

Town of Sharon Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee (DEIC)

January 20th, 2022 Meeting Minutes

The meeting was conducted virtually over Zoom in accordance with Governor Baker's June 16th, 2021, executive action extending certain COVID-19 measures adopted during the state of emergency. The committee chair Mrs. Pierre-Louis started by welcoming everyone and calling all committee members and liaisons to confirm their attendance.

Attendance:

Kiana Pierre-Louis - chair, present
Dru Ledbetter - vice chair, not present (joined late)
Wendy Alexis-Janvier -not present
Bill Kondrath – not present (joined after roll call)
Marjorie Mitlin - present
Zainab Mohamed - present (joined after roll call)
Lajos Kamocsay - present
Tricia Asklar- present
Scott Leonard - SPD Liaison, present
Tanya Lewis - School Committee Liaison, not present
Hanna Switekowski - Select Board Liaison, present _

Statement on Antisemitic Attacks:

Chair Mrs. Pierre-Louis opened with reading a statement addressing the recent attack on the Congregation Beth Israel in Texas. She expressed solidarity with the Jewish community in Sharon and around the world in condemning any form of antisemitic attacks. Select board liaison Mrs. Switekowski thanked the chair for the statement and added that we are lucky to have a strong interfaith community in Sharon that comes together for each other in times of need and in celebration like in Martin Luther King Day service that was attended by more than 60 people. She also mentioned how the Public Safety Department had put in their Facebook page that they have strong relations with the places of worship in Sharon, so that everyone can feel safe to attend them.

Approval of previous meeting minutes:

- October 21st, 2021, meeting minutes were taken by Marjorie Mitlin for the. The chair asked for a motion to approve it, Bill Kondarth moved; Marjorie seconded. Kiana Pierre-Louis, Bill Kondrath, Lajos Kamocsay, Marjorie Mitlin, Zainab Mohamed, Trisia Asklar all voted YES, and the minutes were approved.
- December 16th, 2021, meeting minutes were taken by Lajos Kamocasy, 5 members voted Yes (Kiana Pierre-Louis, Bill Kondrath, Lajos Kamocsay, Marjorie Mitlin, and Trisia Asklar), one member (Zainab Mohamed) abstained because she did not receive the email with the minutes.

Email Correspondence:

Kiana Pierre-Louis provided a summary of correspondence received by the committee. The emails regarded a speaker from a previous DEIC meeting providing their presentation slides. Another email

from a community member regarding an ongoing concern, that was discussed with the community member and will be touched upon later during this meeting. An email from a committee member with the minutes for the December 16th, 2021, meeting. The chair emailed the flyer of the Interfaith clergy MLK service that happened on January 17th. She applauded Bill Kondrath for his part in the service. The recreation department sent an email attaching a facility use application that will be discussed later.

Updates on DEIC Events:

A Critical Race Theory educational event was planned for February but was postponed due to funding. The DEIC chair and the town administrator Fred Turkington are working to secure funds through sponsors and other means. The chair noted that she will give an update on the budget later in the meeting under agenda items not anticipated within 48hrs.

Committee member Zainab Mohamed volunteered to be the note taker. The chair noted that Bill Kondrath sent her an article on CRT history that she would share with the committee and discuss it before the CRT event.

Shared Legacy: is on April 5th and the location has been secure at the community center, the facility use application was received from the recreation department. There will be no fees associated with booking the space. The event is co-sponsored by Temple Sinai, and they are working on recruiting panelists. Lajos graciously agreed to work on the flyer for the event. The DEIC paid \$200 from the budget for the license to view the documentary.

Second SPD Community Meeting: Lt. Leonard stated that Deputy Chief Coffey will take over on March 1st, and the February date was deemed not suitable, therefore a later date (May) would be a better fit to give chief Coffey a couple of months to settle his new role. The department will get two recruits soon and another transfer from Brookline PD will also join SPD, so all new officers will be introduced to the community during the meeting. Scott inquired about the audience and setting of the meeting, the chair stated that she prefers the same setting as the first meeting. As for the audience she will send out an email to Scott with names of groups she would like to be included.

DEI Training Update:

Kaina and Bill will be conducting the training of the town employee, on two sessions to accommodate the employees' schedules. One session is set for the morning of March 25th and an afternoon session on April 8th, both sessions to be held in the community center.

The chair shared that she is in the process of scheduling an intake training with the school committee as well, with more information to come later.

The Greater Us, contract with the DEIC to conduct a strategic planning and affinity groups was canceled, and they reimbursed the amount of \$ 2343 back to the town and is now in the DEIC budget.

