



Notice and Agenda Sudbury Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Commission

Sudbury DEI Commission Meeting
Thursday, July 22, 2021
7:30 PM Open Session

Please click the link below to join the virtual Sudbury DEI Commission Meeting:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83513599960>

For audio only, call the number below and enter the meeting ID on your telephone keypad.
Call In Number: 978-639-3366 or 470-250-9358
Meeting ID: 835 1359 9960

Meeting Agenda

1. Welcome.
2. Open meeting by roll call vote.
3. Public Comments.
4. Bill S.465 Update.
5. DEI Commission outreach updates.
6. Discuss and possibly vote on establishing sub-committees.
7. Reviewing and amending meeting calendar.
8. Celebrating Community Event Planning Update.
9. Quarterly update to Select Board.
10. Review and approve minutes from July 08, 2021 meeting.
11. Upcoming agenda items/next meeting planning.

12. Adjourn meeting by roll call vote.

“This listing of matters is those reasonably anticipated by the Co-Chairs which may be discussed at the meeting. Not all items listed may in fact be discussed and other items not listed may also be brought up for discussion to the extent permitted by law.”

The next Sudbury Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Commission meeting is scheduled for August 5, 2021 at 7:30 PM.

Bill S. 456

S. 465: An act extending voting rights in municipal elections to noncitizen voters of the commonwealth.

Lead Sponsors: Senator Jamie B. Eldridge

Summary

This bill allows legal residents of Massachusetts who are not citizens to vote in municipal elections. It also allows noncitizens to serve in municipal offices if elected.

Provisions

1. Allows noncitizens to register to vote in municipal elections
2. Establishes a registration process, as well as a notification of rights and limitations process
3. A noncitizen may only vote in the municipality in which they reside

Why This Matters

The ability to influence the politics of your town is one of the greatest rights of this country, especially when your tax money is at stake. Allowing all legal residents, regardless of their immigration status, to participate in municipal elections is an essential step toward equality, true democracy and taxation with representation.

**A Report on Massachusetts House Bill 770 and Massachusetts Senate Bill 465
For: The Sudbury Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Commission and the Public
Date: July 8, 2021**

Massachusetts House Bill 770, sponsored by State Rep. Mike Connolly (D-Cambridge) and Senate Bill 465, sponsored by State Senator Jamie Eldridge (D-Acton) both propose to allow non-citizen residents of Massachusetts to vote in local (municipal) elections for school committee, select board, city council or town meeting, and local referendums. The proposed state-wide legislation applies only to non-citizens who are in the country legally, and would allow them to vote only in town, not state or federal elections. (Currently federal law prohibits non-citizens from voting in federal elections but states can permit non-citizens to vote in local and state elections.)¹

Representative Connolly and Senator Eldridge argue that non-citizen residents of Massachusetts are already participating in civil life by running businesses in our communities, volunteering in schools and on local boards, and of course, paying taxes. (According to Representative Connolly, in 2019 immigrant-led households in Massachusetts paid \$3.3 billion in state and local taxes.) Prohibiting non-citizens from voting in municipal elections is the epitome of “Taxation without Representation.”

On the national level, taxes paid by non-citizens go to support social safety-net programs such as Medicare and Social Security, which immigrants are not allowed to access. A 2019 report by WBUR pointed out that, “A similar dynamic plays out at the local level...non-citizen residents are expending considerable amounts of money in sales and property taxes, without any say in local politics. Although their tax revenue funds public schools, libraries, and roads, they cannot vote on any proposal that would direct how those dollars were spent. Although their contributions pay the salary of elected officials, they cannot select a mayor, alderman or school board official to advocate for their interests.”²

There is a long history of allowing non-citizens the right to vote in this country. By 1900, more than half of US States had allowed some form of non-citizen voting. Unfortunately, this changed due to anti-immigrant sentiments following WWI. Currently, non-citizens are allowed to vote in local elections in San Francisco, California, nine communities in Maryland, and two communities in Vermont.³

