

MEETING THE

# NEEDS OF OUR COMMUNITY

DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION | 2023 ANNUAL REPORT



# SHARPENING OUR FOCUS ON CREATING INTENTIONAL SPACES FOR ALL

Each year, we leverage insights from the previous one to craft more intentional initiatives, programs, and spaces. Our focus on data-informed decision-making allows us to grasp the broader impact of our actions, while centering on human experience helps us continue strengthening our culture of respect for all.

**This mission and work progresses only as a result of our collective efforts. And will, as a result, greatly shape the future of our community as a whole.**

In 2023, we increased our DEI efforts by reinforcing successful programs, starting new initiatives, and addressing areas of opportunity. Collaborating with partners within and beyond our community, we were able to bridge gaps and come up with new solutions. There's still more to discover and we acknowledge that we are far from our destination, but we couldn't imagine doing this work with anyone else, anywhere else.

**Thank you for helping shape a better future for us all, Pierce County.**

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## A MESSAGE FROM PIERCE COUNTY'S EXECUTIVE

Greetings and welcome to Pierce County's annual Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) report. As we mark our fourth consecutive year of sharing our work with you, I invite you to explore the initiatives that are shaping a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive Pierce County.

Our commitment to fostering a welcoming and open workplace, along with providing impactful opportunities for community members to create wealth and financial security, is evident in the strides we are making. Notably, the Pierce County Small Businesses Accelerator has proven effective in delivering life-changing results for the emerging entrepreneurs who participated in 2023.

In the spirit of transparency and ongoing accountability, this report outlines the key metrics we review to assess our effectiveness and results. You can track our progress on the Open Pierce County dashboard and dedicated DEI-focused webpages at [piercecountywa.gov](https://piercecountywa.gov).

In particular, I'm pleased to see the changes we've made in our hiring practices over the last five years have led to a 54% increase in the number of racially diverse managers at the County, and a 23% increase in the diversity of our employees.

While numbers and data are useful, DEI goes beyond statistics. It's about cultivating a workplace where everyone's unique voice is heard, career and personal goals are achieved, and each of

us can fulfill our potential. By doing so, we not only establish a positive and fulfilling work environment but also deliver meaningful and relevant services to all Pierce County residents.

Our success is indebted to the invaluable support of our community partners and collaborators, including the Korean Women's Association, The Urban League, Mi Centro, Asia Pacific Cultural Center, The Black Collective, and the Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber of Commerce. These organizations, among others, have contributed to the progress of our initiatives and paved the way for exciting new programs.

I extend my gratitude to the dedicated members of Pierce County's five DEI working groups for their ongoing commitment and encouragement. They serve as a continual source of learning and perspective, contributing significantly to our collective journey.

Thank you for joining us on this path toward a more inclusive and equitable Pierce County. Your support is critical as we strive to create positive change and lasting impact. Here's to another year of progress and collaboration.



Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bruce F. Dammeier". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "B" and "D".

Bruce F. Dammeier  
Pierce County Executive

South Entrance



**STRIVING  
TOWARDS  
OUR GOALS**



## CHANGES

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**92.1%** Employee awareness  
of DEI efforts

**17%** Racially diverse  
County managers  
Up from 11% in 2017

**25.2%** Diverse  
Employees  
Up from 20.5% in 2017

**10.4%** Veteran  
employees  
Up from 3.4% in 2017

**49.1%** Female  
employees  
Up from 45.8% in 2017

# PROGRAMS CONNECTING

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## ACCESSIBILITY AROUND THE COUNTY

Creating vibrant and accessible trail experiences, Accessibility Around the County transforms connective paths across Pierce County. With a focus on safety and fun, the program involves the community, uses innovative engineering, and prioritizes the user experience for trails so they're enjoyable, inclusive, and secure for everyone.



## EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUPS

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) bring resources to employees no matter their background or role. This initiative helps create a sense of belonging among employees looking for safe, inclusive spaces that reflect their experiences and connects team members to key resources for career development, leadership skills, and networking opportunities.



