

**MINUTES**  
**Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee**  
*October 22, 2020*

The meeting of the Sharon Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee was called to order at 7:05 by Chair Mrs. Kiana Pierre-Louis remotely via Zoom in accordance with Governor Baker's emergency declaration regarding public gatherings. The following, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee members were in attendance:

*Members Present*

Chair:	Mrs. Kiana Pierre-Louis
Vice Chair:	Ms. Dru Ledbetter
Clerk:	Mrs. Wendy Alexis-Janvier
Other Members:	Lt. Stephen Coffey
	Mr. Lajos Kamocsay
	Rev. Dr. Bill Kondrath
	Ms. Marjorie Mitlin
	Zainab Mohammed
	Ms. Ellie Zinno

*Members Absent*

*Others Present*

Select Board Member    Hanna R. Switekowski

**Administrative Items**

**MOTION:**    (Ledbetter- Kamocsay) To approve the regular session minutes of October 8, 2020.

**VOTED:**    9-0-0 **PASSES**

Mrs. Wendy Alexis-Janvier	Yes
Lt. Stephen Coffey	Yes
Mr. Lajos Kamocsay	Yes
Rev. Dr. Bill Kondrath	Yes

Ms. Dru Ledbetter	Yes
Ms. Marjorie Mitlin	Yes
Zainab Mohammed	Yes
Ms. Ellie Zinno	Yes
Mrs. Kiana Pierre-Louis	Yes

## **Introductions (DE&I Committee members getting to know each other)**

Mrs. Pierre-Louis asked committee members to give 2 or 3 ideas of what made you join the committee.

Ms. Mitlin shared that she has been retired for 2 years and before that she was a Sharon public school teacher and had a privilege to work with black and brown students, also formed a group and was involved in the Tenacity challenge. She also had the opportunity to have conversations with them to discuss the challenges they faced in the Sharon public schools and in the community. Those conversations made her want to join this committee to help make a difference. She has been a member of the pluralism community since birth. The group has been trying to get people to know each other and to show up and be a part of the committee. She is hoping that she can get more people to join. She would like to help the committee to focus and do something.

Ms. Ledbetter shared that she has been in Sharon since 2015. She joined the committee because she wanted to be active because of the experience that her children have faced as a member of the Sharon Community. Ledbetter shared an experience she had where someone with out of state plates asked her where does she think she is going. She discussed that these moments that we should be concerned about. A system and a committee like this are a moment for us to share our stories and point of views to help make a difference in moments like these.

Ms. Zinno shared that she is a senior in high school, and has been in Sharon her entire life. For a long time, she thought that Sharon was really great, because we are known for having a great school system and being a diverse place, however, it took a while for her to realize that this wasn't necessarily true. She has noticed a few things in the school. She has witnessed a general dislike among students to students and teachers to teachers. It isn't an environment that she wants to be in and she would like to help make change.

Mrs. Alexis-Janvier discussed her background as a Haitian immigrant growing up in South Florida and first-time generation college student. She also discussed her experience as a student in a magnet program in high school bussed to a town 1 hour from her home. These experiences, protesting with her parents at a young age, and the events in the US has caused her to want to join the committee to help make a difference. She also discussed the conversations that she witnessed in some of the Sharon Facebook groups made her feel that some of the microaggressions she has faced in town are actually real.

Rev. Dr. Kondrath shared that he has lived in Sharon for 23 years. Some of his best experiences in town have been religious and racial, and cultural diversity. He grew in the 50s and 60s in the Los Angeles area. His parents didn't go to college but he grew up in a predominantly white privilege in a mostly white area. When he was in college, he realized how white his world was. he did 2 things that made a difference for his life. He lived-in South-Central LA, and moved to what used to be referred to as Watts in a Spanish speaking neighborhood. He worked at a church in a group helping run a bilingual Sunday school. All of his interaction as a 19-year-old were with black and brown folks. It opened his eyes and it was a great experience. He also started a college discussion group, years after the Watts rebellion. 40 of the people that started meeting weekly, started volunteering to sort clothes. They also formed a basketball team and played against the people in the community. Their parents were not happy with this. He also took part in the Farmers Workers protest. He explained that these life experiences made a positive impact in his life. He is currently retired from a 19-year teaching career. He discussed his past

experience in teaching in a seminary and parish work. He taught courses in Anti-Racism and Change in congregation. When he moved to Sharon his neighbor was head of the Mass Commission against discrimination. He put together Martin Luther King programs for the town. One was a week long program. One was the movie Crash. They had a program where members of the town shared their experiences. His 2 daughters were in and out of the Sharon school system and has experience in the school system. Both of his daughters' partners who are Black and brown have had recent experience in Sharon make him worry about them having a good experience. What he brings to this committee, for the past 20 years his has been a consultant multicultural training group. They now have 50 consultants. The organization is led by women and Black and Brown people. He is happy to be in this committee.