During the past 15-20 years, communities including Brookline, Newton, Somerville, Wayland, and Amherst have approved home rule petitions seeking to allow non-citizens the right to vote in local elections. However, each petition requires approval from the state legislature, which so far has not given it. On Thursday, June 24th, 2021, the state Legislature’s Joint Committee on Election Laws conducted a hearing where elected officials and their constituents presented their

¹ <https://newbostonpost.com/2021/06/24/non-citizens-voting-yes-say-massachusetts-immigrant-advocates/>

² <https://www.wbur.org/cognoscenti/2019/02/27/allowing-non-citizens-to-vote-ivan-espinoza-madrigal-lauren-sampson>

³ https://ballotpedia.org/Laws_permitting_noncitizens_to_vote_in_the_United_States

reasons for supporting many of these Home Rule Petitions, along with House Bill 770 and Senate Bill 465. No one argued against the bills at that hearing.⁴ The next step in the process is for the Joint Commission on Election Laws to hold an executive session to issue its recommendations.

Some statistics to consider:

Massachusetts has approximately **7.1 million residents**.⁵ About **8%** of those (**over half a million people**) are **non-citizens** and are therefore not allowed to vote in local elections.⁶

Currently, **Sudbury** has a population of approximately **19,855**. **12.66%** of the population are foreign-born: **8.88%** naturalized citizens and **3.78% (750) non-citizens**.⁷ Approximately **71.8% (14,255) of all Sudbury residents are age 18 or older**, and therefore eligible to vote.⁸ However **84% (630) of Sudbury's non-citizens are age 18 or older**, and therefore would be eligible to vote should the proposed bill be approved.⁹

In the most recent **Sudbury Town Elections (March 29, 2021)** only **2223 votes were cast** (16% of the town's registered voters.)¹⁰ If this proposed bill were approved, an additional **630 Sudbury residents** could be eligible to vote in the Town Election.

⁴ <https://newbostonpost.com/2021/06/24/non-citizens-voting-yes-say-massachusetts-immigrant-advocates/>

⁵ <https://populationu.com>

⁶ <https://migrationpolicy.org>

⁷ <https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/sudbury-ma-population>

⁸ <https://www.neighborhoodscout.com/ma/sudbury/demographics>

⁹ <https://www.towncharts.com/Massachusetts/Demographics/Sudbury-town-MA-Demographics-data.html>

¹⁰ <https://sudbury.ma.us/election/309/>

Individual Reports on DEI Outreach

Scituate DEI Commission

Interview with Scituate, MA DEI Committee Member – July 6, 2021

Maura Curran – member of Scituate Select Board and DEIC

When was your committee formed? [January 2021](#)

What is the purpose/charge of your committee? [Our committee's charge is very specific: \(i\) to review Town policies, procedures, and budgets for the purpose of advancing equity and justice for all, with a focus on eradicating from the Town of Scituate oppression, racism, injustice, and violence against all people \(ii\) to report to the Board of Selectmen on the results of its work at least one time per calendar quarter, \(iii\) and to make recommendations based on the results of such work for the consideration of the Board of Selectmen within twelve \(12\) months from the date of appointment of a Chair of the Committee. This position is a two-year term.](#)

What is the makeup of your group? [We specifically formed the group to include: town employees \(specifically the town HR Director, an office manager at the DPW, and a member of the Police Force,\) a clergy member, a member of the select board, and five at large members. We had about 15 people apply for the five open seats. Scituate is a very white town, but we prioritized selecting qualified people of color – it was part of our consideration. We were lucky to have several applicants who have professional experience in the field of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.](#)

