

Email to Mayor and Council dated 1/4/2020 providing context for 1/16/2020 testimony at Community Forum from 4 members of the Boards and Commissions Task Force

Dear Mayor Newton and Councilmembers Myles, Feinberg, Ashton, and Pierzchala,

This is a follow-up to the December 16, 2019, discussion between the Boards and Commissions Task Force (BCTF) and the Mayor and Council about the BCTF Report submitted to you on October 15, 2019. Thank you agreeing to the request from BCTF members to provide feedback on the document.

The deadline for the report was linked to the date of the 2019 Mayor and Council election. This resulted in time limitations for completion. As a result, some members of the BCTF felt that the report did not sufficiently emphasize important results of the team's efforts. Other members felt that there were shortcomings in the quality of the report. Many team members felt these limitations could have been addressed given more time. Therefore, we appreciated the opportunity to provide feedback on these issues and would like to make the feedback part of the record.

Our discussion with you included the suggestion that copies of our testimony be included as a new appendix to the report. We are submitting the testimony of four BCTF members for this purpose. These comments address the views of individual members.

One tool, developed by a member of the task force and used effectively to generate consensus during the discussions, was the dashboard <https://www.rockvillemd.gov/DocumentCenter/View/37472/Boards-and-Commissions-Task-Forces-Evaluation-Dashboard>. We encourage you to refer to this document for details of the analysis.

We request that this information be added to the official copy of the report.

Thank you for your consideration.

Happy New Year.

Respectfully,

Anne Herbster

Anita Neal Powell

Lorraine Tarnove

Anne Goodman

December 16, 2019 - Boards and Commissions Task Force

Good evening Mayor and Council,

My name is Anita Powell and I live on Douglass Avenue in Rockville.

I would like to congratulate each of you on your elections, for the next four years.

Tonight, I stand before you as a member of the Boards and Commissions Task Force. As a member of the boards and commissions, I do support, the four recommendations that were presented to you, prior to this evening's meeting.

I am also in support of the dash board which served as the footprint used to gather and compile information. It also provided an opportunity for us to make decisions that ultimately led to the four recommendations.

The recommendations are:

- To hire a Full-time Volunteer Coordinator for Boards and Commissions.
- To review and update the Guidelines and Procedures for Citizen Boards and Commissions to be approved and followed by the Mayor and Council, staff, and chairs.
- To establish a formal process for new boards and commissions that is universal for all.
- To improve transparency, diversity and information for boards and commissions on the website. We found that diversity was lacking on or about all boards and commissions.

I am hopeful that as members of the Task Force present their point of views tonight, that we would leave knowing the work this board and commission brings forth, will allow you to see each of the boards and commissions from a different perspective.

Finally, I would like to thank the mayor and council for appointing me to serve with a team of Rockville citizens on the Boards and Commissions Task Force. A team that I believe worked well together to accomplish the task that was before us.

If I have any time left, I will leave it to be used by my fellow task force members.

Happy Holidays to each of you. Thank you and have a great evening.

Testimony from Anne Goodman, Member, Boards and Commissions Task Force, to Rockville Mayor and Council, December 16, 2019, regarding the task force's report, *Boards and Commissions Task Force Report, October 18, 2019*

Good evening, Mayor and Council,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak. I compliment my fellow task force members and City Staff on this effort, and I strongly support the 4 recommendations highlighted for you tonight.

Special thanks to Lorraine Tarnove who assimilated data observations from several different individuals and documents into a coherent whole for a major portion of the document.

The focus of my remaining remarks is the report. The methodology – surveys and a dashboard about which you will hear more in a few minutes – was specifically designed and tailored to our needs and were excellent tools. The dashboard was critical, as it provided a context for discussion, consensus, and development of recommendations. Unfortunately, the dashboard was not adequately highlighted in the document you received. Ben Parry, who developed the tool and ushered us through the consensus-building process for specific recommendations, will be demonstrating it for you.

While the task force collected good data; did good work; and operated fairly well as a team, we were working against a deadline that did not allow adequate review and discussion of the complete document before it was submitted. Our deadline appeared to be linked with the election and was not allowed any flexibility beyond that. I find that extremely unfortunate.

Sections of the document you received were reviewed piece-meal, if at all. In fact, we did not get a complete hard copy of the document until nearly 2 weeks after it was submitted to you.