## AGING LGBT+ COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Recognizing the gap in outreach and resulting services for the aging LGBT+ community, Nellis collaborated with Tacoma Older LGBT to build a much-needed bridge. A huge showing at a town hall meeting led to valuable feedback from this community where there once wasn't much engagement.



## FISH PASSAGE WITH THE TRIBES

The Fish Passage Collaboration program focuses on improving water quality in rivers around the Puget Sound by collaborating with local Tribes. The goal is to remove barriers in the river that make it difficult for fish to move freely. Removing these barriers is crucial for supporting the natural environment and the communities connected to the river.

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# OUR COMMUNITY



## SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

Supported Employment provides meaningful and dignified employment opportunities for everyone, including those with a variety of disabilities. Doing so advances the County's service to residents and supports the wellbeing of those we employ.



## THE JUVENILE COURT

The Juvenile Court has grown their Equity Team from 9 to 43 members representing various departments and tackling issues from outdated policies to promoting inclusivity. Initiatives such as the LGBTQ+ Advocacy program and community-focused projects reflect a commitment to supporting youth with positive experiences within and beyond the justice system.



## THE EQUITY INDEX/NOTE

While we have used data to help make informed decisions, the creation of the Equity Index and Equity Note allow us to better evaluate the impact of those decisions. Taking into account the communities to be served by specific programs or services shows us where there may be gaps or further opportunities.



## TRANSPORTATION FOR VETERANS

This program addresses the critical transportation needs of disabled individuals, seniors, and veterans in rural areas. Focused on ensuring access to life's essentials like groceries, medical appointments, and banking, the program operates a fixed route transporting veterans from the tiny home village to various stops.



# ACCESSIBILITY AROUND THE COUNTY

# FORGING NEW PATHS

Accessibility Around the County doesn't just focus on trails, but on creating positive community experiences and spaces for everyone. This program, guided by Parks Regional Trails Coordinator Brianne Blackburn, is committed to forging new paths and improving the vast network of trails that safely connect people to places and communities to the beauty of Pierce County.

Discussing the impact of trails on communities, Brianne notes how they bring "positive use" by increasing visibility and reducing crime. Reflecting on a poignant moment at Pierce County Trails Day, she recounts a young boy's excitement about biking to soccer practice using the trail, illustrating the transformative power of accessible pathways.

This program is community-driven, with coordinators actively engaging in public meetings, aligning local goals with regional strategies, and identifying strategic initiatives to bridge accessibility gaps. The focus extends beyond convenience, emphasizing the creation of positive community spaces, crime reduction, and the promotion of micro-mobility for diverse transportation needs.

Through innovative engineering and creative safety measures, the program prioritizes the user experience, ensuring that trails serve as safe alternatives for people moving around the county. From improving lighting to implementing traffic-calming techniques, the program is designed to make trails accessible, enjoyable, and secure.

At its core, Accessibility Around the County aligns with principles of equity and freedom of movement. Brianne emphasizes the role of connected trails, sidewalks, and bike lanes in enhancing the quality of life for all Pierce County residents, making it a safer and more inclusive community. "Anything we can do to get people active and give people the freedom to move around how they want to move around makes Pierce County a better, safer place to live."



**BRIANNE BLACKBURN**

*Parks Regional Trails Coordinator*



# BRIDGING GAPS TO AN UNDERSERVED COMMUNITY

“Oh there’s a Tacoma Older LGBT group? I didn’t know that!” is the response Pat McIntyre, Co-founder Tacoma Older LGBT (TOLGBT) often receives.

It’s true that most have never heard about Pierce County’s LGBT+ programs and services for seniors, but Nellis Kim, Maude Valentine and Pat McIntyre have made it their mission to bring awareness, build connections, and serve the needs of this often overlooked community.

Recognizing there was a gap in outreach and direct services, Nellis held an “LGBT Aging in Pierce County” town hall in collaboration with two of their Advisory Board members, Cheryl Cristello and Pat McIntyre, who are also co-founders of Tacoma Older LGBT. The purpose was to engage and listen to individuals who can experience discrimination, repression, and indifference from governmental entities. Nellis says doing so was the catalyst for greater impact within the community and her staff.