Mr. Kamocsay shared that he was born and raised in Hungary, a very white and homogenous society. He moved to Los Angeles in the 90's. He discussed his experience working in the entertainment industry with people from all backgrounds and sexual orientation which was a great contrast from how he grew up. It seemed like everyone was getting along. He moved to New England because he wanted to be in a more family friendly place to start a family. Coming from a progressive state to another progressive state, he thought that things were similar. He moved to Sharon and saw the Black Lives Matter sign and Sharon prides itself in its diversity so he thought that he was in a town that was as progressive as Los Angeles but found out that it was not quite so. Everyone once in a while there is a racist incident. He shared some examples of incidents that have happened in Sharon. For example, former Black Sharon High school football players facing discrimination in town and Select Board Member marching into the Sharon high school to take down Black Lives Matter posters, racist comments, and witnessing Dr. Greer's experience in meetings. There is always something worse that happens on Facebook. He really wanted to do something about. He wants his kids to grow up in a society that is more equitable to everyone. He thought something better should be done. His wife was working on a DEI initiative for her company and she suggested that he reach out to the Select Board so that Sharon can have this committee, and finally we have a committee. Being an immigrant and having to do research on the history of the United States, he thinks he can help with this initiative.

Lt. Coffey shared he is here to keep the conversation going. He was raised in Sharon, and has been part of this community since the 60s. His parents were here since the 20's. He thinks he can bring the perspectives of the police department. He hopes we can get a 2-way communication going. He is hoping he can help educate the committee on the direction and goals of the Police Department. He shared that Sharon is a great town. He likes to focus on the positives. He shared that Sharon is a great place to be. There are some issues, a lot of things we need to hash out, and a lot of things we need to work on but he thinks the Northeast is great. Sharon is a great place. He is happy to be hear and happy to do what we have to do.

Ms. Zainab Mohammed shared that it's pretty much around everything everyone has said so far. Sharon is a great town. We definitely have issues we need to work on. But overall, she finds it nice, welcoming, and quiet town. Like everyone else her focus is on schools and the children because, she is very different from her children. She shared that she is an immigrant when she came to this country, she didn't think she would stay for long. Her husband came to work on his medical training and the plan was to stay in the US for 4 years. Her kids have been facing some challenges. She wants to be there for them. She better prospect for them. They are facing a lot of assumptions about their identity and things they can and cannot do. It's been a journey for her. She has studied abroad and has lived in many countries. She felt like she was never viewed as an outsider, however this is how she feels in this country, not specifically Sharon. She explained that her experience is not that she experienced highly bad things, just the little things. She stated that it is like a glass ceiling and there is a limit on how far she can go. She has started diversity event at many of the schools her children have attended. She also shared her experience initiating diversity events in the town and at other schools. She thought participating in these events would help her lay roots. Initially she was hesitant to join the committee because she is shy and likes to work

under cover. She has a lot of ideas to bring to the table. She feels like there are barriers, like the language barriers and the fact that she wears a hijab she feels like people sometimes are hesitant to except her ideas. After a lot of convincing she decided to join the committee. She is happy to be here and happy to meet everyone, and hopes we can accomplish something.

Select Board Member Switlekowski thanked everyone for sharing their stories. It adds a layer of the diversity that we all bring to the community and the thing we share in common of making the town a better place for our kids, and each other and for the entire town. Volunteering is not easy and the work of this committee it's difficult conversation to take a step back to see where we are and commends everyone for wanting to do this, and get involved and wanting to learn from one another. She moved to Sharon in 2003. She was in 6<sup>th</sup> grade and went through the middle and high school. She moved from Randolph. Her family chose Sharon because of the diversity, especially the religious diversity. Having a wide Jewish community was really important to her family. It's been amazing to see the religious diversity in the town. A lot of people don't realize that we have 2 mosques, 6 or 7 synagogues, at least 3 or 4 churches and chapels. It's a unique melting pot. When she was in grad school, she did a project on where we are as a community. She looked at positives and negatives, and evaluated the budgeting process. This is how she got engaged in the town through here project to see how she can help the community. She served on the finance committee for about 5 years. When she ran for the Select Board, she thought that she could bring a different perspective age wise. She was 27 when she ran. She thought she needed to be a home owner and had to have children, however she felt like she could bring fresh perspective. Her motto has always been helping connect the community. She does this through connecting with public safety officials, connecting with people that work in Town Hall. She was really excited when they were forming this committee, because she felt like being new to elected life, this committee is an opportunity to get involved and work together and collaborate.

Mrs. Pierre-Louis shared that this is her work and her passion. This has always been her work and passion. She is a lawyer and a Professor of Law at Bentley University. She is a Corporate, real estate lawyer so she taught many Business Law classes. Then she transitioned to her passion, she teaches a social justice law class and a race justice law class. She loves engaging the students. She is learning from the students; they are learning from her. She moved to Sharon because of the diversity, not just diversity for culture but also religion. She thought moving to Sharon she would be able to get away from the work, but a year or so in, some horrible things happened to her children at school, starting in Kindergarten. For example, her daughter would sit alone at the cafeteria. She thought she was joining the Facebook pages to get information, but she was surprised by the type of things going on Facebook. She shared how she made the decision to respond to a post. The out pouring was wonderful. Then she found herself becoming more involved in racial justice issues in Sharon. She joined the Sharon Racial Equity Alliance. She thinks race is big issue, however there are other issues. When this committee came up, she thought she wanted to be part of it. She is happy that the Select Board was willing to do this and she hopes the committee can make lasting change in Sharon.

