice in our communities, and our role in correcting it.



[mml.org/dei](https://mml.org/dei)



# A CASE FOR DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

By Shawna Forbes, Ph.D.

In the summer of 2020, I had the opportunity to present a workshop to Michigan Municipal League staff on implicit biases. In the process, I learned about many of the League's efforts in the realm of diversity, equity, and inclusion. The League has been a leading organization in implementing best practices throughout the region. Since 2015, the League has made a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, starting with an organizational position statement and expanding into actionable steps for the organization. Being one of the first to embrace the notion of celebrating an inclusive environment, the League created a Diversity Team that focused on the integration of diversity and inclusion into its policies and practices. The organization continues to make strides in creating an organization that reflects diversity with inclusion; a place where talent is welcomed and respected.

“

...creating a diverse workforce without inclusion and equity tends to do nothing more than produce a nice melody of individuals sharing a common workspace.

”

As a result of globalization, diversity and inclusion have become buzz words and many organizations have expanded their mission statements to include a commitment to a diverse workplace. As organizations look to meet the needs of a global consumer, a culturally diverse workforce is better positioned to assess emerging trends that may reflect a more comprehensive customer base. The myriad of experiences and perspectives that a diverse team brings to the table allows the organization to respond more effectively to challenges in a manner that is most beneficial to the organization and its customers.

In addition, a diverse work environment often attracts diverse talent and generally creates a competitive advantage in terms of being able to effectively connect with a diverse customer base. Diversity is defined as the uniqueness of an individual that is represented within the workplace. This distinctness includes a broad range of identifiers such as race, religion,

gender, political affiliation, social economic status, veterans, disabilities, and a host of other identifiers.

An organization with a diverse workforce tends to have the advantage of a business that reflects a broader way of thinking and analyzing challenges that emerge within the marketplace.

### **Diversity Is Just the Start**

However, creating a diverse workforce without inclusion and equity tends to do nothing more than produce a nice melody of individuals sharing a common workspace. To achieve the benefits of a diverse team, inclusion and equity are key. Inclusion is when employees feel that their contributions are valued, respected, and are welcomed within the workplace in a meaningful way. This means being invited to participate in meetings, given projects that are high profile, allowed to create new products, and asked to contribute to the planning



of various initiatives. On the other hand, equity is a concept of fairness; equity provides access to opportunities and resources to ensure that every employee has what he/she needs to be successful, particularly those members of traditionally marginalized groups.

### Facing Our Implicit Biases

So, if diversity within the workplace is so valuable, why do so many organizations encounter challenges when attempting to achieve an inclusive team? Research suggests that our unconscious or implicit biases are the underlying reason we struggle to achieve diversity, inclusion, and equity. In its most simplistic definition, implicit bias is the unconscious tendency to favor one thing over another and this includes food, cars, and yes, people. There has been a great deal of research focused on implicit biases ranging from a study of racial biases in evaluation against NBA players by referees to gender biases against women by primary care physicians. Our implicit biases unconsciously influence our beliefs and attitudes towards individuals whom we associate with in a particular social group; as a result people hold positive and negative beliefs and attitudes

towards individuals based on race, gender, sexuality, political affiliation, attractiveness, and host of other characteristics. These implicit biases have an impact on behavior and tend to show up in a number of different ways involving decisions like who gets hired, who gets promoted, the amount of a pay increase a person receives, and who is assigned to high-profile projects. The cost of these hidden implicit biases, that is found deep in our mental processes, is the potential for unfair decisions and treatment.

### Key Elements for Inclusive Environments

While everyone has unconscious biases that are hardwired in the brain, people often feel negatively judged for acknowledging having any such implicit predispositions. However, acknowledging this fact is the first step to challenging these automatic preferences of one group over another that may be causing a barrier for creating an inclusive work environment. Authors Laura Sherbin and Ripa Rashid published an article in the *Harvard Business Review* highlighting four major factors that appear to influence and support inclusive work environments, including:



D I V E R S I T Y

&


I N C L U S I O N

1. An inclusive leadership style. A leader who creates safe spaces for employees to be innovative and emboldened to make decisions. This leadership style provides measurable feedback and shares successes with the team.
2. The ability to represent the authentic you. There are many advantages of employees being able to express the uniqueness that they bring to the workplace; gender, sexuality, or race have value in authenticity.
3. Having a mentor to increase protégé visibility. Identifying an executive-level mentor who can advocate for high profile assignments is critical in career advancement. Women, people of color, and other marginalized groups benefit from this type of networking and sponsorship.
4. Identifying a clear career pathway. Organizations can support inclusive work environments by creating various career tracks that identify advancement for marginalized or under-represented groups.

One of the most important elements in attracting and retaining a talented workforce is diversity and inclusion within the workplace. Organizations can benefit from integrating these four strategies into the work environment as a part of the commitment to DEI. Organizations looking to take more impactful steps should consider such initiatives as establishing inclusive language in company policies, adding diversity and inclusion statements into the mission, creating blind hiring practices, offering ongoing professional development, and outlining standardized practices for promotions and salary increases.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion can be considered a business model that maximizes team members' talent and fosters employee innovation within the workplace. However,

we must continue to challenge those implicit biases that may unfairly impact our attitudes toward individuals, leaving them feeling excluded. In the words of Diversity Coach Verna Myers, "Diversity is being invited to the party. Inclusion is being asked to dance." The goal of DEI is creating environments where diverse talents can thrive.

For those interested in discovering more about implicit biases, Harvard University is hosting a free online assessment by Project Implicit that can be found here: [implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/user/agg/blindspot/indexflowerinsect.htm](https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/user/agg/blindspot/indexflowerinsect.htm). 

