

**South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority
Compensation Committee
January 27, 2022
Meeting Transcription**

[COMPENSATION COMMITTEE CALLED TO ORDER AT 1:41 PM]

Brian:

Do I stay on through this one, too? Or is this [inaudible 01:13:05]?

David:

No, no. You're welcome to stay as we get the DEI report, but then, the part regarding Larry's performance evaluation for the season-

Brian:

[crosstalk 01:13:15]` Just tell me when I have to drop off, Dave.

David:

All right. You got a little while yet. Sorry. You're not free yet.

Brian:

Good, David.

Brian:

All right. I just know there's various aspects that I'm not supposed to be on. So-

Tony:

[crosstalk 01:13:24] Excuse me, my notes say that there's only one person available right now, and the others will join them at three o'clock.

David:

Because it's early, right?

Tony:

Then I would raise, would we go to Larry right away with his report?

Jennifer:

No. [crosstalk 01:13:42] They're here.

Tony:

[crosstalk 01:13:44] Until later.

Jennifer:

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[crosstalk 01:13:45] They're here.

David:

[crosstalk 01:13:45] They're there. They're on the screen [crosstalk 01:13:44] so that's good.

Tony:

They're here?

Jennifer:

Yes.

David:

Yep. Worked out well. So.

Tony:

Where's Jennifer? Oh, okay. So we can, [crosstalk 01:13:54] the compensation committee has three elements on its agenda today, the minutes, the diversity group, and the CEO goals. I would entertain a motion to approve the minutes of the July 15th meeting. You all remember that, six months ago?

Catherine:

I'll move the question.

Suzanne

And I'll second.

Tony:

And there's a second. All in favor, aye.

Various speakers:

Aye.

Tony:

Opposed? Abstain? Motion carries. Thank you.

Tony:

Let's move on to the second element, which is the diversity, equity, and inclusion update. Who's going to lead that, guys? [crosstalk 01:14:40]

Larry:

By way of introduction, as you know, we started last, gee, it was in 2020, we started discussion, at the leadership team level, about the need to increase and improve our diversity, equity, and inclusion activities. We retained a consultant by the name of Leading Culture Solutions. And Andrea Hawkins is

the principal in that firm. And she has been guiding senior management, as well as a recently formed employee group, in mapping out our D, E, and I efforts. And so, I've asked Andrea and two employees who are involved in the TIDE Council, which is, together increasing diversity and equity in the RWA, and Aziza Hill, who's a business partner in the IT department, and Amrik Matharu, who is in the operations department, will also provide an update. So, Andrea will kick it off and provide an overview of our D, E, and I efforts, and what we've been doing. And then, Aziza and Amrik will provide a little bit more detail on some of the most recent activities. So with Andrea, I'll turn it over to you, and thank you for being with us.

Andrea:

Wonderful. Wonderful. Thank you, Larry. Good to see everyone today. It has been a fun journey here with the Regional Water Authority. We started our work, almost a year ago now, and started with doing a survey to get an understanding of what the current state of diversity, equity, and inclusion was for Regional Water Authority. From that data in the survey, we able to identify five strengths and five opportunities for this organization to focus on. We collected all that information, and that was the foundation of helping to form this council of folks, within the organization, who were going to help identify how to address the opportunities, and continue to work and build on the strengths. So, your TIDE group, so tapping inclusion, diversity, and equity, is the group of 15 to 20 individuals across the organization, representing different ages, and races, and departments, and union versus non-union, that come together every three weeks to talk about how do we continue to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives at the RWA?

Andrea:

Like I said, these are an engaged group of folks. They think critically, not only about the right thing to do when working with one another, but also how is that going to help advance the goals of the Regional Water Authority? They think very specifically about how to do that. And so, I've been really honored to work with this esteemed group of folks. Larry has been incredibly supportive of the work that's been happening, and as has the leadership team here. So, I am so honored to turn it over to Aziza Hill, who is going to kick us off, and tell you a little bit more about the journey. Aziza.

Aziza:

Thank you, Andrea. Good afternoon, everyone. I'm going to go through a couple of slides here, and then Amrik is going to provide some information on the tail end of this presentation. So, what we have on this screen, here, is our roadmap, at a glance. This roadmap, it covers our diversity, equity, and inclusion journey. As Andrea mentioned, we embarked on this journey in 2021, partnered with her organization, Leading Culture Solutions.

Aziza:

During the listening phase, employees provided input through the survey, focus groups, and interviews, which were extremely helpful, identifying the key themes for the RWA. Last June, the establishment of the TIDE council, which includes, like Andrea mentioned, a representation across all business areas, was a key milestone for us, embarking in this journey. In November, we established the D, E, and I mission, vision, values, and roadmap, which were critical roadmaps, I'm sorry, critical foundational building blocks for our road map. In 2022, we will be entering our learning phase, which Amrik will provide more highlights on, a little later in our presentation.