### **Confirm how we'd like to be addressed.**

The committee discussed how members would like to be addressed. The consensus is that during the meeting members can be addressed by first name, however Select Board Member Switlekowski indicted that in the minutes we should address Salutations so that when the community reads the minutes it should be the formal name. The minutes are essentially is a summary of what happens. Mr. Kamocsay reiterated the point about Salutations, and also stated that Mrs. Alexis-Janvier should get the names of non-committee members that make comments during the meeting. Members agreed to the following:

Mrs. Kiana Pierre-Louis  
Ms. Dru Ledbetter  
Mrs. Wendy Alexis-Janvier  
Lt. Stephen Coffey  
Mr. Lajos Kamocsay  
Rev. Dr. Bill Kondrath  
Ms. Marjorie Mitlin  
Ms. Zainab Mohammed  
Ms. Ellie Zinno

### **Confirm date of next meeting**

There is conflict with the previously scheduled meeting on November 5<sup>th</sup>, therefore members discussed other options that may work. In addition, Thursday may be problematic for some. Mr. Kamocsay made a suggestion to have Mrs. Pierre-Louis select a date. Mrs. Pierre-Louis suggested November 3<sup>rd</sup>. Select Board Member Switekowski pointed out that this is Election Day. Mrs. Pierre-Louis suggested Monday, November 2<sup>nd</sup>. However, Ms. Zinno, has a conflict after 7 p.m. Select Board Member Switekowski pointed out that the Finance committee meets on Monday's also, typically if there are 2 committees meeting simultaneously, Sharon TV will record one meeting and the other meeting will be live. Ms. Pierre-Louis made a decision to meet on Tuesdays and went down the list to confirm everyone's availability. Committee members responded as listed below:

Mrs. Wendy Alexis-Janvier	Yes
Lt. Stephen Coffey	Yes
Mr. Lajos Kamocsay	Yes
Rev. Dr. Bill Kondrath	Mondays and Thursdays are better, but 1 Tuesday a month he is not available.
Ms. Dru Ledbetter	Yes
Ms. Marjorie Mitlin	Yes
Zainab Mohammed	Yes
Ms. Ellie Zinno	Yes
Mrs. Kiana Pierre-Louis	Yes

Select Board Member Switekowski said she can make the dates work and she also indicated that the committee does not have to stick to a certain time. Generally, 7 p.m. work for people.

Ms. Pierre-Louis decided that we will meet on Monday, November 2<sup>nd</sup> at 6 p.m. for are next meeting and meet every other Tuesday moving forward.

### **Guidelines and norms for DE&I Committee**

Ms. Pierre-Louis introduced the Guidelines and Norms created by Rev. Dr. Bill Kondrath as a guiding principle for the committee to abide by, especially when communicating with members of our community. The number rule is that we all have differences, but we should always respect each other. This is a community striving for diversity, equity, and inclusion, and we have to keep this in the forefront. Rev. Dr. Bill Kondrath share the specifics of the norm. Which include the following:

1. Try on – means being open to something new. It doesn't mean that what you suggested is bad.
2. Okay to disagree, it's not okay to shame, blame, or attack.
3. Self-focus – has two parts. The first is "I" statements. I feel, I believe. So that we are not speaking for people who aren't present. The second part is to pay attention to our own feelings. Not listening with your answer running, but paying attention to the fact that I may feel scared, angry, or excited, but those are my feelings. When I pay attention to them, I can more accurately listen to other people.
4. Both, and – it's not either or, we live in a very either-or culture, but most cultures are not like that. I can say something and also validate what someone else said.
5. Do not use the word but – when you say "but" you cancel out what the other person said.
6. Process and Content – is also who's at the table and who's not. Being aware of the "content" impact. Focus on what the impact of someone else, not focus on what you've done. This is a big one for the town if we can focus on the "intention" and the "impact."
7. Confidentiality – not telling someone else story. We are free to talk about what was spoken, but we shouldn't tell anyone else story.

Select Board Member Switekowski thanked Rev. Dr. Bill Kondrath for sharing this and also emphasized the importance of confidentiality. Lt. Coffey shared that for his work, the intent and impact is huge. Lt. Stephen Coffey also confirmed that everyone is sworn in.

