

Minutes of Sharon Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee, September 14, 2023
Agenda times are approximate.

1. 7:03 p.m. Attendance

Present: Toben Asklar; Alison Kellom; Bill Kondrath; Lajos Kamocsay; Marjorie Mitlin; Shelley Keimach; CP Pototsky; Chandu Kiana Pierre-Louis (Select Board liaison); Weinxiao Tiano (School Committee liaison).

2. 7:04 p.m. Email Correspondence presented by Marjorie Mitlin

8/21/23 Received from: Danielle Forte-

Danielle wants to know what the DEIC is planning to do for Indigenous People's Day? She wants to now how we will honor this day. She says that it is the first year that Sharon is celebrating this day, that we should do something.

8/30/23 received from Shelley Keimach-

Shelley is passing along something that arrived in her "in box." There is going to be a Sharon Civics Academy which is a free 7 week series of classes to learn about our town government. The classes will take place from sept. 28th-November 16th/23 from 6:30 - 8:30 at various town of Sharon locations.

9/8/23. Received from Mark Hogan- Town Clerk

There are two State Ethics Law trainings that are mandatory for all Town Employees and Committee members to take. It takes about one hour to complete.

3. 7:08 p.m. Approval of notes from August 10, 2023, DEIC meeting

Lajos Kamocsay motioned to approve the minutes and Margie Mitlin seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously.

4. 7:10 p.m. Discussion of town DEI Director advisement, DEI trainings status.

Bill Kondrath updated the Committee on the status of training for members of town boards and committees. Kiana Pierre-Louis said that the Select Board is moving on the reappointment of members to many boards and Committees. Select Board members are reviewing the SunShower training material. Kiana will check with the Town Administrator about contacting Joel Lesko at SunShower regarding the start of the contract. She assured the committee that the training will go forward, and that the reappointed members will be required to take the training. The Select Board will be interviewing people for renewals in the coming months.

The possible position of a DEIC professional for the town will be part of the budget process for the town. DEIC advisement was for a full-time director who would work with employees and for appointed volunteer members of boards committees. Kiana said it would be good for DEIC members to attend the Select Board when the DEIC position comes up for discussion.

5. 7:16 p.m. Request for Indigenous Peoples' Day Sharon observance event(s): discussion

Toben Asklar has contact someone from the Wampanoag people who could be a speaker (cost: \$500 and travel). The Unitarian Universalist Church has offered their space for a speaking event. Kiana has a contact for a member of the Massachusetts tribe.

Kiana affirmed that there will be a proclamation from the Select Board on Indigenous People's Day.

The Committee discussed the DEIC budget for the year (\$1500) and its usage.

Kiana suggested that since the Juneteenth is further away, we would have time to go to the Cultural Council for a grant.

Alison Kellom and Shelley will make a flyer to be distributed to groups (Schools, SREA, SPN, etc.) in town.

Shelley Keimach moved and Margie Mitlin seconded that we hold a speaker event at the Unitarian Church and fund it from our budget. The Committee voted unanimously in favor.

Margie will get back to the person who wrote and asked about an Indigenous People's event in Sharon.

6. 7:38 p.m. Discussion of Sharon observance and celebration of Juneteenth (June 19, 2024) [moved up on the agenda]

Shelley suggested that we set up an event that might be inspired by a Seder meal with a story telling (parallel to a Haggadah).

Kiana mentioned *The Broccoli Gallery* (art gallery) in Sharon (in Plaza near Zen Leaf), which has a lot of Black art. The people there might be interested in an event.

Alison Kellom volunteered that she is president of the Sharon Creative Arts Association (SCAA) who would like to find space for showings and workshops.

Shelley will take the lead on this event and Margie volunteered to work with her.

7:45 p.m. Recent anti-LGBTQ+ comments during School Committee open forum (August 23 and September 6) : discussion

Some members of DEIC attended or watched these meetings. Some of the comments by community members were quite upsetting to members of the LGBTQIA+ community.

Shelley suggested that DEIC have a "fact sheet" to speak to folks who speak in hurtful ways to the LGBTQIA+ community.

Weinxiao Tiano expressed that she did not want to turn School Committee meeting into a discussion forum or a platform for these discussions if it is not relevant to specific policies or

practices in the schools. It is important that citizens have a place to speak. The School Committee should discuss and work on matters of policy and matters within their mandate.