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# HARPER WOODS ACTIVELY ADDRESSES RACISM

By Ernestine Lyons

As a councilmember in the City of Harper Woods, I take my role very seriously and continually strive to improve my community, particularly in the area of race relations. In 2017, I saw that there was a lack of unity in the city as racial and socio-economic shifts created a chasm between longtime Harper Woods residents and new residents who had different cultural backgrounds and a different perspective on community. To help bridge that divide, I partnered with an organization called Pedal to Porch, founded by Cornetta Lane. The storytelling bike tour was designed to tell the history of communities and bring attention to stories of unity. The event was well attended and attracted a lot of local attention from citizens as well as the press. People felt a new sense of togetherness.



**As a community, we put in place a road map on committing to antiracism.”**

HARPER WOODS  
pop. 14,236



Next, I focused my attention on the decline in businesses on Kelly Road and Eastland Center mall. The city was fortunate to be able to work with students from the University of Michigan’s Urban and Regional Planning Program on a plan to improve the business environment on Kelly Road. The plan suggested incentivizing small businesses with a grant matching program. This effort has not only spurred a new interest in small businesses but also strengthened ties between existing businesses and citizens.

Another economic development effort I was instrumental in bringing to the city is Harper Woods Soup, modeled after the Detroit Soup program run by the Build Institute. Since 2019, the city has been hosting these events designed to encourage creative ideas and projects. For a \$5 donation, attendees receive soup, salad, bread, and a vote as they hear four business pitches. The winner goes home with all the money raised to help them develop the project they presented. The hope is that the entrepreneurs will go on to open a brick and mortar location on Kelly Road. To date, Harper Woods Soup has raised more than \$2,500 for small businesses.

Last year, we continued these efforts with a shift to a virtual format in October. And thanks to funding from a Michigan Municipal League Foundation Bridge Builder’s micro grant, we were able to help new and existing businesses seeking to bounce back from the hardships of weathering COVID-19.

## Open Discussion on Race Relations

In 2020, numerous events brought race relations to the forefront across our country. Outrage over the death of George Floyd at the hands of racist police sparked the need to dismantle systems of injustice and rebuild with antiracist systems of justice and equity. The protests that have taken place in our country show that we should be doing more to have constructive conversations around inclusion and dismantling discriminatory systems.

# A CONVERSATION ON BIAS, WHITE FRAGILITY AND ANTI-BLACKNESS



An open forum and healing workshop.  
With Lois Parr of Justice Leaders Network & Allies for Change.  
Moderated by Ernestine Lyons.



To address this situation on a local level, I proposed having a public discussion on racism and how it is a social system designed to oppress. The national narrative and consciousness were beginning to recognize that we as a society need to dismantle this system. As a community, we put in place a road map on committing to antiracism. This led to the establishment of a series of virtual public discussions on diversity, anti-blackness, white fragility, and biases.

The first event was a Juneteenth healing workshop, led by Dr. Lois Parr of Justice Leaders Network & Allies for Change, an expert in cultural sensitivity training and anti-racism work. A diverse, multigenerational group of officials and citizens explored terms and concepts relating to systemic racism and its implications. The second workshop, held on July 4, 2020, explored the books *How to be an Antiracist* by Ibram X. Kendi and *White Fragility* by Robin DiAngelo and questioned what it means to celebrate freedom. The third workshop, entitled *A Conversation on Social Justice and Community Policing*, took place in September 2020. This session focused on law enforcement and equity, which was particularly important as the city was facing increased racial dissonance after the death of Priscilla Slater in police custody followed by the resignation of the mayor.

Although people were often intimidated by the titles of the events, they were able to engage in meaningful dialogue on race, equality, and bias. Many discovered a lot about their neighbors and had moments of introspection and catharsis. This was a positively received first step in learning to give more than lip service to the work of having conversations about racism, but actively contribute to a more just world.

## Anti-Racism Resolution


Since the public discussions, I have continued to keep the city's pursuit of justice and equality at the forefront. I pushed for our city to adopt an anti-racism declaration, which was collectively written by the city council. The *Resolution in Support of Restorative and Transformative Justice* spelled out Harper Woods' commitment to addressing racial disparities in our community. We collectively vowed that the mayor and city council will work with organizations and our community toward justice, with the recognition of the interconnected nature of racism and systemic oppression based on socio-economic status, ability, age, gender identity, sexual orientation, and language. We wanted to recognize that the fight for diversity, accessibility, equality, equity, and civil rights continues, and urge all people to demand justice against racist and discriminatory practices.



The resolution was adopted unanimously by our city government in October 2020. In furtherance of the resolution's intent, our city employees underwent mandatory cultural sensitivity training and the city continues to have virtual conversations around community policing, diversity in policing, and public health disparities. I have also begun talks with our public libraries to take the conversation to a wider audience by revisiting the books *How to Be an Antiracist* and *White Fragility* in early 2021.

It's long overdue that the City of Harper Woods commits to being anti-racist and has open discussions on the biases and systemic injustice that run deep in our society. The coronavirus pandemic has shed new light on the need to address health injustices, economic injustice, and strive to be the best version of ourselves. We need to create a community built on civility, community, and empathy.

There has been much upheaval in our country and indeed our city this past year. The difficult things we face will not go away by failing to acknowledge that there is work to be done. We have to take a deep introspective look inside and be strong enough to make goals and tackle our problems head-on.

We, as a society, can come together and be custodians of our shared human experiences. Even when something doesn't impact you directly, it's important to see each other and acknowledge each other's struggles. In the process, hopefully our collective actions can lead to solutions. We have to see each other's values, fears, hopes, and challenges. We should never allow fear and hatred to divide us. 