“It’s been a point of growth for our staff in bringing resources from the Rainbow Center, Tacoma Older LGBT, and SAGE Table to improve our staff’s knowledge base in

terms of serving people from the older LGBT community... understanding what their history and experiences with formal institutionalized services like ours so we can better serve them with empathy and humility.”

Overwhelmingly, the response was a need for more social connections and health and wellness programs. With the help of Maude Valentine, a yoga therapist and instructor, Pierce County’s Aging LGBT+ program was able to offer accessible yoga programs to seniors which she remarks, “gives older LGBT a safe place to go.”

In addition to yoga programs, SAGE Tables, and community outreach, there is active participation in Tacoma Pride, conferences, and other events to ensure aging LGBT+ individuals have access to needed resources in Pierce County.



**NELLIS KIM**

*Program Specialist  
Pierce County Human Services,  
Aging and Disability Resources*





# AGING LGBT+ COMMUNITY RESOURCES



# EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUPS

# CREATING A SENSE OF BELONGING

Pierce County's Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) play a growing role in fostering a diverse and inclusive work environment.

These ERGs, initiated and driven by employees, serve as valuable resources for career and leadership development, enhancing inclusivity and creating a sense of belonging for all staff. The groups, including those focused on the veteran, LGBT+, LatinX, and African American communities, have their own charters and objectives, and are inclusive to allies becoming members.

Raul Leal-Trujillo, the Organizational Development and Training Manager, has personally experienced the transformative effects an ERG can have on an individual's career trajectories.

He says, "I initially started my career in government and never thought I could be in a leadership position... Joining an ERG inspired me to envision a leadership role for myself. Interacting with fellow members who shared similar backgrounds of being an immigrant and were skilled leaders was a great source of inspiration that showed me career advancement was possible for me."

Despite being in its early stages, the impact of ERGs is evident. Participation in DEI training and communication has surged, as well as a growing interest in starting new groups. Looking forward, the plan is to expand ERGs, increase participation in current groups, and continue reinforcing the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion within Pierce County.

As Raul notes, "These groups can not only have a higher impact but also contribute to a broader positive influence on the business we conduct in the county. This, in turn, enhances our effectiveness in delivering direct services to the population of Pierce County, and increases our retention and recruitment."



**RAUL LEAL-TRUJILLO**

*Organizational Development  
and Training Manager*



# STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS TO INCREASE ACCESS

Kevin Dragon, Assistant County Engineer of Surface Water Management, oversees a program of 80 individuals focused on water quality in the Puyallup River Valley. One significant aspect is collaborating closely with local Tribes to remove fish passage barriers in the Puyallup River to enhance instream habitats for fish tributaries. These barriers make it hard for fish to move freely in the river so Kevin and his team set back the levee — or move the barriers — to expand the river.

The efforts extend countywide, working alongside four federally recognized Tribes — Puyallup Tribe of Indians, Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, Squaxin Island Tribe and Nisqually Indian Tribe. The collaboration with the local Tribes is rooted in federal sovereignty and respecting their treaty rights, with a shared focus on protecting fisheries.

Kevin says, “We value, trust and respect their feedback. It’s imperative to the work we do because water work is so important to them and we recognize that there’s a lot of work to be done to rehabilitate our riverines and fish waterways...we’re looking for opportunities to solve this together.”

The collaboration involves blending the Tribe’s historical knowledge of the river with the county’s engineering. Fixing barriers in the rivers helps to restore an extremely vital way of life for the Tribe while also resulting in a healthier ecosystem, cleaner water, flood prevention, and protecting the homes and nature near the rivers.

Additionally, the Fish Passage project provides, “A way we can live harmoniously within the natural environment to protect fisheries and to address other issues associated with how we live on the landscape.”