How did/will the community participate in your work? [It took a lot of patience and training in town procedures, open meeting laws, etc. because some people came in with very specific ideas already about what needed to be done. First, the DEI committee went out to fact-find in a standardized, objective way. We identified four town departments to interview: Public Safety, Health and Human Services, DPW, and Finance. Then we developed a standard group of questions for each department to find out what's working and what is not. \(She will send list of questions.\) For example, we are asking questions about Procurement practices, hiring practices, etc. There are a lot of rules in place when it comes to hiring contractors, etc. Much of what you do in the procurement system is due to procurement law \(ex. You have to take the lowest bid for a project,\) so it might have to be kicked up to the state level in order to change the law. Second, we intend to create a survey and hold public forums where people can share their experiences. We will likely use Survey Monkey and we will post information about the survey and forums on social media, the town website, and we will send it out via email to all town employees and residents.](#)

I notice that the Public School system is not one of the departments you listed. Why is that? [The Scituate Public Schools have developed their own committee and recently hired Jamele Adams as the Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion \(DEI.\) Mr. Adams has extensive experience in this area, and he has also created "Freedom Teams" in towns including Natick, Franklin, and Holliston. These teams include a cross-section of the town: police chief, town administrator, clergy, superintendent, lawyer \(social law\), etc. who work together to build community. He intends to help create one in the town of Scituate. \(As an example, Hopkinton's Freedom Team](#)

Mission is “to create unity in the community by fostering inclusion, solidarity, and compassion for all people.”)

Is there an incident reporting system to your DEI? No, because it is not part of the charge. We are more of a recommending committee. We will identify issues and make recommendations to the Select Board. People can report hate crimes to the police department. We have a civil rights officer, but some people are not comfortable reporting things to the police. So, we have to give them another avenue for reporting, and I think that is one of the things Mr. Adams’ Freedom Team will do.

Does the town have a protocol following a hate event? All hate crimes are reported to the police. Our DEI advisory board is not there to handle complaints. We take feedback, but we are not a board to handle complaints.

Have you done, or will you do a survey? And if so, what will be included in it? We did one small survey that was sent out to about 200 people, but it was not very representative. So, we intend to do a more comprehensive survey, along with public forums after we finish the initial research into the town departments.

What actions has the group taken/do you foresee it recommending? We have taken a very slow, methodical approach to this. In addition to the standard questions being asked of the four town departments, we intend to do a survey and hold public forums. We also have “walk-ins” at every DEIC meeting, so community members can share their experience or recommend something that needs to be looked at. One of the things our DEIC talks a lot about is what is the “low-hanging fruit.” For example, they identified the need for gender neutral bathrooms in town buildings, and they made that recommendation to the select board. It is one of the easier things to accomplish. They also recommended (and implemented) the practice of giving a proclamation of safe spaces before every DEIC meeting and every town meeting. They may ultimately recommend that we hire a diversity officer for the entire town (but there is still a lot of work to be done.)

What challenges have you encountered in your work? And are there any lessons learned that could be helpful for other DEIC’s? Just the lack of understanding of process – open meeting laws, etc. So, there was a lot of frustration in the beginning – people making bold statements, a lot of assumptions being made, wild accusations instead of talking to people to find out what processes are. A couple of the members of our DEIC have background and training in this area because of what they do in their professional life, so that is very helpful. (But overall, the committee has not had any specific training.) It’s challenging when you don’t have a very diverse community. It’s a small percentage of the population trying to open the eyes of the majority.

Concord DEI Commission

Concord does not currently have a DEI Commission, although there is citizen interest in establishing one. There are already several DEI-focused groups in Town, and DEI work is being done within the Town government and the school district. The following is a summary of some of the DEI-related activities currently happening in Concord (not intended to be an exhaustive list).

Recent Town and School Activities

Concord's Town Manager has engaged a DEI Consultant to provide a leadership assessment, education/training and ongoing consultation to the Town's Senior Management Team and other key stakeholders. That process is currently underway.

Concord Public Schools/Concord-Carlisle Regional School District has a new Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion position effective July 1, 2021.