Aziza:

If you can go on to the next slide. So here, as I mentioned, is our mission, vision, and values. With our mission and vision, this provides a vehicle for communicating our organization's purpose and values. The TIDE council worked collectively to establish our D, E, and I mission, which is building an equitable and inclusive culture [inaudible 01:20:12] of all employees. Our vision, which is strengthening our foundation for innovation and future growth, by providing opportunities for all.

Aziza:

In our values, the four key items we focused on in our values were honesty, being open minded, welcoming, and being unbiased.

Aziza:

Next slide, please. Actually, can you go back? I did want to touch on our central challenge. So our central challenge, we looked at this challenge for strengthening our transparency, and inclusion to improve trust, improve morale, and grow equitably. Some of the strategic priorities and initiatives to achieve this challenge includes career growth mentorship, which was a very hot topic that came up across our interviews, creating employee development plans, increasing employee engagement with the COVID events and future parties. That was another topic of being inclusive during COVID. And focusing on workplace wellness, which we have had two virtual wellness programs this month. I believe one is actually today, a wellness program that's being offered to our employees.

Aziza:

Okay, next slide. So, as Andrea mentioned in our intro, there, we identified some strengths and opportunities. With this slide, we'll cover the key strengths that employees felt we have at RWA.

Aziza:

The first one is belonging. So, employees felt that they are being acknowledged, for the most part, and appreciated for their contributions at RWA.

Aziza:

Feeling safe. For the most part, most employees feel that our facilities are suitable and safe. They also feel that the timely, weekly safety message is sent out by our safety administrator is very helpful. And they also felt that our COVID preparedness was good.

Aziza:

Collaboration. Employees felt that working collectively and virtually with peers in their departments, and other business areas to support operational and project work is working. And during this COVID time. So, COVID in its unexpected reality, has changed how we work, but many employees have identified the support of their peers and leadership has been helpful in them being productive.

Aziza:

And last, but not least, fairness. For the most part, many employees feel that they are being treated fairly.

Aziza:

Next slide, please. Now, some opportunities where we can improve some. Some employees felt that leveraging the strength of diversity is an area where we can improve. And this is by recognizing and utilizing the unique strengths of each employee to increase the productivity and profitability of our organization.

Aziza:

Transparency. This includes being more open and timely with communications. Overall, I think we are doing well with this, but there's always room for improvement.

Aziza:

Active listening, paying attention to employees' feedback and concerns was an item that was brought up by some of the employees in the survey.

Aziza:

And fairness, which is brought up, again, here. And opportunities. Some employees feel that eliminating favoritism, and treating others like you would like to be treated, is an area where we can revisit.

Aziza:

And respect. So, Larry touched upon respect in his leadership message earlier this month, which I felt was a timely message to start the new year off with.

Aziza:

Before I wrap up my section, I just want to say that participating in the D, E, and I journey has been rewarding, knowing that I'm contributing to our important journey to inclusion. Collaborating with my peers and LCS has been refreshing, and at times, insightful, with the thought provoking discussions developing our foundation. The TIDE team is very passionate in successfully achieving this journey, with the support of our leadership. We recognize it's not a sprint, but a marathon. And Amrik will now provide additional highlights around common themes in the learning phase. Thank you.

Amrik:

All right. Thanks, Aziza. My name's Amrik Matharu. I sit in operations, and I've been here about a year. So just to echo everything that Aziza said, it's been great to be a part of the TIDE council.

Amrik:

So, piggybacking off of the previous slide, you'll see the same areas of opportunity listed above. Leverage diversity, transparency, value all employees, fairness, collaboration. But the important stuff is what's below. Those are further areas of improvement that we identified in our work with the TIDE council, that we can start moving the needle on, to improve D, E, and I at the RWA.

Amrik:

So, things like leveraging diversity, not just in leadership positions, but with new hires. And then, that'll also grow an area of leveraging the diversity of thought, because everybody's going through life with a

different perspective, with a different lens. And when you start trying to bring people to the table to make decisions, those additional new perspectives could result in something that you wouldn't have had, previously.

Amrik:

Transparency. There's the theme of communication. And that's something that we talked about pretty frequently in our work with the TIDE council. Here, you'll see improving communication by making it more inclusive, growing participation.

Amrik:

But, I thought the one that was most important was clear understanding, through communication. So, it's not just enough for a coach or someone to say, "Let's go win a game," right? It's more helpful to hear, "Let's go win a game by dominating time of possession," right? And, from that, you can start saying, "All right, well, if we want to dominate time of possession, we can do that by this, or by this, or by this." So, that was an interesting tip that we got from our work.