*Ernestine Lyons is a councilmember in the City of Harper Woods. You may contact her at 313.515.5818 or [ernie1786@gmail.com](mailto:ernie1786@gmail.com).*





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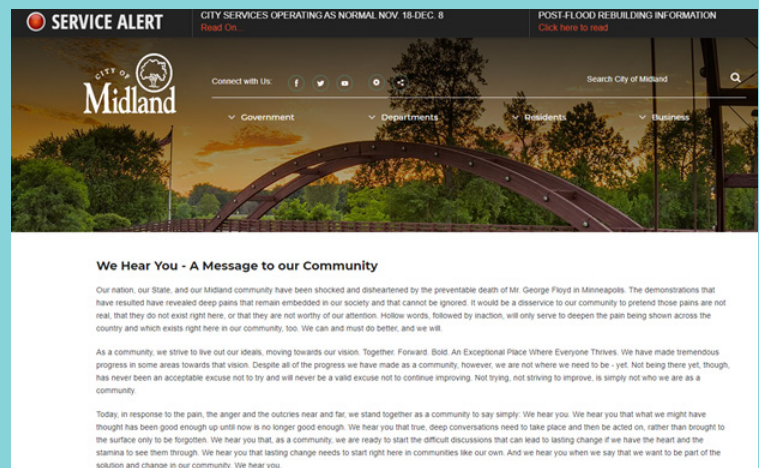
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## DEI SAMPLE MEMBER POLICIES



On the Michigan Municipal League Diversity, Equity & Inclusion site, we have assembled a variety of sample member policies that address discrimination, police misconduct, or racial inequity—please share your own policies as examples for others to draw on. They range from community-wide communications, like the example shown on this page, to community benefits ordinances and racism as a public health crisis.



**To learn more, visit [mml.org/dei](http://mml.org/dei).**



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# Claim of Constitutional Violation of Right to Bodily Integrity Acknowledged in Flint Water Case

In 2016, Melissa Mays and others sued Michigan Governor Rick Snyder (Snyder), the State of Michigan (State), various departments within the State, and former Flint emergency managers for injuries sustained as a result of actions taken by the defendants during the “Flint water crisis.” The plaintiffs claimed the following actions were taken by state and local actors.

Detroit Water and Sewerage Department (DWSD) supplied water to Flint from 1964 through late April 2014. In 2013, Snyder authorized a contract to explore the development of an alternative water delivery system, knowing that the Flint River would be the interim source of drinking water for Flint residents. In late April 2014, Flint, under the direction of its emergency manager and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ), switched its water source to the Flint River despite warnings from the Flint water quality supervisor that the plant was not fit for operations and that a 2011 study indicated that necessary facility upgrades would cost millions of dollars.

Less than a month later, residents began making complaints regarding the quality of the water. Over time, resident complaints extended to serious health issues. In February 2015, the United States Environmental Protection Agency advised MDEQ that the water contained lead. Nonetheless, state officials continued to cover up the health emergency, discredit reports regarding the existence of lead, bacteria, and other contaminants, and advise the public that the water was safe even though they knew it was not. In October, Snyder acknowledged that the Flint water supply contained lead and ordered Flint to reconnect to the DWSD.

In 2016, the plaintiffs brought a four-count class-action complaint in the Court of Claims against various state and city defendants for 1.) state-created danger, 2.) an unconstitutional taking via inverse condemnation, 3.) denial of fair and just treatment during executive investigations, and 4.) violation of right to bodily integrity under the Michigan Constitution’s Due Process Clause. Appeals by the plaintiffs and the defendants of various pre-trial rulings by the Court of Claims and the Michigan Court of Appeals were ultimately filed with the Michigan Supreme Court (Court). Only the “bodily integrity” claim will be discussed in this column.

## Constitutional Right to Bodily Integrity

Article I, section 17 of Michigan’s Constitution provides, in part, that no person shall be deprived of life, liberty or property without due process of law. In its discussion of whether Michigan recognizes a constitutional tort claim against the state if no waiver of immunity has occurred, the Court cited cases from Michigan and other jurisdictions.

The substantive component of due process encompasses... an individual’s right to bodily integrity free from unjustifiable governmental interference.

*Lombardi v Whitman*

Violation of the right to bodily integrity involves “an egregious, nonconsensual entry into the body which was an exercise of power without any legitimate governmental objective.”


*Villanueva v City of Scottsbluff*

Violation of the right to bodily integrity must be so egregious, so outrageous, that it may fairly be said to shock the contemporary conscience.

*Rogers v Little Rock*

As noted by the Court, “[t]here is obviously no legitimate governmental objective in poisoning citizens.” In addressing whether a state “custom or policy” mandated the actions that led to the violation of a substantive due process right, the Court cited with approval prior Michigan cases that held that official governmental policy includes decisions and acts of officials. Accordingly, the Court held that the plaintiffs had pled a recognizable due process claim under the Michigan Constitution.

*Mays v Governor*, (Nos. 157335 through 157337 and 157340 through 157342), July 29, 2020.



# CARES Act

## Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act

# CARES Act Funding Helpful, But More Federal Aid Needed

By Rick Haglund

**M**ichigan cities and other local units of government that saw the cost of providing services jump in the face of the coronavirus pandemic were able to secure some budget support through the state from the federal government in 2020. But they will likely need hundreds of millions more this year, and possibly beyond, to offset the lingering effects of the worst public health crisis in a decade.

The \$2 trillion Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES) provided much-needed aid to local governments, mainly in three programs. The money was required to be spent by Dec. 31, 2020. Those programs were:

- The Public Safety and Public Health Payroll Reimbursement Program, which provided \$200 million to cities, villages, townships, and counties to help pay police, fire, public health, and other payroll costs incurred as a result of the pandemic.
- The First Responder Hazardous Pay Premium Program originally appropriated \$100 million to local governments to offer pay beyond what they had already budgeted to their first responders who performed hazardous tasks or work involving physical hardship related to COVID-19.
- Coronavirus Relief Local Government Grants Program. Local governments that saw the state cut \$97 million from their August state revenue sharing payments were provided \$150 million from these federal dollars. The money was required to be spent on COVID-related costs as defined by the federal restrictions.