League of Women Voters of Concord-Carlisle (LWVCC)

The LWVCC sent a letter to Concord's Select Board in May 2021 urging them to establish a DEI Commission. The LWVCC formed their own DEI Committee following the death of George Floyd and has engaged in a number of activities, movie nights/book discussions, meeting with Concord's Police Chief to discuss the Police Reform bill, meeting with the LWVCC Housing Issues Committee and creating a [DEI resource list](#).

Communities Organization Against Racism (COAR)

COAR is fairly new community group whose mission is to "support self-learning and unlearning to be anti-racist" and to "actively engage in anti-racism efforts as individuals and as a community". They hold monthly community discussion groups and have been reaching out to the schools and other community groups to "share, listen, build understanding, and serve as collective antiracist voices". They recently sponsored a month-long series of community events called "June Journeys". Here is a [list](#) of actions taken in 2020-2021. COAR supports the establishment of a citizen DEI commission in Concord.

Concord-Carlisle Human Rights Council

The Human Rights Council is "a community organization of volunteers working together to foster respect, understanding, good will, and conciliation among individuals and groups in the community". The Human Rights Council operates something called the Rapid Response Network, which provides support to victims of harassment or discrimination (with their permission). Examples of what the Rapid Response Network does include: connecting victims with people who can assist, working with police or school to ensure investigations are carried out, putting pressure on organizations/businesses to change discriminatory policies/practices, assisting with removal of offensive graffiti or repair of damaged property, and soliciting community support, i.e. letters to the editor, etc.

Source: <https://www.cchumanrights.org/get-help>

Wayland DEI Committee

Spoke with Karen Blumenfeld, one of 15 members of the Human Rights, DEI Committee of Wayland

When formed?

Spring of 2021 – March 22

What is the purpose/charge?

“The purpose of creating the Committee is to affirm that the Town of Wayland is an inclusive community that has, as one of its core values, the freedom from discrimination, disrespect, bigotry, other forms of microaggressions/macroaggressions, hatred and oppression, and to reaffirm the Town’s commitment to upholding and defending the rights of all individuals to enjoy the free and equal exercise of their human and civil rights and privileges.”

What is group makeup?

Board of Selectmen appoints the members. The Board is guided by these principles:

“To the greatest extent possible, the members of the Committee shall be diverse and be drawn from underrepresented groups. To that end, the Board of Selectmen shall strongly endeavor to ensure that its members represent: (1) historically marginalized communities, and (2) relevant experience in human rights/equity, community engagement, municipal government, and advocacy for individuals who are targets or mistreatment or discrimination.”

People on the Committee currently include representation of the following descents: Indian, Latinx, Asian, African (Black), and European (white). The Committee includes 4 students, 2 men. The Committee met in person for the first time last week.

9 voting and 7 non voting,

open until filled

staggered 3 -3 year 2- 2 year 1- year term

How Appointed – (very similar to Sudbury)

resume and statement of interest

interview in groups of 2-3 at a time over 2-3 evenings

Everyone who applied was accepted.

How will/did community participate?

Early 2020, three Wayland residents started to explore the idea of whether a human rights commission would be appropriate for Wayland. Through learning, attending meetings of the MAHRC (Mass Human Rights Coalition), and talking with other residents, they ended up with a group of 13 residents who formed the Wayland Human Rights Commission Study Group. The group had a mix of experience of town government and some with none. Predominantly white group but some ethnic diversity.

THEN, last summer town admin started her own Town Admin Working Group on Race– 21 people (with sub committees including a subcommittee to explore a human rights commission), . Now there were two parallel but interconnected efforts to explore the creation of a human rights commission for the town. Several members of the Human Rights Commission Study Group were also members of the Town Administrator’s Working Group.

Town Administrator recruited people to her Advisory Group at the end of June 2020 but didn’t convene until Nov of 2020.

Town Administrator Advisory Group had subcommittees on – human rights commission, policing, and public events – only one still meeting is public events.

