

Norfolk Insider

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“Mayor’s Diversity Discussion Group”

When people take time to share their perspectives and insights with other community members, good things can come about as a result. City of Norfolk Nebraska Mayor Sue Fuchtman and Iowa-Nebraska National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) State Area Conference President Betty Andrews agreed that a Mayor’s Diversity Discussion Group held Monday evening in Norfolk was a success in that about 20 people were given the opportunity to tell city officials firsthand what life is like for them in this Northeast Nebraska community.



“Our goal was to gather people from many different perspectives in Norfolk and listen to their unique experiences. As a white female mayor it’s good to hear about life in Norfolk for an African-American mother or Mexican-American businessman. We consider the Norfolk community to be one of people who respect those of differing views and it’s important that we take time to reach out to those who don’t always feel like they get a listening ear,” said Mayor Fuchtman who hosted the two hour discussion along with the NAACP. Shane Weidner, Norfolk City Administrator, and Josh Moenning, City of Norfolk City Council member, also attended the meeting.

“This round table discussion was an important step toward ensuring that voices from various cultures are heard and that diverse perceptions are considered in future endeavors.” President Andrews said, “It was a great vehicle for honest communication about the positive and negative aspects of living as a minority in a small community. Now the challenge is how we do we grow from this discussion.”

President Andrews was one of five NAACP representatives who participated in Monday night’s meeting at the Elkhorn Lodge in Norfolk. The other four were Vickie Young, Omaha NAACP President; Jareldine Mays, Lincoln NAACP President; Dewayne Mays of Lincoln, NAACP member; and Dedric Doolin Iowa-Nebraska NAACP Secretary and a National NAACP Board member.

The Mayor’s Discussion Group came about after a Fourth of July parade float in Norfolk that depicted a mannequin and a replica of an outhouse that had the lettering “Obama Presidential Library” on it. Though the City of Norfolk did not sponsor the parade, people throughout the country emailed and called City officials with their opinions about the float.

NAACP leadership subsequently met with Mayor Fuchtman, Weidner and parade organizers. All agreed that a discussion group made up of people with diverse backgrounds would be beneficial for the community. A member of the United States Department of Justice community sat in on the initial meeting but did not participate in this meeting.