**MOTION:** (Kamocsay - Mitlin) To implement Guidelines and norms presented by Rev. Dr. Bill Kondrath  
**VOTED:** 9-0-0 **PASSES**

Mrs. Wendy Alexis-Janvier	Yes
Lt. Stephen Coffey	Yes
Mr. Lajos Kamocsay	Yes
Rev. Dr. Bill Kondrath	Yes

Ms. Dru Ledbetter	Yes
Ms. Marjorie Mitlin	Yes
Zainab Mohammed	Yes
Ms. Ellie Zinno	Yes
Mrs. Kiana Pierre-Louis	Yes

#### **Summary of meeting with Mrs. Pierre-Louis, Ms. Alexis-Janvier, and Fred Turkington**

Mrs. Pierre-Louis provided a summary of the meeting with Mr. Fred Turkington. Topics of discussion were committee budget, town data, and town recruitment policy. In terms of budget, currently the committee does not have a budget. The committee can put in a request for a budget when the town during budget allocation. However, in the meantime if there are items that the committee deems is necessary and requires a budget, we can reach out to the Select Board and they made be able to find funds. Ms. Mitlin asked whether we will hire someone for training. Mrs. Pierre-Louis send this is an agenda topic we will discuss in this meeting.

In terms of data collection, there isn't demographic information for any of the elected officials. As far as the demographic information for employees, each department keeps their own. For example, police, fire, and DPW keep their own data. There is no demographic data for the boards and committees. We can collect our own data, but best bet might be to outsource data collection. Mrs. Alexis-Janvier agreed that outsourcing might be a better

idea. Ms. Zinno asked about specific on data collection, will it also include other demographics area like gender and sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity. Mrs. Pierre-Louis reiterated that sense this is the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion committee we will include all aspects of demographics in our data collection. We will spend a meeting talking about the types of information we want to collect and the use. Mrs. Crosby noted that people don't have to share their address since this is an open meeting. Mrs. Crosby also noted that the School Committee does have data from DESE on employees and behind the scenes data. Giving the behind the scenes data would "deanominize" some people because we have some small percentage of people. She is not sure if it drills down into religion, national origin, ethnicity, disability status, etc. She also thinks we should use a third party. Anyone can drill into the DESE data. Select Board Member Switekowski – recommends that putting the recommendation into the board on the 2 and have the information ready for the board by 10th. The process takes time and the committee would need to report on it. Mrs. Alexis-Janvier – suggest that we consider having a conversation on the rationale as this will be need to be provide to the Select Board. Mrs. Pierre-Louis point out that we cannot administer half of what we need to do on the charge if we don't have data. Ms. Mitlin also agrees that we will need to be more specific on the rationale and flesh it out.

Rev. Dr. Bill Kondrath – clarified that it doesn't have to be one person to take on the action of finding a third party to outsource the data collection process. It can be 2 or 3 people which is not the majority and would not violate open meeting policy.

Mr. Kamocsay wanted to know if we have to do an RFP for the funds for the data.

Ms. Ledbetter, Rev. Dr. Bill Kondrath, and Mr. Kamocsay volunteered to work together on the search for a third party for data collection.

Ms. Ledbetter if we are trying to create an equitable environment in our town it is important that we understand the composition of our town. If we are trying to create diversity, equity, and inclusion, we need to spend our time where are population is. If our biggest is opportunity is in religious diversity, we need to address that first. If our biggest opportunity is in racial diversity, we need to address that. We need to address all of the diversity of our town.

Ms. Mitlin noted that when she was working in the town, a lot of the conflict was less about racial issues, but socioeconomic issues. There is a huge divide between the people who have a lot and the people who have less. We should take a look at that. Understanding the socioeconomic needs of the town.

Ms. Zinno noted in order to create a more equitable environment we need to understand how equitable we are already. Ms. Ledbetter explained added that having a baseline will give us something to measure against.

Select Board Member Switekowski advised if the committee is not able to outsource, the DEI training that she just did with Brandeis, conducted a SurveyMonkey. This seems like a possibility for the DEI committee since there is an email address. This is also the process the Sharon Celebrates Diversity committee got information was through a SurveyMonkey survey, through Facebook, email, etc.

Mr. Kamocsay asked for clarification on the scope of the data collection. It should be outsourced because a great concern is confidentiality. Mrs. Pierre-Louis indicated that if money is an issue, we should prioritize data collection over training. Mrs. Crosby when you look at data collection, consider reaching out to the Commission on Disability

who may have data. Also, district partnered with a nonprofit who may be able to help connect this committee with data collection and data process. Mrs. Pierre-Louis we all need to look at the recruiting policy of the town.

Ms. Mohammed asked for clarification on the timeline. Although we need the data for some aspects of the work, but we can use the resources that we have right now. What is the timeline, what is the priority, and how are we going to use the data that we have right now?

Mr. Kamocsay recommends that committee members not to use the chat. Ryan with Sharon TV will send the transcript to Wendy.

Ms. Ledbetter added that the data collection will help with credibility metrics as baseline to help move forward when we are making progress.