A vital way the community participated was that a group of committed residents made the case on why an HRC was needed. That wasn’t obvious before. They laid the groundwork for what the town was doing. Their work led to creation of the Town Administrator’s Advisory Group on Race and ultimately to the Board of Selectmen’s creation of the Human Rights, DEI Committee.

The Residents group's proposal was different from the proposal ultimately approved by the Board of Selectmen in terms of who the human rights body reported to. Autonomy vs authority.

There's also the Wayland Community for Social Justice Group that has working sub committees including efforts in; Defunding police, Education,

Wayland is currently searching for a new chief of police

Is there an incident reporting system to DEI?

Wayland does not have one established yet
Confidentially - ?

Does town have protocol following a hate event?

Not yet

How did/will roll out a survey and what included?

The residents group that was exploring the HRC idea conducted a Lived Experiences Survey (Like Needham did)
Needham Lived Experience Survey

They set out to document that instances of discrimination and mistreatment DO happen, and to amplify the voices of those who have endured these experiences and move toward a town where these kinds of experiences no longer happen.

"The Wayland Lived Experiences Project is a grassroots storytelling initiative led by a group of Wayland residents seeking to hear and amplify the voices of anyone who has experienced mistreatment in Wayland due to racial identity, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, country of origin, or any other aspect of their identity. The Lived Experiences Project gathers experiences through an anonymous survey so anyone can share their story without fear."

What actions has the group taken/do you foresee it recommending?

No action yet

RESOURCES

Fridays once a month at 9am HRC – Zoom – Adam LaFrance - MAHRC MA Human Rights Coalition
<https://www.mahrc.info/about.html>

The Massachusetts Human Right Coalition (MAHRC) is an organization of municipal and local agencies responsible for promoting human and civil rights and harmonious relationships among diverse groups at a local level. We provide leadership in the areas of human rights and intergroup relationships. We accomplish this by promoting networking initiatives, developing educational strategies and model programs, and serving as a resource for new and existing human rights and relations commissions.

Wayland Human Rights Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee:

<https://www.wayland.ma.us/human-rights-diversity-equity-and-inclusion-committee>

Wayland Lived Experiences Survey:

https://brandeis.qualtrics.com/CP/File.php?F=F_eRNO76e83rfZzZX

Preliminary survey findings were presented by Terrie Livingston at the Wayland Public Library on April 13, 2021. Here is Terrie's [video](#) presentation (*Minutes* 3:30-16:40).

Needham Unite Against Racism Initiative:

<https://www.needhamma.gov/4942/NUARI---Needham-Unite-Against-Racism-Ini>

Needham Lived Experience Survey:

https://cmu.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_73NOizPA4dvFMpv

Needham Lived Experience Survey Results:

https://www.needhamma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/22341/LEP-De-identified_Final_102620?bidId=

Needham Listens: July 2021 16:00 – Select Board Meeting 111 people

<https://www.needhamchannel.org/2020/07/needham-select-board-7-21-20/>

A list of various MA towns' Human Rights Organizations:

[MA Human Rights Organizations](#)

Bethany Hadvab, Sudbury Town Social Worker

General question: Given her experience in town with residents who identify with many different cultures, races etc. what did she think the DEI Commission should do to be most successful. Bethany was careful to note that she shared her thoughts through the lens of a white, cis-gendered female, even as she is on a constant journey to be cognizant of that and work to expand her lens.

- Her most emphatic recommendation was to work with a consultant. She saw that as a way to maximize our effectiveness and minimize mistakes that can occur as a result of how we each see issues.

- If there is not town money available for this we could pursue grants:

- The Sudbury Foundation

- Metro West Health Foundation (they also have a Race and Ethnic Disparities Working Group that might be a good resource in general.)

- Network with other groups in town (see list attached from Bethany), perhaps having a group meeting to do some planning going forward.

- Work slowly and deliberatively.

- A consultant would be able to provide a framework/template for the work, including advice for the best way to go into the community. This would go beyond working and making decisions based on our own perspectives.

