

Mullen welcomed as Fremont's new diversity inclusion director

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FREMONT - City leaders hailed an important step for bringing residents together Tuesday night, as they welcomed Chari Mullen as Fremont's first diversity and inclusion director.

Community members gathered at Terra State Community College's Neeley Center for an hour-long program announcing Mullen's appointment to the newly created position.

Mullen briefly outlined some of her goals in her new role, including working to create more inclusive hiring practices, training department heads and working with the Fremont Community Relations Commission.

She said she also wanted to boost minority economic development efforts and start community dialogues on diversity and inclusiveness.

"We want to have those courageous conversations with one another," Mullen said.

Mayor Danny Sanchez has pushed repeatedly for the position to be created in Fremont this year.

"Diversity is not an imposition. It's an advantage," Sanchez said Tuesday.

In July, he told Fremont City Council he wanted the city to hire a new city diversity inclusion director to serve as a liaison for Fremont's minority communities.

Mullen has worked as an executive assistant to the University of Toledo's vice president of student affairs since 2017.

She also served as an executive assistant to the university's associate vice president of student affairs and dean of students.

Mullen founded Momma's House Community Development Center in 2016, a downtown Fremont community center geared toward helping Fremont's youth find purpose in their lives and have a positive impact in their communities.

She also worked for eight years at Tiffin University and served as a CASA advocate in Sandusky County.

The diversity inclusion director position involves reaching out to the city's minority community and working with Fremont City Schools, Terra State Community College, the police department and other entities.

Terra State President Ron Schumacher said he knew Mullen from when they both worked at Tiffin.

Schumacher said Sanchez had called him about the creation of the diversity inclusion position.

With the opening of its residence hall in 2018 and the introduction of intercollegiate athletics, Terra State's Black population has increased from 2.5% to 10%, Schumacher said.

Jon Detwiler, Fremont City Schools' superintendent, said he's known Sanchez for almost three decades.

He called the mayor a role model for him and the addition of a diversity inclusion director an historic moment for the community.

"This matters. This is good work," Detwiler said.

Kenneth Frost, the city's safety service director, said the director position will start out at \$61,000 a year.

The new position will be partially funded through a \$49,500 Mental Health and Recovery Services Board grant.

Fremont Police Chief Dean Bliss spoke briefly Tuesday.

He said he'd been asked if the creation of the city's new position was part of a "defund the police department" movement.

Bliss said Sanchez and Frost had no intention of defunding the department, adding that the Fremont Police Department's budget had increased every year since Sanchez became mayor.

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