



African American Heritage Network

A City of Austin Affinity and Employee Network Group

P.O. Box 6453, Austin, TX, 78762-6453

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Hello Task Force Members, my name is Carla Johnson, I am the Chair for the African American Heritage Network (AAHN) for the City of Austin. I am also a supervisor within the Development Services Department.

PURPOSE OF AAHN

- To serve in an advocacy role on issues of importance to African Americans.
- To be a communication network for African American employees within the City of Austin, which allows for the interchange of experiences, ideas, and interests that may enhance their career and personal development through seminars, classes, group discussions, and pertinent publications.
- To promote cultural and social awareness
- Our Executive Sponsor is ACM, Mark Washington and our Membership consist of City employees that work across nearly 20 Departments.

BODY

I am honored to share with you on their behalf today and I hope that you will take deep thought and consideration of our input.

Our Next City Manager should exhibit the following characteristics:

- Have an understanding of true diversity and cultural awareness: City employees represent a diverse group, we have different beliefs and different values. **Our Next City Manager should value diversity by considering it a strength and not a weakness.**
- Austin's City Manager should be a visionary. Their vision should include an honest look at "equaling out the playing field" so that all employees can earn a comparable/competitive wage.
- Specifically, the next City Manager needs to tackle the different pay disparities (African American males are *still* the lowest paid in the City of Austin)
- Our Next City Manager should address unequal representation at various city departments. Several Departments still lack diversity. This challenge must be fixed.

- Be willing to discuss and come to a median on racial issues within the City. Have the skills and expertise on how to shape diversity (possibly put some mandatory diversity training in place for City Management Team).
- Tackle issues affecting the employees and community (i.e. racial issues, police brutality and mobility and traffic) by being transparent and acknowledge that these issues do exist. (Have proven track record dealing with same or similar community challenges).
- Build relationships with business and community leaders to create partnerships that will enhance the COA (we recommend bringing in faith leaders from all denominations to assist)
- Excellent communication skills, willingness to make the tough decisions, vision not just for one group of people, but understand they serve the entire community.
- Most important is excellent leadership skills – having a degree with letters behind your name does not mean you know how to lead people. A leader motivates, relates, builds and leads a team. **First position is to seek understanding, instead of seeking to be understood.**

CLOSING

Once again thank you for the opportunity to stand before you to assist with our search of finding the best City Manager for the City of Austin.