- The Commission work should be in parallel to our own “personal journey.” We have to be vulnerable, know that we are going to make mistakes-“impact doesn’t match intent.”

- It’s important to know how everyone on the commission identifies, both in background and in other ways...she warned against putting specific roles on people based on what you see. Some of the groups she mentioned :

- CIS gender

- poverty

- gender

- Trauma

- religion

- politics

- Just because we think something is a good thing to do-is there research to support that?

- Listening to others/listening sessions...

- Does that put pressure on people

- Do we create a check list for these sessions-and how does that impact the information we get? Does it compromise it?

- How do we facilitate the sessions, so people feel their voices are heard?

- Good intentions can backfire. We always have to be aware of the power dynamic. We need to learn how to actively listen and understand what people share.

- How do we reach people...many disempowered people don’t have time to do something like this, might not have a car to get to a meeting, they feel that they will be treated differently, seen as “other. She shared a story from someone about being uncomfortable going to one of the schools because of all the expensive cars in the parking lot.

- We often have a need to fix something, when a fix isn’t what is needed.

- Sometimes it’s just to be listened to and heard. She hears a lot of “Why don’t they just ...get another job, go back to school...etc.” as examples of others thinking they have the answer.

- Natick's DEI efforts: they were charged with putting together a group. The group is spending a year figuring out what is actually needed, who should be involved. This circled back to her recommendation to work slowly and deliberatively.

Community organizations that Bethany works with:

1. Sudbury Community for Racial and Social Justice
 - a. Contacts: Susan Berry, Tricia Brunner, Debbie Howell, Sue Abrams, Elli Stern.
2. Sudbury CARES (Community Anti-Racist Education Series)
 - a. Contacts: Esme Green and Karen Tobin
 - b. Ellie Gotlieb and Becca Paquette are two high school students who helped to initiate this group
3. Bay Path Elder Services LGBT Services
 - a. Contact: Julie Nowak
4. Sudbury Senior Center
 - a. Has increased awareness and services LGBT and Asian American seniors
 - b. Contact: Ana Cristina Oliveira
5. Lincoln Sudbury Regional High School Racial Climate Task Force
 - a. Pamela Jones, Judy Merra
6. Sudbury Foundation
 - a. Providing funding for racial equity initiatives
 - b. Contacts: Tricia Brunner and Marilyn Martino
7. League of Women Voters
 - a. Contacts: Judy Merra, Marilyn Ellsworth
8. Sudbury DEI Commission
 - a. Just getting started now
 - b. Contacts: Jen Roberts, Select Board
9. Sudbury Commission on Disability
 - a. Contacts: Kay Bell and Pat Guthy
10. Lincoln Sudbury Mutual Aid Group
 - a. Contacts: lincolnsudburymutualaid@gmail.com

Shrewsbury DEI Task Force

Participants:

Katina Fontes – Member, Sudbury DEI Commission

Noor Ali – Member, Shrewsbury DEI Task Force, and Storytelling Sub-Committee

Paula Collins, Member, Shrewsbury DEI Task Force, and Storytelling Sub-Committee

1. When formed?

Created last summer by the Board of Selectmen (BoS) in response to a petition from residents after the murder of George Floyd. Officially established on August 11, 2020.

2. What is the purpose/charge?

Task Force is temporary/interim (1 year).

Official charge (from Shrewsbury Town website) -

<https://shrewsburyma.gov/956/Diversity-Equity-and-Inclusion-Task-Force>):

- Examine and evaluate existing policies and procedures currently in place within the Town of Shrewsbury related to diversity, equity and inclusion
- Complete this work by offering many opportunities for extensive community engagement employing a variety of means including but not limited to interviews, public listening sessions, surveys, programs and social media
- Identify potential areas for improvement based on relevant local, state and national research determining best practices
- Provide quarterly written updates to the Board of Selectmen highlighting work done and progress made
- Submit a written report detailing the findings and recommendations of the committee to the Board of Selectmen within 12 months from the creation of the committee

3. What is group makeup?

34 members, including one representative from each of the following: Board of Selectmen, School Committee, Board of Health, Council on Aging, Commission on Disabilities.