**KEVIN DRAGON**

*Assistant County Engineer  
of Surface Water Management*





# FISH PASSAGE WITH THE TRIBES



**I CAN SEE CHANGE EVERYWHERE  
EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUPS  
IS INCREASING AND WE ARE  
MOVING FORWARD IN A WAY  
THAT BENEFITS  
EVERYONE IN THE COMPANY**

Y MONTH. EVEN THOUGH  
PS ARE NEWER, OUR IMPACT  
ARE SEEING THINGS MOVE  
THAT WILL BENEFIT  
PIERCE COUNTY

”

—• *Raul Leal-Truillo*



# SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

# EMPOWERING ALL PEOPLE

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With a strategic partnership in place, the Supported Employment Program not only addresses increased workloads but also creates meaningful opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

“It’s a win-win,” says Cindy Hartman, Chief Deputy Auditor. “We get the work done, and we provide opportunities for disabled individuals to learn, support their families, and get career opportunities.”

Goodwill partnered with Pierce County to provide Supported Employment services to Kristal, a dedicated employee who has thrived in the auditing department for several years. Kristal has become an integral part of the team in every way from participating in employee appreciation to even having a baby shower thrown for her.

DEI is a cornerstone in the Auditor’s office, and the Supported Employment Program is a testament to its commitment to equity and inclusion. The program has welcomed several individuals since its inception in 2009 with the goal of increasing awareness.

Cindy says, “So much of DEI is about awareness.

I feel like the more we are aware of our differences and similarities within our communities the better we can serve everyone...”

Tara Hart, Licensing Supervisor, works directly with Kristal and adds the Supported Employment program, “gives people a shot to create skills they would normally not have the opportunity to have.”

By integrating supported employees, the department not only meets operational needs but also elevates awareness, understanding, and service to the community. Kristal’s contributions are appreciated and valued by the team, who believe her strengths are invaluable and showcase how this program stands as a model for a thriving, inclusive workplace.



**CINDY HARTMAN**

*Chief Deputy Auditor*

**TARA HART**

*Licensing Supervisor*

# IMPROVING IMPACT WITH STRATEGIC DATA

The brains behind the county's newest initiative, the Equity Index tool and Equity Note, are turning data into action.

These tools aim to improve decision-making transparency and promote data-informed program and policy development that equitably serves residents within Pierce County.

Julie Demuth, Assistant Director of Budget and Performance, noted that before the Equity Index and Equity Note, the initial focus with using data to inform decisions was very technical.

She says now the Equity Note and Index work hand-in-hand to "see how we can serve a particular demographic or community more effectively...we've learned that how we do things in one neighborhood might not work for another."

The Equity Index's collaborative development involved a work group of diverse departments which was key to ensuring its relevance and effectiveness. While these tools are new to the County, they've already proven

to be valuable in providing the necessary context for departments to see data through a different lens.

Senior Data Analyst, Amy Scott German says, "I think the largest win here is really around transparency...this is making it more clear to stakeholders why the government is making the decisions we are, why we're investing in certain locations and how we're using data to inform those decisions."

