

**MINUTES**  
**Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee**  
*Date 10/8/2020*

The meeting of the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee was called to order virtually at 7:00pm by Select Board Member Hanna Switekowski

*Members Present*

Chair:	Kiana Pierre-Louis
Vice Chair:	Dru Vernet
Clerk:	Wendy Alexis-Janvier

*Members Absent*

NONE

*Others Present*

Lt. Stephen Coffey  
Lajos Kamocsay  
Rev. Dr. Bill Kondrath  
Marjorie Mitlin  
Zainab Mohamed  
Ellie Zinno  
Hanna Switekowski, Select Board Liaison

**Administrative Items**

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

**VOTED:** 9-0-0, (In Favor-Opposed-Abstentions) October 8, 2020 minutes **PASSES**

**Introduction**

Members went around, introduced themselves to the community and discussed hopes and goals for the new committee. There was general consensus to look at and try to understand all aspects of diversity within the community, increase cultural competency, and try build a sense of inclusion & equity for all in town. Select Board Member Switekowski emphasized that this is a new committee and there may challenges along the way, and we will be analyzing and looking at all different departments in the community along with the schools, but it's important to also focus on the positives in the town.

**Review and discuss charge and mission**

Ms. Pierre-Louis brought up a question about advising the select board as it relates to different trainings the committee may want to pursue and what "advise" actually means. Select Board Member Switekowski said the

Committee would most likely start meeting twice a month to kick things off, and a report to the Select Board would most likely be presented in December and that it is very much an advisory committee. She also encouraged members to search and look at other community DEI Committees around MA as models or examples for this committee. Mrs. Alexis-Janvier commented on the bullet points prepared and asked if there is budget for the committee and if it is out of scope to expand the committee charge, including creating an anti-racist policy for the town. Select Board Member Switekowski made some suggestions around programming ideas for the committee to possibly put on in partnership with the town, and that it also an administrative type of committee to suggest trainings or areas needed to look at Ms. Mitlin asked if there's anything in particular to look at in the community if there's particular groups struggling. Ms. Ledbetter asked if other committees can reach out to the DEI committee if they're having issues or if there's a way to connect with boards and committees to introduce themselves. Select Board Member Switekowski suggested once the committee has a chair, it could be discussed later on if they might want a liaison for town boards/committees for outreach or communication. Rev. Dr. Kondrath spoke about his experience on diversity & inclusion and asked about if town has data on diversity demographics specific to boards and committees. He would like the committee to look further at this as a baseline to see where departments, committees and boards are in terms of diversity. A member from the public spoke about her experience in Sharon, and asked about community communication with the committee, and how to reach out to everyone in the town. Select Board Member Switekowski explained that the DEI Committee is on the Town website and the committee will hopefully have a town email address for residents to reach out to, so they can certainly keep correspondence and discuss outreach approaches. Ms. Ledbetter inquired about Schools Equity report which had parts come out recently and asked about hiring practices. Select Board Member Switekowski mentioned Ms. Mohamed is the liaison to the Schools and she could be point person on anything related to the schools. She also stated that she envisions the committee having specific meetings on certain departments, for example one meeting around public safety and one spent on the schools. Ms. Vernet inquired about Police Department trainings and if any trainings suggested by the committee would be covered under department's budgets or would it be overall town wide trainings. Mrs. Pierre-Louis addressed having open-forums as a committee and the need to hear from the community directly. She also addressed that DEI isn't a partisan, political issue and we all need to respect one another, even if we have different ideas or thoughts. Ms. Alexis-Janvier inquired about Open Meeting Law and if all meetings are public, including the work they do as a committee. Select Board Member Switekowski explained all meetings are open to the public, and sub-committees could be created possibly to work on certain areas. A member of the public commented that the Sharon Schools doesn't currently have system wide anti-racist trainings, but some schools do their own thing around diversity, but there isn't something for all faculty and staff standardized. Another member of the public clarified that sub-committees are still subject to open meeting law. Ms. Mohammed spoke about her experience with Cottage Street School Diversity Committee, which also includes Mrs. Pierre-Louis, and she would like to use Cottage as an example for the elementary schools working together and the other schools in town. She spoke about also Heights Elementary beginning to look at diversity events as well. She emphasizes the need for training our teachers. Ms. Mitlin would like to back-up and examine who we are, where we come from, and suggested an icebreaker type discussion. It was decided that this would be best for the next meeting with a Chair in place.