In reviewing this document, I found the recommendations to be too extensive to provide good guidance. They needed clearer focus, suggestions for priorities, and possibilities for implementation. Hopefully, we have provided some clarity on that tonight by highlighting 4 specific recommendations.

Furthermore, I observed statements that the group had agreed to remove that remained in the document; sections that we had no chance to discuss; incomplete linkage between/among sections; and inaccurate statements. While the document has much good information, I am concerned that it doesn't completely reflect the group's opinion. I consider this a missed opportunity to provide a quality legacy. I request that the comments made this evening be included as a separate appendix so that this will be clear to future readers.

Thank you for your consideration.

Good Evening

Thank You Madam Mayor and City Council Members. Let me introduce myself. I am Anne Herbster, a resident of Rockville for 14 years, and not only was I a member of the Boards and Commission Task Force I am also the Chair of the Senior Citizen Commission. As I look back on the enormous amount of work that the team completed to get your report, I want to impress upon you that this was not our opinions and comments but representative of all the volunteers we spoke with.

Rockville is blessed with an army of volunteers who choose to give of their time and energy serving one a board, commission or task force. Many like myself have never done this before and assuming a role like this can be daunting. Not knowing what to expect nor what are the duties and responsibilities can be a challenge. The process itself applying to be a member is cumbersome and challenging. Communication is limited at best given the amount of work the city clerk has and the large number of organizations and volunteers. We have strongly – myself included – proposed adding a staff member to coordinate and support the work of all your city volunteers. I know that adding staff is a budget challenge, but I can't emphasize enough the return I think you will receive by bringing on someone to help coordinate, communicate and engage with the volunteers and BCTF organizations.

Another area that I encourage you to review and consider implementing is the template for evaluating all new requests – for a board, commission or task force. Using this template, you will be in a better position to evaluate requests having pertinent information around goals, objectives, etc. It will ask the right questions to help evaluate. During our presentation earlier this fall it was briefly mentioned, and more time was spent on several new organizations. The task force choose to focus on the template merely provide examples of possible organizations showing how it could be used. Yes, the document is long but the section on the template will prove helpful to you in making future decisions.

Finally let me thank the city staff who provided an incredible amount of support. We could not have completed all the work we did without their help and assistance. I know the document is long but there is a lot of information there than can help guide you in future decisions.

Thank You!

Points of Clarification to the Boards and Commissions Task Force (BCTF) Report

Submitted by Lorraine Tarnove

December 16, 2019

The amount of data, other information collected, and the extensive discussions and opinions from BCTF members may make the report matter challenging to digest and translate into implementation strategies. The key tool offered is the Dashboard. The report included the summary page of that tool, but the full document includes supporting pages for each board and commission studied from the perspective of the key competency characteristics. Using the full dashboard tool online will allow anyone, volunteer or staff, to view specific observations and recommendations offered for each group.

Another important tool that was created by task force members is the Policy for New Board and Commissions Evaluation Process (in the Appendix). This will be useful to anyone who wants to form a new board or commission and will assure consistent structure and operation throughout the city's volunteer groups. It can also be used to determine if existing groups are operating effectively and efficiently or to determine if their organization needs subgroups or coordination with other boards and committees to address gaps or overlaps.

Recommendations are offered in several sections of the report. In addition to the specific recommendations in the Dashboard, the section on recommendations on page 30 of the report is a "roll-up" of all the recommendations that appear in the various discussions sections on survey data, issues and evaluation criteria.

That said, while all recommendations are important one is key: the addition of a new full time, staff position to support and coordinate the activities of the boards and commissions. Without this position, the other recommendations will be difficult to implement. As the task force looked at the current functioning of the boards and commissions it became clear that the kinds of improvements that are needed to further strengthen their already successful work require this type of position. This is reiterated throughout the report as the various issues and evaluation criteria are discussed. The specifics of the recommended position description (in the Appendix) link directly to gaps and needs identified throughout the report.

Finally, the report may not adequately reflect the Task Force's concern about board and commission vacancies and the process for filling them. Indeed, this came up in discussion at almost every meeting held by the BCTF. Potential volunteers need to be encouraged and full transparency should be achieved in every aspect of the process. This must be addressed or the strong record of volunteer participation and contribution will erode.

The additional materials submitted for inclusion after the report was issued and signed on to by all BCTF members, were not included for a reason. Again, the amount of information and data reviewed was overwhelming. In an effort to streamline the final report document, we chose not to include working documents that were for our use, but are not policies or recommendations passed by the Task Force.