Amrik:

And then, you'll see other things like active listening under respect, that Aziza talked about earlier. Fairness and accountability, accountability also being a recurring theme in our work. And then communication again, leading into collaboration, as a vehicle to create more cross department, cross business function, collaboration, and work.

Amrik:

Next slide. Thanks. So here, you'll see the roadmap for what we are trying to do, and what we're working through with LCS and Andrea. We've completed the listen phase, as Aziza described earlier, with the survey. And that provided a jumping off point, that highlighted those areas for opportunity that the TIDE council identified, and that we're going to start working towards.

Amrik:

Where we are right now is, I think, the most important portion, the learning phase, where we get to really take a look at where we are with D, E and I, understand the history, and how we got here. And once we do that, and if we do that well enough, we'll see the result of that pay off tenfold, when we start to lean in and live.

Amrik:

And this roadmap isn't something that just the TIDE council or Andrea takes part in. This is really something that we should all start applying, from leadership positions, to new hires walking in the door, all of... By putting something like this into practice, you can start making incremental changes with every interaction you have, throughout your company. Next slide. Thanks.

Amrik:

So the learn cycle. Ensure what we really want to do here is provide leaders with a practical standing of diversity, equity and inclusion. Now, that means you've got to understand how we got here. You got to understand how D, E and I can be communicated effectively to our culture. And that's important

because it varies from industry to industry. And you've got to take a good look at your workforce, and it's going to vary person to person. And once you understand those two things, you can start seeing how all of these changes and improvements we can make will help us in a business sense, as well. And it's important to provide leaders with the context and the skills to have these conversations, because they're on the forefront. A lot of leading is by doing, and I think that's very evident here. A lot of our guys that are in supervisor positions have done the groundwork, whether it's customer service, or construction and operations, or running a control room-

Amrik:

... or construction and operations or running a control room. If they take those same skills that have gotten them to the management level positions and apply them to the DE&I context, we really will start to see pretty rapid and significant change. Next slide. Thanks. All of these things, they're great ideas, but they only work if we have the right people behind it. So championing by our executive teams, Larry's made a very good priority here with setting up the [Tide 01:32:38] council and enabling us to continue our work. But even with that, we still need help from other functions of the business. We may have a good idea, whether it's a collaboration with another department or putting together trainings or participation events to grow more awareness of what we're doing, but that requires help from communications, from IT, from marketing, from other functions of our business as well.

Amrik:

All of these things will be effective if everyone starts putting them into practice, from frontline managers to executive level positions and all staff, whether you're walking in the door or you've been here 10 years. Like I said earlier, that little roadmap that we are working through, everybody should be working to, and every little bit helps. So with all of that, we are starting down a very long road. Aziza hit on it. It is definitely a marathon and not a sprint, but I'd also like to say, we are not the only company, utility, or otherwise that are at the beginning of this journey. So I encourage you to reach out to other people, whether it's in this organization, out of the organization, to get more perspective on what this DE&I includes, because it's not always the things that are top of mind right this second. You have to look at where your workforce is going to be further down the road.

Amrik:

Right now, we're at a point where we're seeing an explosion of technology in a lot of different industries, but we also have to look at what that technology could be upcoming, and then what's our workforce going to be as well and how can we make all of this stuff work and grow at the same time. So it's been a great experience working with Tide so far, and especially Andrea. With that, I think this is the end of my little tidbit here. I'll leave you guys to it. Thank you.

Andrea:

The only thing that I-

Tony:

[crosstalk 01:32:36]. Go ahead, please, Andrea.

Andrea:

Right. Thank you for that. Both Aziza and Amrik talked about the four L journey to inclusion. I neglected to say that at the beginning, so thank you for pointing that out. The four L journey to inclusion, that's what RWA is on. I love that I heard both Aziza and Amrik say what we say all the time. This work is a marathon and not a sprint. We've been working together for a year. We've gotten through the listen phase. We are going to go through a few more phases, the learn, the lean-in, and the live phases to really help them make DE&I part of what they do and not a separate track of work. There's some guiding principles that we encourage everyone to think about. What I love is that this leadership team is already leaning into it.

Andrea:

The language that we use around this, the guiding principles in this is you really want to make sure you have diverse perspectives at the table. If you really are doing this DE&I thing, then the people around the table reflect the community that you serve or that you live in. We want to make sure we have diverse perspectives at the table. The second guiding principle is around shared authority. As we all know, no man, no woman is an island. In order for systems to drive change, you really do need perspectives from different parts of the organization, from different levels in the organization. So this idea of sharing the authority actually reduces work for everyone. We want people to instill this.