About evenly split between men and women. Some members were actively recruited. Members I spoke with suggested that the task force is representative of the diversity of the town.

4. How will/did community participate?

Most work is completed at the sub-committee meeting level. The community has participated through the storytelling project and survey. Participation of residents during the public comment period of public meetings has been rare.

5. Is there an incident reporting system to DEI?

No.

6. Does town have protocol following a hate event?

No. (Except through the police department, and there was a suggestion that some incidents were not taken seriously by local law enforcement.) Tracking this type of data might be included as a recommendation in the final report.

7. How did/will roll out a survey and what included?

Shrewsbury Stories was the first data collection project. Data collection began in May/June 2021 and will continue through July 15 to allow time for coding and analysis before the submission of a final report and recommendations to the BoS.

Stories may be shared by residents in multiple ways (written accounts, video, audio). 11 stories have been collected so far.

To read the call for participation:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScDWwXIdgScMzXQT29H3j1jNXbu8gNcZQHfKuJmli24IzgB4A/viewform>

A survey was created with input from the subcommittees and the entire task force. Each of the five subcommittees submitted two questions and a working group created the final survey instrument, which was then reviewed by Town Counsel. The survey went live on June 21. Data is being collected now. 145 responses have already been received. There are plans to solicit additional participation at local gathering places with paper copies and/or iPads.

To see survey: <https://forms.gle/y4kt9LLENbk9F6zC6>

8. What actions has the group taken/do you foresee it recommending?

Potential recommendations to the BoS will focus on the need to diversify the town management and actions to make the school employees more representative of the diversity of the student body. Also, it is unclear if the town tracks hate incidents, so creating a tracking system may be included in the recommendations. Additional recommendations will come from survey and story data.

Additional notes from the meeting:

- The Shrewsbury DEI Task Force is VERY large. Because of the challenges of managing meetings with a group of this size (via Zoom), subcommittees were quickly established. Most of the work is done at the subcommittee level. This also allows members of the

Task Force to focus on issues with which they individually have expertise or interest. The subcommittees include the following:

- Public Safety
 - Employment
 - Housing
 - Education
 - Public Health
 - Storytelling (added later)
- One of the women I spoke with stress the importance of recruiting members in your group with diverse networks of relationships and connections (socially, professionally, civically). This is how you get the word out about your work and find participants for surveys and other projects.
- The local cable TV station helped spread the word about the group's work and the Shrewsbury Stories project. To watch:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uR5NLSmHDI0&t=57s>
- There was a lot of debate about the survey and whether to do it through the task force or recommend a survey conducted by a future body. In the end, they decided to do a “generic” survey for data to inform the recommendation process. One of the women I spoke with said “Do the work you can do, and then do more!”
- When they first started meeting, there was a belief by some that DEI work = antiracist work. Through deliberation, the group decided that they needed to think about inclusivity and diversity through a wider lens.

North Andover DEI Commission

Introduction

I was interested in contacting North Andover because its Commission looks very different from ours in Sudbury in that it is comprised of several town employees. Also, the Mission Statement included the use of financial tools to address root causes of iniquities and the strategic allocation of public funds.

Denise Casey, who is Deputy Town Manager and Interim Chair of the Commission, gave generously of her time and spoke with me at length. She identifies as a white, heterosexual cis-female who is over 40 and has lived in a predominately white community her entire life. I noted that when she ran down the list of Commission members, she used similar identifiers

Our conversation was **not** the one I expected but was very helpful.

Her opening statement was striking. Denise was happy to talk to me so she could

- “Save (us) from the grief and misery (they) went through.”
- Tell me “How we *should* have done it (begin the work of the N. Andover Commission) rather than *how* we did.”