The chair shared that there are interests from the community members to help train the trainers on the DEI field. She thinks it will be a good idea for some people to learn how to do it. However, a budget needs to be discussed if they decide to go through with the idea. Bill added that due to the COVID restrictions the numbers of people allowed to attend will be limited and he would be comfortable doing at least one session before opening it up for training of trainers.

Select Board Liaison Hanna made a comment that Fred, Melissa and Lauren went through the DEIC training and will most likely be present in the town employee training, so they can conduct training in the town for the future years. The Fire and Police department training will be separate and scheduled after the town employee training is completed.

Community member Beth from Sharon Pluralism Network shared their views and experience on the benefits of training community members.

Update on the Social Media Policy and Code of Conduct Proposal to the Select Board:

Kiana gave a background on the issue and how it came about to the DEIC table, and what can be done about it since the DEIC is an advisory board. Marjori has been working on drafting an advisory opinion to the select board to adopt a social media policy and code of conduct on their board and committees appointed and elected officials. DEIC had deep conversation on the topic and voted to propose this policy to the select board. For the proposal to make it to the Select board agenda it needed to be drafted as a policy. The DEIC will work on the draft and the town administrator offered to assist, the draft must be reviewed by the town legal counsel. The chair reiterated that the role of DEIC is to provide guidance and advise the select board but cannot control how people use their personal social media platforms.

Hanna stated that she supported the policy formation, and how it should be a collaborative effort. She looked at other towns that have such policies and she would like to have some form of acknowledgement or receipt of it like the town does with the ethics. She informed the DEIC that the select board has two meetings in February, she doesn't want the process to drag for too long and hopes that the policy will be a long-term document and serve as a guide.

Committee member Tricia asked if the town has other policies that deal with inappropriate behaviors other than in social media platforms, and what other criminal acts would result in removal from an appointed position? Select board liaison Hanna answered that she is not entirely sure, however the town administrator would know the specifics, the Clerk office would have some knowledge as well. She added that all appointed and selected officials go through the state's ethics training every one or two years.

A question was asked in the chat if we have evidence that some elected or appointed officials have used hateful language before? The chair responded by saying that they have received some complaints about certain individuals who have put in questionable content in personal pages and in town pages. Lajos commented that hate speech is still a form of protected speech and that he doesn't think it should impact who gets appointed to committees and boards. The chair explained that the law in the United States regarding hate speech is complicated, however there is an obscene speech law. The Miller Test is used in the Supreme Court to determine if a speech is deemed obscene by that test it is then not protected under the first amendment. She continued to assure everyone that this is not a simple process, and that it has to be carefully crafted and not rushed because it has a constitutional barrier.

Marjori offered an apology for the people who came to her with the concern, because the process is long and complicated. Hanna also agreed that the process takes time, but it is important. The chair asked for volunteers from the DEIC to work with the draft of the policy, Marjori, Tricia, and Lajos have all kindly volunteered to work on the draft.

Hanna reminded everyone not to use the chat feature because of open meeting law.

Announcements:

Columbus Day/Indigenous people Holiday name change: Warrant article to change the holiday name is issued and is in the process to make it to the Town Hall meeting in May. The article is sponsored by the Select Board and co-sponsored by the DEIC. The chair thanked the DEIC members for their hard work to make this happen.

Annual report: Every year the town publishes an annual report book that compiles reports from all departments, committees, and boards. The chair had prepared a report, stating that this is the second year for the DEIC to provide one. The book should go to every resident in town.

Topics Not Anticipated Within 48 hours:

Hanna announced a book collection for the benefit of students in the city of Brockton as part of the project that B'nai Mitzvah are doing. Collections sites are around town.

The chair announced that the proposed budget for the DEIC for 2023 will be \$5000 if the select board votes and approves it.

The chair also apologized for forgetting to add an agenda item for this meeting regarding a presentation by the LGBTQ+ working group, it will be on the agenda for the February meeting.

Zainab acknowledged the efforts of SPS, PTO Alliance and the Hijab Team in bringing Ibtihaj Mohammed the US Olympic fencer to SPS in a live broadcast where she spoke to SPS student 4th grade and up about her experience being a Muslim woman of color wearing the Hijab in sport. The SMS PTO donated some of her book Proud to the school library so students can borrow. The chair added that students in grades K-3rd grade watched a video of her reading a book the proudest blue.

Lajos asked if the DEIC would consider meeting on the second Thursday instead of the third of the month, committee members started discussing the change of dates of the occurrence of the meeting. After discussion everyone agreed that starting February the meeting will be on the second Thursday every month.

Bill apologized for using the chat feature because he was not aware that we were not supposed to use it. The chair thanked him and assured him that we have used it in the past and we are all still learning.

Motion to adjourn the meeting was seconded and approved by all members attending, at 8:18 pm the meeting was adjourned.