Andrea:

The third is collaborative decision-making. One might think you couldn't bring 80 people into a room to make one decision, but we teach organizations how to do that and how to get to one decision. I know Aziza and Amrik would attest to this because during the Tide council, they did the work to create their DE&I roadmap, which was coming to a common DE&I mission, a common DE&I vision, a common set of DE&I values. They had to create that together. They also had to create their central challenge. There were 25 people in the room while we were doing this work. They had to come up with the common priorities and the initiatives to support those priorities, and they did that work. They did that. It is possible in organizations. We are teaching that to develop that muscle memory.

Andrea:

When you know that you're living DE&I, those three things are evident. You have diverse perspectives, you have shared authority, and you have collaborative decision-making. We know the connection around engagement. How many organizations have you been in where there have been engagement surveys done? I'm going to make the connection for you from DE&I to the engagement. If there is a diverse group of people in an organization, that is fantastic. If there is equity, I give you what you need to be your best self, that is wonderful. If there is inclusion, you hear my ask and you implement it, that's wonderful. So if you have diversity, equity, and inclusion, you are going to have belonging. People will feel connected to the organization. Where you have belonging, you have high engagements, and we already know that high engagement means that people do more than you ask them to do.

Andrea:

They work longer hours. They work harder. They make sure their quality is the best that it can be. So there's the connection from diversity, equity, and inclusion to belonging, to engagement, and so that's why we do this work. It is good for the organization. I thank you so much for allowing us to be here today and to share with you. We'd love to come back at some point in the future to let you know what

progress we're making. I promise you there will be more progress. I just appreciate Larry and his leadership team for allowing us to be here.

Tony:

Any questions of Andrea or Aziza or Amrik?

Suzanne:

I want to thank you for being here. That was a very good presentation. I appreciate that. Amrik and Aziza, I just am really profoundly touched by your optimism and your articulation and your professionalism. Thank you very much. I also appreciate very much, Andrea, the connection between belonging and engagement, because I think you're right on. The one thing as I listen to your presentation that I think you would benefit from is if you take your listening data, which I call perception data, and try to match it up with or contrast it to actual data. I don't even have any great suggestions for you about what actual data you could mine in relation to your organization, but sometimes people have perceptions about things. Then in fact, when you look at the data, it's very different. Some people may perceive that diversity means this, but actually, what we're trying to articulate is that, or that diversity means something as it relates to what we look like and they think we are diverse, but when you point out the facts that what percentage of people identify other than a white Caucasian, it's like, "Well, not really. We're not."

Suzanne:

I think that what facts do is they help perception. They come together at a conversion point to help inform at even a higher level and give you places to really push the system to do better. So I would ask you to take a look at what data, factual data in addition to perception data, and I think you'll have a wonderful mix between the two. In addition to that, I do agree it's a marathon and not a sprint, but just never forget that speed matters. We do not want to take a lifetime to solve some of the problems that we face related to this. So lean way in as we do this work.

Aziza:

Thank you for the feedback.

Suzanne:

Yeah.

Amrik:

Yeah. Thank you.

Andrea:

Fantastic.

Catherine:

I was going to thank you for the presentation as well. I don't think I can say it any better than Suzanne did. I appreciate the methodical and really thoughtful approach that you are going through. So thank you very much. This is very informative and very encouraging.

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Suzanne:
Yes.

Aziza:
Thank you.

Andrea:
Thank you.

Tony:
Okay, any other questions or comments? Okay. Well, thank you very much.

Amrik:
Thanks for having us.

Aziza:
Thank you, everyone.

David:
Thank you.

Larry:
See you. Thank you.

Aziza:
Have a good rest of the day.

Andrea:
Thank you very much.

Tony:
Thank you, folks.

Larry:
[crosstalk 01:40:17]. Thank you.

Suzanne:
Take care.

Aziza:
Bye.

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Suzanne:
Bye-bye.

Tony:
Guys, are we ready to move on to the CEO goals or is there another element to this second item that we should hit?

David:
I think it includes then the evaluation of the CEO at the midpoint and his goals. I think it can include anything regarding his evaluation. I'd like to suggest, if you don't mind since it'll take a few minutes anyway, if we could take a break and then when we come back, if it's all right, we would come back with just the six of us.

Tony:
Absolutely.

Larry:
All right.

David:
Brian, thank you.

[BREAK FROM 2:10 PM TO 2:25 PM]

[FROM 2:25 TO 3:23 PM THE COMPENSATION COMMITTEE VOTES UNANIMOUSLY TO GO INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION TO DISCUSS PERSONNEL MATTERS]

[AT 3:23 PM THE COMPENSATION COMMITTEE MEETING ADJOURNS].