In addition, local governments are able to apply for ongoing disaster grants related to the Trump administration's March 13, 2020 declaration of COVID as a national emergency. As of mid-November 2020, local governments had submitted 787 applications seeking more than \$675 million in funding. Of that, more than \$260 million has been approved by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

"That's more than the total of applications we've had for all federally declared disasters in the past 10 years," said Penny Burger, state finance officer at the Michigan State Police. Funding applications could ultimately exceed \$1 billion while the federal emergency declaration is in effect, she said.

While the COVID-related aid was welcomed by hundreds of local governments that received it, they and state officials had to scramble to quickly understand the programs and apply for funding. Local units also had to file regular reports with the state Treasury Department on how they spent money received from the three main COVID relief programs and work to find expenditures that fit within the very limited guidelines allowed under the constantly changing federal rules.

The seven-person Treasury unit that was charged with processing grant applications temporarily borrowed 30 staffers from other areas of the department to handle the workload. Treasury also hired three public accounting firms to assist with auditing program spending reports from local governments, required by the CARES Act.

### Short-Term

Chris Hackbarth, director of state and federal affairs at the Michigan Municipal League, said the three CARES programs provided essential relief to local governments, which has seen rising costs during a steep, pandemic-induced economic slowdown. "Treasury's been a really good partner," he said. "They pushed hundreds of millions of dollars out the door in a matter of a few months."

Not all of the \$450 million appropriated had been spent by mid-November, though. For example, there weren't as many first responders eligible for federal hazardous duty pay as originally thought. Only \$40 million of the \$100 million appropriation was spent on hazard pay. The rest went to supplement the state unemployment insurance fund. And some smaller communities weren't able, as of

mid-November, to use all their federal local government relief funds that replaced the August revenue sharing payment because they didn't have enough COVID-related expenses.

"Certainly, they helped," said Gretchen Gomolka, the City of Brighton's finance director and president of the Michigan Government Finance Officers Association, about the federal COVID aid programs. "Those revenues are somewhat hedging us from future losses if the economy continues to struggle." Brighton's share of state gas tax revenues, for example, has declined because of the pandemic, putting a strain on needed infrastructure spending. "The lost revenue has been a challenge particularly because gas prices are low and nobody traveled," she said.

State revenues held up better than expected in the fiscal year that ended Sept. 30, 2020, primarily as a result of higher income taxes from taxable state and federal unemployment benefits and more spending on goods subject to the state sales tax, including cars and trucks, computers, and home remodeling materials. Michigan took in a record \$451 million in unemployment insurance withholding taxes through July 2020, far exceeding the \$134 million peak during the Great Recession. That is not expected to continue as the federal supplemental unemployment benefit program had not been extended by mid-November.

## Long-Term Challenges


Something that is not expected to continue as the federal supplemental unemployment benefit program had not been extended by mid-November. But the next several years could be far more challenging, particularly if Washington fails to agree on another large stimulus program that many economists and Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell say will be necessary to buoy the COVID-racked economy. Michigan faces a general fund revenue loss of \$1.7 billion in the current fiscal year budget and another \$1.1 billion revenue loss in fiscal 2022, according to August estimates. Statutory revenue sharing is expected to be cut \$53 million in fiscal 2021, from \$490 million in 2020.

Hackbarth said the COVID pandemic threatens to cripple local tax revenues, as well. Owners of office buildings that have been largely vacant as people worked from home during the pandemic are likely to seek big cuts in their property assessments before boards of revenue this spring, he said. So are bar and restaurant owners and a variety of other commercial businesses that have suffered during the pandemic. "The minute those values drop, the (taxable) assessments are reset, and they can't come back," Hackbarth said. Most cities depend heavily on property taxes from homes and businesses to fund local services.

Michigan's 24 cities that levy an income tax also are facing sharp revenue cuts. A General Motors salaried employee in Flint who's been working from home for months in, say, Fenton, isn't

paying Flint's income tax. That hurts an already struggling city. "The city of Flint can't afford to lose 20 percent of its revenue stream," Hackbarth said. And unlike the state and federal government, these cities can't withhold income taxes from the unemployment benefits of laid-off workers in their jurisdictions. "These two issues present these cities with a \$250 million budget problem," Hackbarth said.

Michigan received \$3.1 billion in CARES funding to address cost increases to state and local governments related to the pandemic. Their fiscal future largely depends on receiving substantially more federal aid that is flexible and allows for the federal funds to cover revenue losses, budget officials say. Even a quick economic rebound won't be able to undo the fiscal damage already caused by COVID. The negative impact on local government budgets is likely to be felt "for a couple of years at a minimum," Hackbarth said.

That's already true in Battle Creek. The city, which levies an income tax and received nearly \$2.5 million in federal CARES funding, cut 26 jobs in November, citing anticipated revenue losses in fiscal 2022. "This is the hardest thing I've had to do as city manager," said Battle Creek City Manager Rebecca Fleury. 

*Rick Haglund is a freelance writer. You may contact him at 248.761.4594 or [haglund.rick@gmail.com](mailto:haglund.rick@gmail.com).*



# 63

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R. Brent Savidant, planning director, City of Troy



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# U.P. Firefighters Breathe Easier with Aid from Federal Government

By Lisa Donovan

BARAGA  
pop. 2,053

**H**ow do you help a small fire department take a giant leap from the 1990s to the present? Perseverance! That's what Jeff Mayo brought to the Village of Baraga when he accepted the position of fire chief in 2015. He knew the department's equipment was old—everything from the engines to the self-contained breathing apparatuses (SCBA) dating back to the 1990s. But with very little budget, what could he do?

Mayo got to work searching for other sources of funding to improve his department's firefighting ability. After three years of unsuccessful attempts, Mayo and his team finally landed a game-changing grant of almost \$700,000. The grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Assistance to Firefighters Grants program is enabling Baraga to purchase new SCBAs for their department as well as eight surrounding communities. SCBAs are valuable pieces of equipment, allowing firefighters to breathe fresh air when they're in a toxic environment.