History

Like many towns, North Andover began a process of self-reflection after the murder of George Floyd. The Commission was established by the Select Board and met for the first time in October 2020.

- 1) A Mission Statement was created
- 2) Eighteen people were selected to serve and were assigned
- 3) Meetings were conducted via Zoom
- 4) In Denise’s words, they “jumped in.”

Commission members

Eighteen people met in October. Several were employees of the town.

Denise Casey was elected Interim Chair pending the election of a citizen

The Commission had to include

- A school administrator – to enable work on the school curriculum
- A member of the Youth and Recreation Services
- A representative of the North Andover Police Department
- A representative from the town group, Steps to Justice (Equivalent of a Commission on Disability)
- A member of the minority small business community
- A member of the Council on Ageing
- At least two members of color

In addition to these stipulated members, the Commission included a Merrimack Valley Black and Brown Voices member, a representative of the Youth and Recreation Council, the HR Director (an African-American woman who volunteered out of interest rather than as a town employee), and the Community Support, Coordinator. There were three people of color, one person from Portugal and one young Asian woman.

October 2020 – the Challenge (One shared by Sudbury)

Denise describes the group as eighteen people who did not know each other – using different terms, different definitions, and coming to the work from very different life experiences. They were meeting and being recorded on Zoom and were governed by the Open Meeting Laws.

With hindsight, Denise sees this as a formula destined to fail.

November 2020 – a good faith effort to create a foundation

It was decided that the group would use storytelling to get to know one another. This commenced, and people began to share. One older white man described an experience he had in 1957 and used a racial epithet. One group member objected strongly, and an argument ensued. Almost straight away, the Merrimack Valley Black and Brown Voices issues a statement on social media accusing the white members of the Commission of being racists.

The meeting was, of course, recorded. The recording was shared, and the local media reported it extensively.

The Commission lost five members, including the small business owner, a biracial member, the member of Merrimack Valley Black and Brown Voices, and the HR Director (who retired.)

Next Steps

Since this disastrous start, the Commission has stepped back, regrouped, and started again.

Denise suggested that they were too far away from their skills sets and that if they were to succeed, they needed the help of an independent consultant.

This was approved, and two organizations were considered. The group chosen was

Visions Inc.(<https://visions-inc.org>) a company specializing in diversity consulting.

Open Meeting Laws

The North Andover Commission on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion elected to create a strong foundation before doing anything else. The Open Meeting Laws were serving to prevent this.

They decided to split into two groups – neither representing a quorum – both mixed by age, gender, race, and ethnicity. These groups have met twice with consultants who have worked on language, ground rules, e.g., What can and cannot be said. Storytelling has resumed guided by the trained consultants. Denise reports that this has been enormously beneficial.

Once this process is complete, they will begin recruiting new members.

Summary

As stated at the beginning, this conversation was not the one anticipated

I found it very easy to relate to what Denise described because our situation is very similar. The fact of thirteen mostly strangers meeting on Zoom to discuss such delicate and complicated issues without any sense of trust or safety could result, if not in the chaos of North Andover, a superficiality that could drive some away and an ultimate ineffectiveness.

It is worth noting that the man whose words exacerbated the issues in North Andover described an event in his youth. A gang of white boys attacked him because his white father was pastor to a black church. The white boys used the racial epithet toward him. In his defense, he said he thought honesty was the whole point of the storytelling, and he regretted believing that. It also illustrates the extreme sensitivity around discussions of race

Currently, the N. Andover Commission is focussing upon the development of a strong foundation for its work. Therefore, a copy of the Mission Statement (which could be changed) is not attached but can be found at <https://www.northandoverma.organization>.

Finally, in Denise's words, "I recommend that if you have the money to spend, you start by hiring a professional who is trained in this work and rescues you when you go sideways. It could save you a world of hurt and embarrassment."