## **Discuss and confirm future meeting schedule**

Discussion was held around how often the committee should be meeting since it is brand new, and it is expected that an update be given around December to the Select Board. Mr. Kamocsay suggested meeting the following week, and Select Board Member Switekowski advised that is quite a busy week for the town and that two weeks would be preferred. Ms. Mohamed likes the idea of every two weeks meeting, and there is an urgency to get to work. She recognizes Wednesdays are School Committee nights, so that wouldn't be ideal. It was asked if Thursdays typically work for the committee. Ms. Alexis-Janvier feels that every two weeks isn't enough time given the timeline of the committee of a possible December update to Select Board. Select Board Members Switekowski clarifies that this committee has in its charge to give updates/reports to the Board 3 times a fiscal year, so it doesn't necessarily have to be December. Ms. Mitlin lets members know about the Pluralism Network program happening on a Tuesday night. Mr. Kamocsay suggested Thursday, October 22 at 7pm for the next meeting and clarifies it's up to the chair to schedule meetings. Rev. Dr. Kondrath suggested November 5th and 13th for future meetings as well. Mrs. Pierre-Louis likes the thought of October 22, and it is important to meet as soon as possible to get the committee moving. She recognizes also it is just an update to the Select Board about progress. Lt. Coffey recognizes Thursdays are not the best for meetings, but will make it work.

**A Roll Call vote was had on the next meeting date of October 22 at 7pm: 9-0-0 Passes**

#### **Committee organization**

Mr. Kamocsay nominated Kiana Pierre-Louis, Dru Vernet, and Wendy Janvier-Alexis for Chair, Vice Chair and Clerk respectively. He recognizes that Vice Chair wasn't in the agenda but feels it is important for a committee. Select Board Member Switekowski explains the reasoning around no Vice Chair, but is open to the idea if committee feels strongly about it. She also states that she has been note taking to help the clerk position. Question was asked about if anyone else had interest for any of the positions. Ms. Mitlin asked if the people nominated are actually interested in being nominated. Mr. Kamocsay asked if he could make a motion to elect a vice chair once a chair is elected. Ms. Pierre-Louis accepted the nomination for chair.

**A roll call vote was taken for Kiana Pierre-Louis to be Chair, which was motioned by Mr. Kamocsay and seconded by Ms. Mitlin**

**MOTION:** (Lajos Kamocsay) To elect Kiana Pierre-Louis as Chair.

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

Ms. Pierre-Louis would like Select Board Member Switekowski continue the election process tonight. She also would like a vice chair on the committee.

A roll call vote on the motion made by Ms. Alexis-Janvier to elect Ms. Ledbetter as Vice Chair, seconded by Mr. Kamocsay:

**MOTION:** (Wendy Alexis-Janvier) To elect Dru Vernet as Vice Chair.

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

A question was asked about the details of the roll of clerk/secretary. Mrs. Alexis-Janvier accepted the nomination to be Clerk/Secretary.

A question came up about correspondence and wanting a town of Sharon email address. Mr. Kamocsay spoke about his experience on another committee and clarified open meeting law around emails. Mrs. Alexis-Janvier asked about setting agendas with open meeting laws. It was clarified scheduling can be done and she can communicate with Mrs. Pierre-Louis as chair without conflict.

**A roll call vote on the motion made by Mr. Kamocsay and seconded by Mrs. Pierre-Louis to elect Mrs. Alexis Javier as Clerk/Secretary:**

**MOTION:** (Lajos Kamocsay) To elect Wendy Alexis-Janvier as Clerk.

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

A member of the public spoke on agenda setting and open meeting law as it relates to administrative things in the committee.

### **Adjourn**

Select Board member wrapped up meeting letting members know that they can reach out to her anytime and she turned things over to Ms. Pierre-Louis to end the meeting.

**MOTION:** (Lajos Kamocsay) To adjourn the meeting at 8:30 pm.

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