"It's huge for all of us," exclaimed Mayo, whose department consists of 20 firefighters, three engines, and one rescue vehicle. "None of our departments have the money to afford brand new equipment. Without it, we'd keep struggling to find money to replace things."

## The Road to Success

In some ways it's not surprising that it took three tries for Baraga to come out on top for the grant. It's very competitive as it's open to fire departments from across the country. Last year, 10,000 fire departments vied for funds to purchase much-needed vehicles and equipment. But each time, Senators Debbie Stabenow and Gary Peters supported Baraga in their much-needed efforts.

So, what made the difference for Baraga this time around? First, they were successful in getting all nine fire departments up to speed on their regular reporting requirements. But perhaps more importantly, Mayo presented the Baraga Village Council with the idea of engaging a grant writer to go after funding, and they agreed.

"It was suggested that if we go in as a community effort, we may have a better chance of receiving funds," said LeAnn LeClaire, Baraga village manager. "Mutual aid has been coming into play on being awarded funding these days. All of our fire departments are so small that it's hard to get funding individually. This way, we all share in the costs and benefits of having a grant writer." "What he does is amazing!" added Mayo. "None of us are qualified to write what he does."

So, it's only fitting who broke the news to Mayo. He had been anxiously checking his online FEMA account for weeks when he got the fateful call. "Are you ready to spend \$700,000?" exclaimed the grant writer, who had compiled a 29-page document in support of the grant request. The situation became even more real in early September 2020 when Senators Stabenow and Peters announced the awarding of \$677,738 to the Village of Baraga Fire Department for the purchase of SCBAs.



*The new SCBAs on order are much lighter and more comfortable.*




“None of our departments have the money to afford brand new equipment. Without it [the grant], we’d keep struggling to find money to replace things.”

—Jeff Mayo, Baraga Fire Chief



Baraga's 30-year-old SCBA's have seen better days.

“Our firefighters in Baraga put their lives on the line to protect our families, homes, and communities,” said Senator Stabenow in a Sept. 1, 2020 article by the Upper Peninsula’s TV6. “These new resources will give our first responders the equipment they need to better serve the public and do their jobs more safely and effectively.”

The new SCBAs are now on order and expected to arrive in early 2021. Mayo describes them as lighter, more comfortable, and light years ahead of their old equipment. “For Baraga to hit a grant like that, it’s big,” said Mayo. “Hopefully this is a new start and we can keep moving forward.” 

*Lisa Donovan is the communications specialist and editor for the League. You may contact her at [ldonovan@mml.org](mailto:ldonovan@mml.org).*



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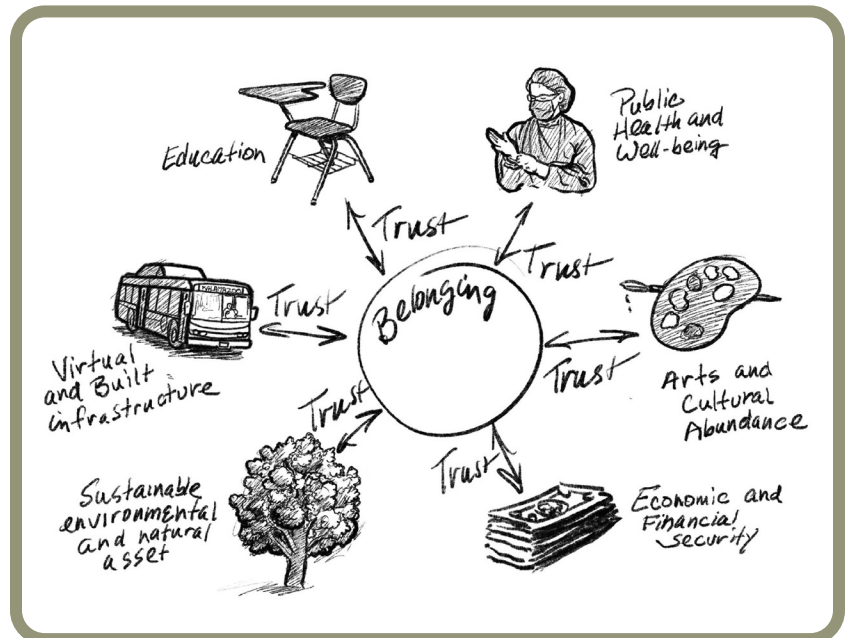
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## Moving Forward with Community Wealth Building

By Shanna Draheim

Economic inequality is one of our nation's most pressing challenges. Despite a decade of success in building great places and communities in Michigan, there are still troubling signs that social and economic progress has been uneven in our state. In response, the Michigan Municipal League has been increasingly focused on how we evolve and build on our placemaking success to bring sustainable and equitable growth to communities. We know that requires us to look through a broader lens than just traditional economic growth measures—it requires strategies to build community wealth.

“We are optimistic that this evolution of our placemaking work will help create more resilient, adaptable, sustainable places that improve the human experience.”



Community Wealth Building occurs when community leaders, partners, and residents collaborate to develop equitable, resilient, adaptable, sustainable places that improve the human experience. The Labs team, along with our colleagues across the League, have spent much of the last year talking with our member communities, partner organizations, and community wealth building experts from around the country to learn about how community wealth

building strategies are helping to strengthen and improve social and economic conditions, and how those approaches might be deployed here in Michigan. As our Labs team loves to do, we've been digging into the research and talking through ideas with many of our community leaders to help us refine our thinking and begin to identify some of the models that might be applicable in Michigan.

## Sharing the Community Wealth Building Concept

At the League's annual Convention in September, held virtually this year, a significant portion of the agenda was focused on community wealth building, including a presentation by our CEO Dan Gilmartin and several engaging panel discussions on the role of foundations and social enterprise businesses. Another area where we are working to infuse community wealth building principles is our economic development assistance with Michigan communities. One of the more exciting areas of this effort has been our work on federal Opportunity Zones.