Select Board Member Switekowski recommended looking into the MMA (Massachusetts Municipal Association) which is the state wide umbrella association that promotes job postings, classifieds, and policy updates that are happening statewide. Fred has many contacts. They are a great resource. In addition, they are starting to work on DEI initiatives because this has become an initiative statewide as more communities are implementing DEI committees.

#### **Vote on whether DE&I Committee should be included in the Implicit Bias Training**

Ms. Mitlin stated that we should go through any of the training the we are going to recommended to other members of the community. Mr. Kamocsay asked whether there is non-fit that does the training or are they all for profit and was wondering if we could get this for free if we were going to go through a non-profit. Mrs. Pierre-Louis responded that there are both, and non-profit also charge a fee. Town member Mrs. Crosby, at the first meeting where this was brought up, the first meeting before the DEI was formed, Select Board Member Bill Heitin made a read a statement and made a public commitment to fund training for all the elected and appointed officials in this town. She understands that the DEIC doesn't have a budget, but recommends going back to the Select Board and asking them what the budget for this. He initially did not back the DEIC, but voted for it after Emily and the town asked for it.

**MOTION:** (Alexis-Janvier – Kamocsay) for the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee to take the Implicit Bias Training

**VOTED:** 9-0-0 **PASSES**

Mrs. Wendy Alexis-Janvier	Yes
Lt. Stephen Coffey	Yes
Mr. Lajos Kamocsay	Yes
Rev. Dr. Bill Kondrath	Yes

Ms. Dru Ledbetter	Yes
Ms. Marjorie Mitlin	Yes
Zainab Mohammed	Yes
Ms. Ellie Zinno	Yes
Mrs. Kiana Pierre-Louis	Yes



## Discussion on prioritizing the charge

Mrs. Pierre-Louis revisited the charge. She also wanted to get thoughts on the committee on prioritizing the charge. Mr. Kamocsay added that there is a lot of information on the charge. Because of this he is recommending that we request that this committee be admitted for more than a year. As for what we should focus on he suggests that we create a category of goals based on timeline for example, short-term vs. long-term. Ms. Ledbetter also agrees that this committee should also be long term and it's important for the work to continue. Mrs. Alexis-Janvier also agrees that this should be a permanent part of the town.

Mr. Kamocsay suggested set up a subcommittee to review the charge and make recommendations. Mrs. Pierre-Louis stated that she likes this recommendation and also agrees that the charge is very broad. Rev. Dr. Kondrath also agrees that this committee be ongoing. He prefers the word ongoing to permanent. In terms of the priorities he is impressed with Sharon Pluralism Network and SREA are going in terms of education which is part of our charge. He thinks education is really important and he thinks it is being done well in our town. We can shorten the list and say we are really happy with what other groups are doing and help them promote. Mrs. Mitlin noted that there are certain groups that have conflict and maybe there is a way we can help them. Perhaps that should be a priority. Mrs. Pierre-Louis noted that although she thinks it might be worthwhile to look at what other community groups are doing in terms of education, however wonders if those cover everything on the charge. We also need to consider what training is needed for other groups. We had to take an ethics training as part of joining this board. There should also be a DEI training. Ms. Ledbetter agreed that training is a number one priority, because we all have biases, and we should all understand what those are to help us move forward.

Mrs. Alexis-Janvier recommended breaking the charge into chunks focusing on 1 or 2 bullets per meeting and coming up with action items and next steps for each. Looking at the entire charge at once can be overwhelming and break things up might help in the process. Ms. Mitlin also agrees that narrowing it down would be helpful, even with subcommittee, it may be a lot. Ms. Mohammad noted that yes, the charge is big and broad, however she thinks of it like an opportunity. She also agrees that we should discuss one or two charges each meeting and use that as an opportunity to discuss them in depth. She is very concerned about the school and thinks that it is a priority. She is interested to hear everyone's thought. Mr. Kamocsay agrees that training should be a priority and also likes the idea of looking at categories on ongoing basis. Also consider reaching out to other towns with DEI and get input on their ideas.

Mrs. Pierre-Louis confirmed that the priority for the committed is to break up the charge into categories, and the area of important is training, helping certain groups that are struggling, and schools.

Town member Town member Natasha Neese, as a community member she would love to have bias training and assumes she is not the only one in the town that feels that way. If there is an opportunity to do community training for the town would be wonderful.

Mrs. Pierre-Louis requested a vote on making the committee and ongoing committee. Rev. Dr. Kondrath suggested that we flesh that out more. For example, thinking about a rotation. For instance, he thinks the clergy would be happy for an opportunity to sit on the committee. We can do some work to make our recommendation more palatable and thoughtful. Ms. Zinno also agreed that we should reiterate that we recommend that this committee be permanent and we think there should be a rotation. Mrs. Pierre-Louis reminded everyone that there is an end date and that on May 31 we can make a recommendation to the Select Board at that time? Ms. Mitlin added that the Sharon Pluralism Network many were interested in being part of this committee so a rotation would

be nice. Select Board Member Switekowski reminded everyone that there are 3 opportunities to give update to the Select Board and suggested that this may be a topic shared with the Select Board at the first meeting. The reasoning behind the date was because this is brand new and we want to determine what comes out of it. She noted that she likes the idea of sharing that with the Select Board.