Chandu suggested that the DEIC might be the place for such a forum and asked what that would look like. Tobin recounted that the DEIC had hosted forums in the past. They expressed that their concern was the pain caused by the comments and how to repair that pain without further exposure to more pain. Weinxiao stated that you have to be open-minded to have a dialogue and that the open forum was often seen as a place for people to vent.

Toben expressed that the comments created pain and how do we repair it, and that we do not want to create a forum for speech that is hurtful.

Margie talked the “harassment team” that used to function at the high school.

Kiana talked about two citizens who called her who were hurt by the open forum. DEIC can write a letter of support to the School Committee, and could advise when policy issues arise. Perhaps DEIC may be able to strategize with the School Committee at some point. Tobin mentioned that the school superintendent spoke out to support the LGBTQIA+ community.

Alison asked how can we prevent future harm.

Weinxiao mentioned that the School Committee read their non-discrimination policy at the beginning of the second meeting. We can have more cultural check-ins with students. What’s happening in the schools is not always reflected in what’s happening in the community.

Chandu Krishnan said that we cannot ignore the harm done. We really don’t have a choice and we should at least make a statement. After discussion, Chandu motioned and Shelley seconded that Toben write a letter of support for the School Committee. The motioned was approved unanimously.

Weinxiao mentioned that School Committee is working on hiring a DEIC person for the schools.

After a lengthy discussion, the DEIC voted to support the School Committee in their work of valuing the diversity of the students in Sharon.

Weinxiao mentioned that PTO are helpful in bringing about changes through relationships.

8. 8:22 p.m. Sharon Day: Sunday, October 1, Veterans’ Memorial Park Beach, 11 a.m.-3 p.m.

Shelly put in the application with the town for Sharon Day. Alison and Shelley discussed Sharon Day and possible handouts. Shelley looked at the costs of handouts at Staples for about \$112 for 250 cards (4” x 8”). She also talked about the possibility of creating a Deck of DEIC cards.

Bill shared a graphic of Equality, Equity, and Justice (with the removal of barriers). About 8:33 pm.

The Committee had lively discussion of possible handouts, including definitions, “scripts,” pictures, etc. Alison suggested that the purpose for the handout is “brand awareness” with a QR code on the back with our website. Some education; some info about DEIC.

Kiana stated that DEIC can put definitions on the DEIC webpage.

Kiana will notify the town administrator about upcoming expenses for Sharon Day.

Weinxiao suggested that we stress the positive as well as offer help with problems. Shelley asked about “tax-free” status for the purchases.

CP Pototsky will set up a SignUp Genius for times that committee members will staff the booth.

Shelley has the banner. Tobin (?) has the tablecloth. CP talked about the “tree and leaves” activity for children last year. Shelley suggested a coloring activity. Tobin offered to bring glitter tattoos.

9. 8:57 p.m. Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day – Day of Dialogue 11/14/2023 discussion

The committee discussed recognizing and honoring Ruby Bridges. CP offered to get visuals on the SHS screens. Tobin wants to make the schools aware of the day. Shelley mentioned the safety logistics including crossing guard help.

The website is: <https://rubybridges.foundation/>

Alison suggested a library reading of “I am Ruby Bridges.”

Kiana suggested that we talk to the PTOs and library about the walk.

Toben will talk to Weinxiao.

Margie suggested a reading on Sharon Cable.

10. 9:09 p.m. Strategic Plan status update

Toben shared the grid of the strategic plan and mentioned updates.

Shelley will talk with Kiana about a “big tent” event.

C.P. connected with a new SHS faculty member about ideas the teacher had about an umbrella group for various affinity groups.

Toben suggested we have 10-15 knowledge sharing by members of the committee within our meeting.

11. 9:16 p.m. Announcements regarding upcoming events

Toben presented upcoming events. See the DEIC website (<https://www.townofsharon.net/node/59333/events/upcoming>) for upcoming events.

12. 9:24 p.m. Topics not anticipated within 48 hours of meeting

A citizen from Foxboro was asking for support for changing the Foxboro mascot.

CP has been asked to attend an ADL meeting at the high school.

13. 9:25 p.m. Appreciations, regrets, and learnings.

The committee shared appreciations and regrets.

9:34 p.m. Bill motioned and Margie seconded that the meeting be adjourned. The motion was unanimously approved.