The Opportunity Zone tax incentive is driving private investment in distressed areas where little has come before and, if done well, can be a rare chance to undertake transformational projects that truly benefit communities. Opportunity Zones also are fostering a discussion of equity, rather than just debt, in communities that traditionally receive affordable housing assistance but have no pathway to building community wealth. Using Opportunity Zones as tools to build community wealth, cities and towns across the country are enabling entire communities to take part in their revitalization.

## Michigan Investor Summit

To help ensure the prospects for more inclusive and sustainable projects in Opportunity Zones, the League, in partnership with Accelerator for America and the Michigan Urban Core Mayors, hosted a virtual Michigan Opportunity Zone Investor Summit at the end of October 2020. At this first-of-its-kind event, local leaders from our 13 Urban Core Mayor cities showcased Opportunity Zone projects available for development in their cities, including mixed-use development, retail, office, residential, hospitality, and tourism investments.

The presentations to more than 100 prospective developers and investors from throughout the nation were followed up with City Expo Hall sessions where the potential investors could meet one-on-one with the local government officials to ask specific questions. The summit was supported by the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA), the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), and numerous other sponsors. "The projects pitched at the summit aimed to increase the quality of life for residents in cities across Michigan," said Dan Gilmartin, CEO and executive director of the Michigan Municipal League. "It is our hope that the presentations and



conversations that took place at this event will open dialogue between potential investors and communities, and eventually these discussions will result in real investment in meaningful projects throughout our great state."

As we move into 2021, the League and the MML Foundation are excited to continue integrating community wealth strategies into our programming, including our training and education offerings, state and federal advocacy, and partnerships with other statewide organizations. We also hope to begin partnering with some Michigan communities to pilot specific community wealth building strategies at the local level and use those to develop tools that can be adopted in all communities. We are optimistic that this evolution of our placemaking work will help create more resilient, adaptable, sustainable places that improve the human experience. 

Shanna Draheim is the director of policy research labs for the League. You may contact her at 517.908.0307 or [sdraheim@mml.org](mailto:sdraheim@mml.org).

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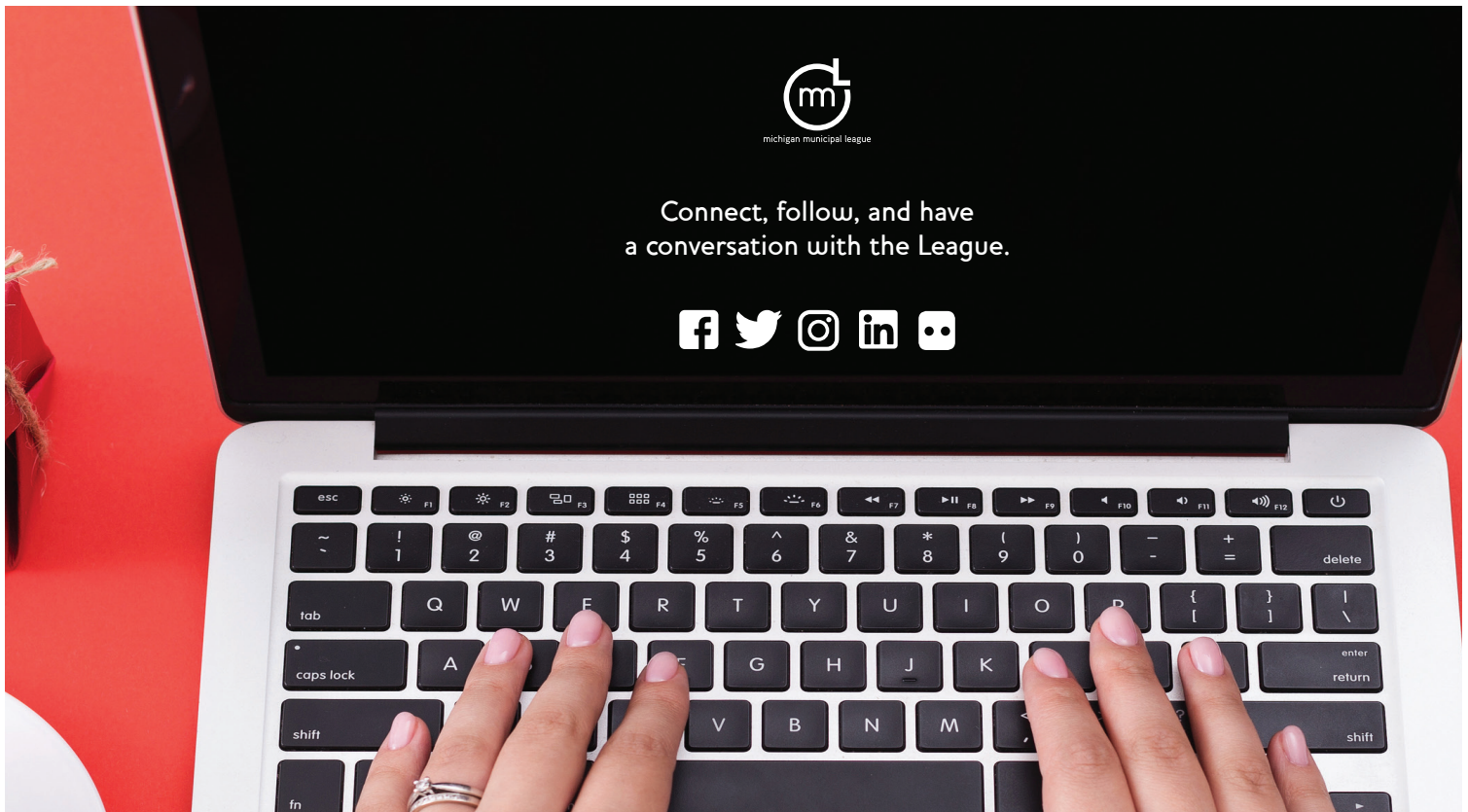
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The Q&A—plus our white paper, sample ordinances, and other resources—are available on the Marijuana in Michigan page at [www.mml.org](http://www.mml.org).