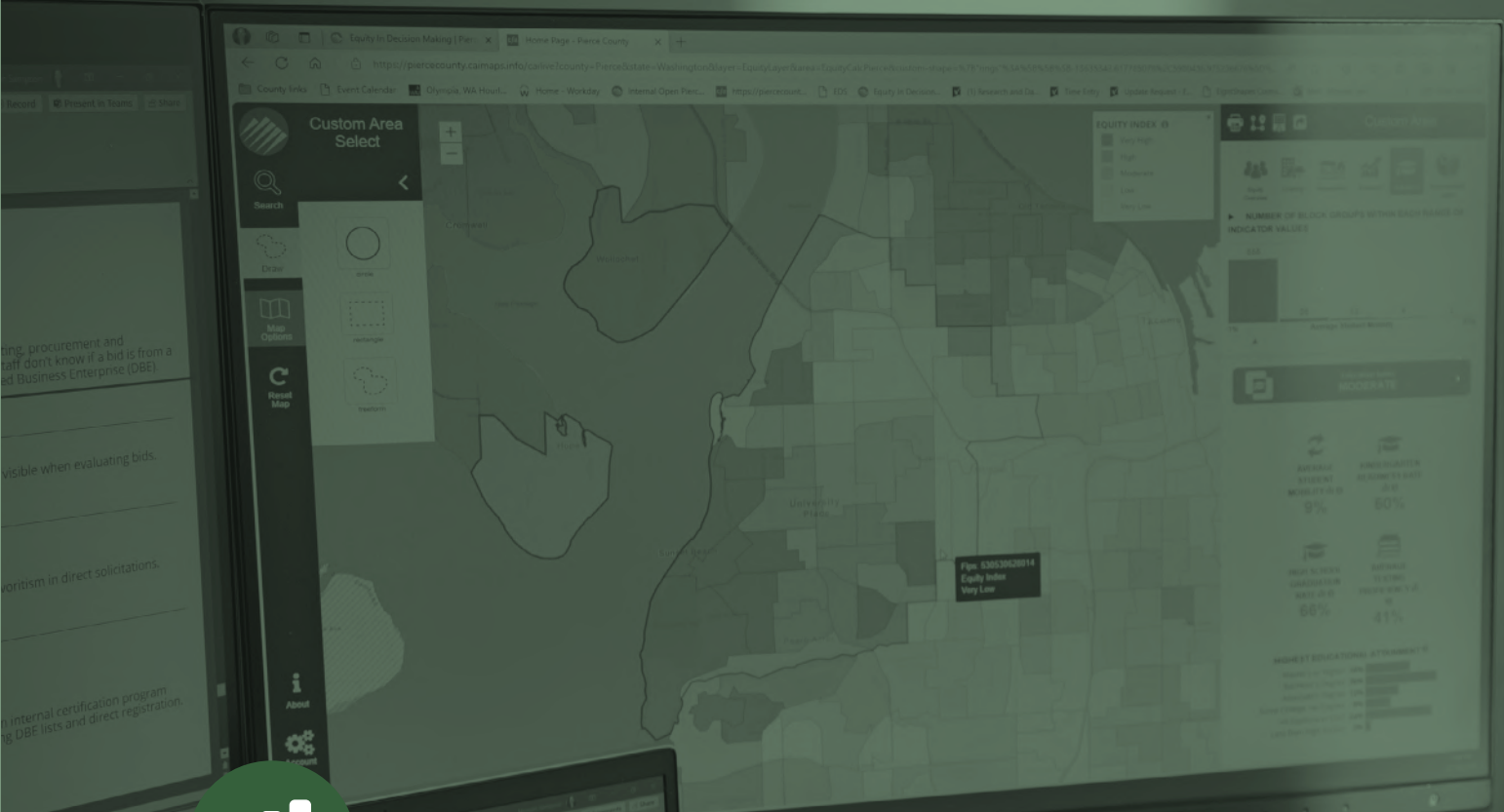
"And," adds Morgan Sampson, Data Analyst, "there's a paper trail that shows the decision-making logic for each of these proposals which helps the department to implement policy and Council to understand the impacts of the proposal which leads to better outcomes."



**JULIE DEMUTH**

*Assistant Director of Budget and Performance*





# THE EQUITY INDEX/NOTE



# THE JUVENILE COURT

# BUILDING PATHWAYS FOR A THRIVING FUTURE

Public narrative and perception often associate the youth justice system as a negative and unwelcoming experience. The departments and equity subgroups at Pierce County's Juvenile Court aim to transform the youth court system to instead be a bridge connecting youth and their families with community partners and programs. Their primary goal is to pave the way for youth success after court, as noted by Clarissa Fletcher, Juvenile Court Community Volunteer Services Coordinator.

Clarissa says, "Recidivism isn't just about who comes into your building and how many times; it's about the skills and strengths they build along the way."

With 5 equity subgroups, the Juvenile Court has embraced comprehensive DEI training, confronted systemic issues, and cultivated robust programs, partnerships, and services. This ongoing evolution is driven by the diverse needs and identities of the communities served in Pierce County.

One community receiving focused attention is the LGBTQ+ population, led by Shelby Mann, Juvenile Probation Counselor and member of the LGBTQ+ community. Shelby spearheads the LGBTQ+ Advocacy Program, enhancing support for this community and their families. They share, "We're working on SOGIE (Sexual Orientation Gender Identity Expression) training for staff to facilitate safe conversations with youth and connect them to post-court community resources."