### **Discussion on how to handle community input**

Mrs. Pierre-Louis asked for the committee's feedback on how to handle community input. Ms. Mohammad agrees that right now we don't get a lot of community input so we should play it by ear. If we start getting more community input, we can schedule this on the agenda for once a month or every other meeting. We can announce that we are soliciting community input once a month. Ms. Zinno thinks it is really important to get community input, especially with the number of people that interviewed to be a part of the committee. She likes the School Committee model where they address it at the beginning of every meeting. It's important to let people know that we are listening and that we will do our best to address their questions/concerns. Ms. Mitlin noted that it's important for people to have their names when they send emails to the committee. The emails should be coming from a specific person. Select Board Member Switekowski shared that the Select Board established a Correspondence Policy and suggested that we review it and possibly use it as an example for the DEIC. The policy will help new people to the committee navigate the process. It's also up to you on how much public input during the meetings. As part of the Select Board policy, they are not taking anonymous emails. It has to have first name, last name, and address. Mrs. Alexis-Janvier thinks we should do this and agrees with everyone. She likes scheduling the correspondence ahead of time and based on all the work we have to do we may not be able to do it for every meeting. She likes the suggestion of once a month at the end of the meeting.

Mrs. Pierre-Louis recommends that the chair, vice chair, and clerk discuss the process and bring it back to the committee. Mrs. Alexis-Janvier asked whether we should review the Select Boards policy and then create a policy of the DEIC. Select Board Member Switekowski shared the Select Boards process for the policy. They discussed policy and took a formal vote on the policy. We can reach out from Melissa in the Select Board office. We can mirror it. School Committee also has a policy.

Town Member Judy Crosby shared that the subject of our committee is pretty sensitive so therefore suggest that we consider anonymous emails. The School Committee does consider anonymous emails. When you do get correspondence consider how you respond to it. The school committee's policy is that they respond but provide and objective response. If there is going to be a more substantive response the policy is that the committee agree on the response.

Mr. Kamocsay supports that the anonymous email be included. Maybe create a policy based on the content of the anonymous email. He also noted that the email address is a handful and was wondering if we can put in a request to shorten it. Mrs. Alexis-Janvier took an action item to update the email address. Many committee members agreed. Also, maybe indicate on the website we can indicate that the email is public record. Also, can we update the website. Mrs. Pierre-Louis noted that she requested an email address. Select Board Member Switekowski noted that as being under the Select Board, Melissa would help us. She suggests that the Secretary reach out to Jeff. Typically, Melissa is the contact to add information on the agenda. Mr. Kamocsay shared that on the Energy Advisement Committee they had access to the web page where they could make updates. This was beneficial because they had the opportunity to add additional information.

Ms. Zinno had a question on whether she should advise students to reach out to her as the school liaison or should she give them the committee email address. Mrs. Pierre-Louis advised that she give the DEIC email address. Select Board Member Switekowski confirmed this. Mrs. Pierre-Louis also advised that if you post on social media that

you clarify that this message is your own, not that of the committee. Town member Judy Crosby also confirmed that leaving eh message that states that the message is your own.

Mrs. Alexis-Janvier noted that she would like to work through Melissa for now. She does have ideas on using the website to add additional resources for community members, however this will be a discussion when we start digging deeper into our charge. Mrs. Pierre-Louis is going to ask Fred for the Select Board policy on correspondence and send it to the committee for review prior to the next meeting.

Rev. Dr. Kondrath asked whether in the future we can use more visuals during the meetings. For example, the committee charge, correspondence, etc. Mrs. Pierre-Louis says that we can keep that in mind. The owner of the topic can take ownership of sharing onscreen.

### **Discussion on School Committee's Listening Session**

The School Committee is having a listening session this Sunday at 7pm for underrepresented members of the community. Mrs. Pierre-Louis wanted to open up the conversation with the DEIC since it is in the purview of the committee.

Ms. Ledbetter shared that although the Sharon Racial Equity Alliance had a listening session and is in support of the listening session, she is not sure of the intent. She is also concerned about the time limit. She is also concerned about the sponsorship of the listening session. As a citizen she is also concerned about the School Committees involvement because she also wants to participate. She is not sure she wants to be involved with it as a committee because we have the opportunity to have the eyes and ears of the community.

Mrs. Alexis-Janvier added that she echoes some of Ms. Ledbetter's sentiments, because it is important for the community to know the why and to be informed on the process. What is the end goal of the listening session? Sharing stories can be triggering so it's important that the intent is communicated to the community. She also shared her experience with the DEI Committee at her children's school and the process they followed which also included non-public meetings with the parents, the purpose and goals were communicated.

Ms. Zinno said as a person she generally sees the pessimistic side of things, however she is trying to see the positive side. She is hopeful for this. She is glad it's happening and she is hoping to share her story as a neurodivergent student in the school system. However, she also hopes that the school committee will listen and there are actions.