## Rules of Procedure?

**Q.** Do we need rules of procedure? Can't we just use *Robert's Rules of Order*?

**A.** *Robert's Rules of Order* was written and intended for large deliberative bodies, not the typical 7-member local government legislative body. Some items in *Robert's* can be cumbersome or not even applicable to local government bodies. In addition, *Robert's Rules* only applies to your municipality if you adopt them—they do not have any inherent regulatory powers—they are not law.

City and village councils/commissions should adopt rules of procedure designed to best expedite business and provide fair and open deliberation in their communities. For instance, rules of procedure describe the processes for councils, clerks, and managers/ administrators to bring matters before the council. Of special note is the General Law Village Act—which requires that the council “shall prescribe rules of its own proceedings.” And the Fourth Class City Act, which states that the council “shall prescribe rules for council proceedings.”

Here is a sample of how to incorporate *Robert's Rules of Order* into your municipality's council rules:

*Robert's Rules of Order*, the most recent published edition, are hereby adopted as the parliamentary procedure for the city council. In all matters specific in these Guidelines, these Guidelines shall take precedence over *Robert's Rules of Order*. In matters of parliamentary procedure not otherwise addressed in these council Guidelines, *Robert's Rules of Order* shall prevail.

The League has over 80 sample council rules of procedure—we can customize a search and send you samples with specific provisions.

## Spouses Serve Together?

**Q.** We are a General Law Village. Can a husband and wife both serve on village council?

**A.** Yes—there is no prohibition in the General Law Village Act. This is not uncommon, due to the generally smaller populations in villages and number of residents interested in serving on council.

## Swearing in Elected Officials?

**Q.** Who can swear in elected officials in a city or village?

**A.** City, village, township, and county clerks; and judges, any notary public, and state senators and representatives can give the oath of office to municipal officials. The mayor/president, trustees/ councilmembers, manager, etc. are not empowered to give the oath of office. Your charter or the Act that serves as your charter (General Law Village Act; Fourth Class City Act) will contain specifics on taking and filing the oath of office. Most municipalities use the oath of office from the Michigan Constitution.

## Ethics Resources at mml.org

### Fact Sheets

- Ethics: Contracts of Public Servants with Public Entities
- Ethics: Incompatible Public Offices
- Ethics: Misconduct in Office by Public Officers
- Ethics: Standards of Conduct for Public Officers/Employees

### Ethics Handbook for Michigan Municipalities

Sample Ethics ordinances

Sample Ethics policies


Sample Ethics charter provisions

## Incompatible Public Offices?

**Q.** Can a city council member also serve on our local school board?

**A.** This scenario falls under what is known as “Incompatible Public Offices.” There is a state law regarding this: “A public officer or public employee is prohibited from holding two or more incompatible offices at the same time.” MCL 15.181(2) Incompatible offices means public offices held by a public official which, when the official is performing the duties of any of the public offices held by the official, results in any of the following:

- one office is subordinate to another
- one office supervises another
- a breach of duty of public office

The Michigan Attorney General (AG) has issued numerous opinions regarding the applicability of the Incompatible Public Offices Act to various public positions. The AG has ruled that a city councilmember and school board member are incompatible public offices. See our Ethics Fact Sheets at [mml.org](http://mml.org). 

*The League's Information Service provides member officials with answers to questions on a vast array of municipal topics. Call 800.653.2483 or email [info@mml.org](mailto:info@mml.org) or [inquiry@mml.org](mailto:inquiry@mml.org).*

## BRIDGING DIVERSITY & EQUITY

### The Mission of the Michigan Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials

By Lois Allen-Richardson

The year 2020 will go down in history for a multitude of reasons. We elected our first female vice president and our first Black vice president. We are living in the middle of a global pandemic, and racial injustice is at the forefront of everyone's mind.



In the midst of it all, the Michigan Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials has been a steady voice for its members. In the spring, when it was apparent that the African-American community was being hit hardest by COVID-19, MBC-LEO held a webinar with Lt. Governor Gilchrist and a virologist to address this issue and learn more about the discrepancies. After the death of George Floyd in May, we issued a statement on eradicating the disease of institutional racism. And over the summer, we created a playbook to help municipal officials think about ways to operationalize equity and assist them if they are experiencing racial tension or protests.

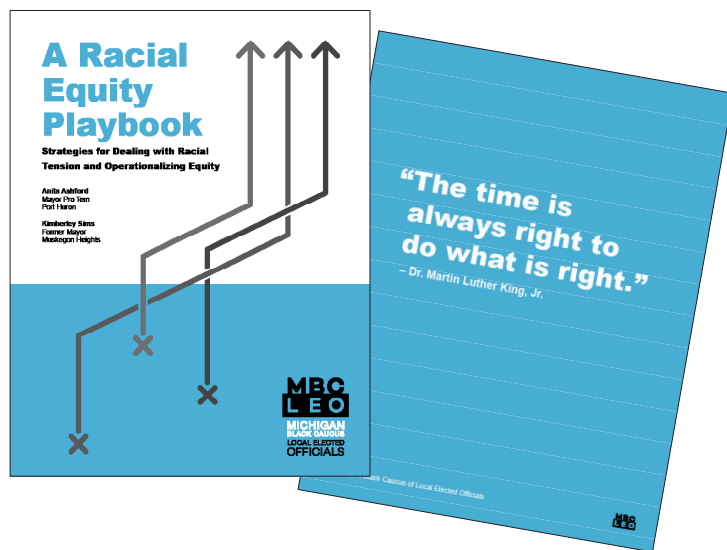
#### COVID Hits Hard

In Michigan, African Americans make up 14 percent of the population but represent 40 percent of the deaths from the coronavirus. This is a pattern across the nation. African Americans are in the lower paying, public-facing jobs which don't necessarily allow for work from home opportunities and may not include sick pay leave. In addition, African Americans tend to have more underlying health conditions. But we must look at the reasons why that is the case, including racial inequities in medical treatment.