Looking ahead, Clarissa envisions a court centered on services rather than detention, while Shelby aspires to foster a positive and safe environment for everyone involved in the youth justice system.



**CLARISSA FLETCHER**

*Community and Volunteer  
Services Coordinator*



**SHELBY MANN**

*Juvenile Probation Counselor*



# MEETING TRANSPORTATION NEEDS

Daeveene May, Mobility Manager at Pierce County Human Services, spearheads the Transportation for Veterans in Orting Program, addressing the critical transportation needs of individuals, seniors, and veterans with disabilities in rural areas. Focused on ensuring access to life's essentials like groceries, medical appointments, and banking, the program operates a fixed route transporting veterans from the tiny home village to various stops.

Orting lacks traditional transportation services, and the program, in collaboration with partners like Pierce County Transportation Services, Veterans Affairs Office, and developers of the tiny home village where the veterans reside, fills this void.

Daeveene says, "Without the partnership there is no program. These are strong partners in making sure veterans get transportation to services and places where there are gaps."

Despite facing higher demand than available resources, the program will often make exceptions to ensure veterans receive necessary care. Looking forward, Daeveene plans to expand this invaluable service from three days a week to five or six in the future so they can continue to bring support to the Veteran community and be a resource for them as they rebuild and take control of their lives.



**DAEVEENE MAY**

*Mobility Manager,  
Pierce County Human Services*

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# TRANSPORTATION FOR VETERANS

# MOVING INITIATIVES FORWARD



Over **1,500** County employees have received DEI training + **12 DEI Lunch & Learns**



Developed the Inclusive Leadership Development Program (I-LEAD) for **all County Managers**



**3 LGBTQ+** classes with **52 attendees**



Facilitated **11** Attitudes  
Towards Differences courses  
and **156 attendees**



Developed the Inclusive Team  
Development Program for  
**all County Employees**



**40 Book Club members**  
met throughout the year

# IN PURSUIT OF CHANGE

## FOR PIERCE COUNTY

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### **Strategic Oversight and Coordination** | *Chair: Judy Archer*

Brent Bomkamp (Sheriff's Department), Brian Hardtke (Executive's Office), Constance White (Clerk of the Superior Court), Gary Robinson (Finance), Heather Moss (Human Services), Jen Tetatzin (Planning and Public Works), Jody Ferguson (Emergency Management), Michael Kawamura (Assigned Counsel), Misty Robison (District Court), Sarah Colleen Sotomish (Executive's Office), TJ Bohl (Juvenile Court)

### **Communications** | *Co-Chairs: Lisa Hilligoss and Libby Catalinich*

Anthea Aasen (Planning and Public Works), Lillian Scott (Executive's Office), Delmar Algee (Human Services), Megan Hutton (PCTV), Jeremy Acree (PCTV), CJ Johnson (Human Resources), Lauren Wallin (Sheriff's Department), Meghan Wettig (Auditor's Office)

### **Recruitment** | *Chair: Kelly Lewis*

Anthanee Briese (Finance), Charissa Hudson (Human Resources), Debi Ross (Planning and Public Works), Denise Petrie (Parks), Kim Schwannecke (Human Resources), Liesl Kondor (Human Resources), Lindsay Derrick (Human Resources), Malissa Adame (Human Services), Nichole Scott (Clerk of the Superior Court), Peter Barlow (Finance-IT), Sherry Hieb (Human Resources/Civil Services)

### **Training** | *Chair: Raul Leal-Trujillo*

Mary Benton, MaryBeth DiCarlo, Dea Finigan, Stefanie Love, Maura Maye, Tyesha Green

### **Work-based Programs** | *Chair: Kandace Thomas*

Carrie Frohlich (Human Resources), Dom Hardeman (District Court), Roxanne Miles (Parks & Recreation), Bruce Wagner (Planning & Public Works), Anika Moran (Human Services), Betty Capestany (Economic Development), Charissa Hudson (Human Resources), Matt Milenkovic (Human Resources)