Mr. Kamocsay added that he is concerned with confidentiality. He is surprised that this is a public session where people will have to share their experiences and then expose themselves to feedback on Facebook and other forums. Agrees with Mrs. Alexis-Janvier that the sessions should be run by a consultant who has experience in this area. Hopes that the consultant would be able to conduct private sessions and write a report where the names of participants are redacted so that people are free to share their experiences. This session being public would disenfranchised other groups. He hopes it can be modified.

Rev. Dr. Kondrath finds the conversation very interesting. The committee is figuring out our role and what we have to offer the Chair of the School Committee who is on the call. This may be our trying on how we help one part of the town think about what they are trying to do. I'm going to assume good motives. He heard the reason that folks gave that may make it hard to speak, don't want to repeat those. The other piece is when do you conduct a listening session, is it before decisions are made or after. Finally, he just got finished with a colleague where they conducted

18 focus groups for an organization in North Carolina where they heard from 103 people and then it was their responsibility to put that into a report that will be public. They kept comments anonymous, gave the report to the people that hired them, people who participated, next public to the whole organization. There are best practices around this. The hotter the issues, the longer it takes to do it properly.

Ms. Mitlin shared that whatever is being presented on Sunday is being presented on Sunday. This committee wasn't apart of that, maybe there were individuals from this committee. Perhaps this conversation is for us, but she feels like we are stepping on toes. It is premature for us to be wading in on something that's happening already on Sunday.

Mrs. Pierre-Louis clarified it is on the agenda because she was asked to put it on the agenda so she wanted to respect that. She knows that it is happening on Sunday, and thought input from the committee would be beneficial. She agrees with Ms. Zinno and Ms. Ledbetter to a point where, largely agrees with Mr. Kamocsay and Rev. Dr. Kondrath that this cannot be the sole form of collecting comments. If this is important to the School Committee the listening session will not be their only strategy, they will figure out a way to do focus groups and other forms of data collection. Having participated in the Sharon Racial Equity Alliance was very therapeutic. The fact that it is open is important. We have allowed Facebook to take control of the conversation. The support that we got after sharing our stories during the interview was important and that is something that others may be. She also shared that she was asked by the School Committee did reach out to her and she gave feedback that she thought it was a good idea.

Town member Natasha Neese shared that she is really concerned about the listening session. The Black community has already shared their experiences so far, from the Black Student Union to others in the community. Like others have said, what is the point. What are we going to do with this information? People have been saying that our schools are not equitable, people haven't been treated equitably on the School Committee, the Superintendent wasn't treated equitably. This listening session isn't only Black voices, but Black voices have been communicated. But nothing has been done. Difficult to understand why this is happening now, and not before. Since Dr. Greer has been put on administrative leave people have been attending and having something to say about it. The School Committee has other things they need to do right now. It is a busy time. Giving people time and space to share is important. There needs to be action as well.

Town Member Judy Crosby clarified, that she is speaking as a citizen not as a member of the School Committee. She is noted that when there is a topic on the School Committee agenda that involves a town committee, the School Committee makes an effort to collaborate with the other committee. She is disappointed because she didn't know if it was on the agenda. She recognizes that you were asked to put it on the agenda, this is uncomfortable and unfair. Mrs. Crosby provided responses to the various questions, stating that she was not the chair when the Black Student Union spoke, she did not have any authority on agenda prior to becoming the chair. She shared that she was the only elected official who participated in the SREA event, Sharon Pluralism event last week in the 10-person meeting on implicit bias. She makes it very clear why she is doing this. That is because equity will be a major focus of the School Committee this year. She also shared goals of a sustainable equity plan with measurable goals and plans. They are also working with a consulting group working with. Had anyone on the DEIC picked up the phone to call her she would have discussed it with us. She understands there are concerns. She reached out to Mrs. Pierre-Louis who indicated because of her role in this committee she did not feel it was appropriate for her to run the listening session or provide the training to the committee. She sent Mrs. Pierre-Louis a list of 7 trainers that the legal counsel provided for anti-bias training. She is sorry if there is so little respect and so little trust for what is trying to be done. But it matters. She asked Mrs. Pierre-Louis if this listening session should be closed or open. Mrs. Pierre-Louis recommended open. She also shared additional details on her conversation with Mrs. Pierre-Louis. This feels very

unfair and it feels like incredibly why bother. Every effort that is put together is going to be picked apart without notice on the agenda. Why should they bother. She noted that they are the elected school committee. If they wait 5 months to figure out the best way to hold a listening, because in 7 months there will be someone else sitting in this seat. They released the equity analysis as soon as they received. She also shared some of the questions she received from community members regarding the equity analysis. She would be thrilled to share information with the DEIC, but what she just saw was a committee who is tasked with diversity, equity, and inclusion, with the exception of 1 or 2 members is not assuming good intent or the best of anything but instead, trying to take apart something with giving it a chance. She stated that she is disappointed and hurt.