#### Statement to Eradicate Racism

The culmination of racial inequities and the deaths of Black and brown people at the hands of police prompted us to issue a statement because there is much work that needs to be done. In part, our statement reads that MBC-LEO will work to eradicate the disease of institutional racism by intentionally addressing the symptoms of systemic racism in our state. Our goal will be to offer programming and training which will address racism in the following areas: housing, criminal justice/policing, education, healthcare, and economic prosperity. You will find a full copy of the statement on our website.

Out of a sense of urgency and necessity, we put together A Racial Equity Playbook: Strategies for Dealing with Racial Tension and Operationalizing Equity. It includes ideas on how to operationalize equity, has checklists to follow if there is racial tension in your community, and contains information on love-based policing. You can find a copy of the playbook at [mbc-leo.org](http://mbc-leo.org), and on the League's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion website at [mml.org/dei](http://mml.org/dei).



## MBC-LEO Convention Session

During the Michigan Municipal League's 2020 Convention, as part of the MBC-LEO virtual session we showed the award-winning documentary *WALKING WHILE BLACK: L.O.V.E. Is the Answer*, a film by A.J. Ali. It is a very powerful film about the relationship between law enforcement and the African-American community.

The film was followed by a facilitated discussion with Director Ali. The feedback was extremely positive. There was a spontaneous afterglow, where up to a couple dozen attendees hung around in the virtual meeting not saying anything but still present after the session ended. That let us know that something was happening on the inside. They were moved by what they just heard.

Whenever we host a forum or session, our hope is that it brings a change in the participants. Then we know it was successful. Our goal is to help people and communities find their path to equity. We define equity as everyone having a pair of shoes that fit. This is different from equality, which means everyone would have a pair of shoes, but they might not necessarily fit.

This is one of the chat messages after the film.

*Excellent presentation. Should be required viewing in every police department and all schools in every community in the country. It provides clear and understandable views from police officers and community members. Many of the solutions are also reasonable and not difficult to implement.*

I'd implore each of you to watch the movie and learn more about the L.O.V.E. Is the Answer movement in our playbook and on the website, [www.loveistheanswermovement.com](http://www.loveistheanswermovement.com).

## MBC-LEO Membership

I extend an invitation for you to join MBC-LEO. The Caucus works in cooperation with the League. The membership of MBC-LEO is comprised of local elected officials and municipal staff members and associates in the State of Michigan. All are welcome to join. Everyone who shares our commitment is not only welcomed but essential to the success of our work. Despite its name, MBC-LEO is not an all-Black organization. We have had non-Black members since the beginning, and all are welcome. Since its inception, MBC-LEO has worked towards bridging diversity and equity in the municipalities represented in our membership and beyond. We know you'll find value in belonging.

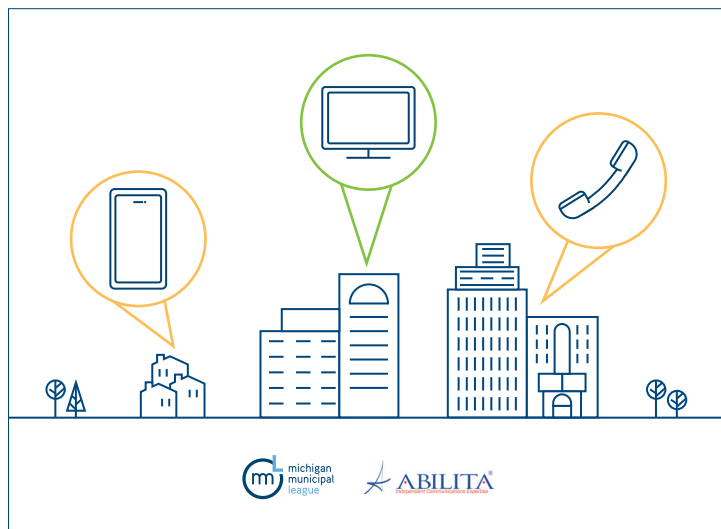
Dues range from \$35-\$100, and they are only \$15 for students! Membership runs from January to December. To download a membership application, visit [mbc-leo.org](http://mbc-leo.org). Become a member and help us in this ongoing and uplifting pursuit of equity, equality, and justice for all.



A.J. Ali shared his award-winning documentary at the Michigan Municipal League's 2020 Convention.

Wear your mask, stay safe, and remember that *L.O.V.E. Is the Answer*. 

Lois Allen-Richardson is president of the Michigan Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials and mayor of Ypsilanti. You may contact her at 734.482.2017 or [lrichardson@cityofypsilanti.com](mailto:lrichardson@cityofypsilanti.com).



Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has forced many changes in the workplace: working from home, Zoom meetings, social distancing when returning. All of this while you still need to provide communication to your staff and residents. During this time, Abilita—MML's endorsed communications technology consulting partner—may be able to help. They can advise on your remote options for voice, chat, and video collaboration with co-workers. In addition, they will find ways to reduce your telecom spending while freeing up staff time.

**If you need help with short or long term transitions, reach out to Abilita to see how they can help you.**

[mml@abilita.com](mailto:mml@abilita.com)

[abilita.com](http://abilita.com)

888.910.2004



michigan municipal league

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# Coronavirus Resources

For information that is up-to-date and  
relevant to your community visit:

**[mml.org/coronavirus](https://mml.org/coronavirus)**