Mrs. Pierre-Louis shared that she understands that Mrs. Crosby was upset. But she needs to understand that this was not intentional, especially from her on her part. She clarified that this was asked to be put on the agenda. She is aware of Mrs. Crosby's support of the committee, so she presumed that Mrs. Crosby saw the topic on the agenda. In the future, she will be sure to communicate formally to the School Committee and Mrs. Crosby. She asked that Mrs. Crosby not blame anyone on this committee for this mistake and she apologize for that. She understands Mrs. Crosby is hurt but it's okay for everyone to question intent. The School Committee has made decisions that is causing this light to be shown, and she has shared this with Mrs. Crosby and other members of the School Committee. She hopes that the community will move on and move pass this. She hopes the DEIC will be part of that. She does understand that some committee members question their intent but that is their personal opinion. It was important to share, and she is happy Judy shared.

Mrs. Alexis-Janvier shared that we should avoid broad statements on people's intent. The committee was asked a question and people voiced their opinions. Her main concern is that some community members may be hesitant to share and there should be an opportunity for them to share in a more private environment. Ms. Ledbetter as a committee we are a committee looking at the collective growth of the town and not looking for personal opinion. But she will work with the committee to work to get things done. She cautions this committee, that no one is a victim hear, as much as she shares what she has faced. She chooses to share on behalf of her and her son. She will speak in truth and hope her allies will work with her. If we as a committee come up with a way to work, personal opinions don't matter. Town member Neese clarified that her comments were for the school committee as a whole. She was not directly putting that on Mrs. Crosby alone.

Mrs. Crosby said she has nothing more to say. She feels defeated. She will leave the DECI to their work. She has heard pretty loud and clear where DEIC is. She hopes people will join and follow our own norms. She thinks there is some reflecting to do? She is sad by this meeting and the way it was carried out. If she is not the chair, none of this would be happening. There would be no focus on equity. She said the kids deserve it, and we've known it for years. She reiterated that Black Student Union came April 24, 2019 but nothing changed. This was under different leadership. If the desire of this committee is not to have that happen or to take the approach. She is going to go forward and work with the School Committee and make changes through her term of May 2021. She indicated that if we need School Committee input, we have Ms. Mohammad, she will work with Ms. Mohammed directly, and ensure that she has the support that she needs. She will not be returning to the DEIC meetings.

Ms. Mitlin shared that she feels badly that this was Mrs. Crosby takeaway. Someone should reach out to her. The hope is not to alienate anyone but to try to bring people together. Mrs. Pierre-Louis feels that it should have ended this way. She hopes everyone can go back and listen to what was actually said. If the problem was not reaching out before it was asked, Mrs. Pierre-Louis noted she will reach out in the future. Mrs. Ledbetter shared she is on this committee to keep it real; this was an example of white fragility at its best. She is sorry felt attacked. She also shared that she had a conversation with Mrs. Crosby prior to the meeting about Facebook commentary. She is not up for the white fragility. She doesn't feel like Mrs. Crosby is that sensitive. There are other committee members, she should assign someone else to work with DEIC. Part of the issue is that we like to have these conversations

and then pretend we're moving forward, but everyone keeps the same mindset. Unless we start to shift and change nothing is going to happen. If we start to have sympathy for people who play victim like Judy Crosby and Heather Zelensky, nothing is going to change. Everyone pretends to be the victim but they are not the ones who are continually attacked. She needs Mrs. Crosby to step it up. If we are going to continue to sympathize for Judy and hold it's not going to work. We need to work and represent those that have been underserved. She noted if people aren't going to do that, then they need to get off the committee. Mrs. Zinno agrees. Town Member Barbara said that she commends all of the DEIC for volunteering. She appreciates it. If it is this hard with everyone on this committee with open minds open hearts, this is an indication of how difficult it will be as a community conversation. It is tough work. Mrs. Pierre-Louis agreed that it is tough work and difficult conversations. Mrs. Alexis-Janvier reiterated the norms. Thought we started on a good note but unfortunate that we had to end this way.

Rev. Dr. Kondrath shared the additional part of the norms which is an exercise where each member of the committee shares appreciation and regrets. Members took the opportunity to share their appreciates and regrets. Select Board Member Switekowski expressed appreciation, shared that she is happy with the work of the DEIC and reminded everyone of the goal and charge.

## Adjourn

**MOTION:** (Rev. Dr. Kondrath-Ms. Mitlin) To adjourn the meeting at 10:57 pm.

**VOTED:** 8-0-0 **PASSES**

Mrs. Wendy Alexis-Janvier	Yes
Mr. Lajos Kamocsay	Yes
Rev. Dr. Bill Kondrath	Yes

Ms. Dru Ledbetter	Yes
Ms. Marjorie Mitlin	Yes
Zainab Mohammed	Yes
Ms. Ellie Zinno	Yes
Mrs. Kiana Pierre-Louis	Yes