

**DEI Commission Meeting
June 24, 2021
Meeting held via Zoom**

Present:

Sue Rushfirth (arrived 7:40)	Joanna Steffey
Katina Fontes	Susan Tripi
Yana Bloomstein	Sue Abrams
Stephanie Oliver	Nuha Muntasser
Nancy Kimble	
Nalini Luthra (arrived 7:44)	

Absent: Peju Champion, Tanisha Tate, Vona Hill

Also present:

Jennifer Roberts (Selectboard Liaison), Henry Hayes (Town Manager) , Scott Nix (SPD)
Bill Schineller (Selectboard Liaison), Janie Dretler (Selectboard), Lynn Puorro (Sudbury TV), Sylvia Nersessian, Yisroel Freeman, Andy Goldberg, Dan Carty, Lisa Kouchackdjian, Paula Magnanti (Sudbury Lions)

Agenda:

Welcome.
Open meeting by roll call vote.
Public Comments.
Rabbi Yisroel Freeman will participate in a discussion on recent multiple anti-Semitic incidents.
DEI Commission outreach:

- Who can we reach out to?
- Assigning outreach.
- Discussion points and questions to ask.
- Identify Commission goals:
- Organizing commission based on goals and needs.
- Create a timeline for each goal.
- Review and approve minutes from June 10, 2021 meeting.
- Upcoming agenda items/next meeting planning

1. Welcome

- Nuha reminded the Commission and attendees of guidelines for participating via zoom and discussion guidelines to facilitate respectful and productive discussions and a safe space for everyone.

2. Co-Chair Montasser, following acknowledgement of a quorum, called the meeting to order at 8:05. Vote taken to call the meeting to order:

Joanna Steffey	Aye	Susan Tripi	Aye
Katina Fontes	Aye	Sue Abrams	Aye

Yana Bloomstein	Aye	Nuha Montasser	Aye
Nancy Kimble	Aye		
Stephanie Oliver	Aye		

3. Public Comments

There were no public comments at this time.

4. Rabbi Yisroel Freeman

Rabbi Freeman addressed the recent anti-semitic incidences in the schools. He asked that the incidences be put in perspective: the acts were perpetrated by children, they were images and nobody was physically hurt, although they triggered a lot of emotions. He noted that these acts were not reflective of the community. Other points included:

- The clergy have discussed this issue and town leadership has been pro-active in responding.
- This is an opportunity to grow together and gain an understanding of the ramifications of hate.
- Rabbi Freeman sees this as an opportunity to “grow together ...build bridges of respect...go to a new place from tolerance to respect for others and a deeper appreciation of one another.”
- He noted that there have been incidences in the past but hoped for a new layer of understanding.

Discussion:

- a. In response to a question about what the clergy association is doing, Rabbi Freeman noted they have had a lot of dialogues about hate and what can be done together. They want to let the community know that they are working together towards the same goal of building bridges and reaching out to those not like us. The clergy would like to take a participatory role in our work.
- b. When asked what specific ways we can reach out to support affected communities, he noted that it wasn't necessary to have a public response to every act...it's important not to over-amplify, which could result in copy-cat behavior. He reiterated that this is a good town, with people who are trying to do the right thing. There is a lot of effort being made to do better. He emphasized the importance of finding a balance-not sweeping it under the rug, but not over-amplifying either.
- c. Attendee Andy Goldberg spoke of concerns of his children in light of these incidents, and their anxiety about being public about being Jewish. In an effort to help the community move forward he suggested having dialogue to educate more widely about different cultures and perhaps investigating the restorative justice program to respond to incidents.
- d. Suggestions for reaching out to the community in a pro-active way included: sponsoring community wide events to celebrate cultures and allow people to talk to each other; get to know you coffee hours with 2 or 3 of the commission members; office hours that are scheduled regularly (similar to the Select Board's practice.)

5. Outreach.

- a. Joanna spoke with an Acton Select Board member, who is also chair of that town's DEI Commission.

- Their charge was to assess the diversity equity and inclusion in the town and have a report with suggestions in September. The design of the commission was: 70% BIPOC and 1 or more (there are 2) students from A/B.
 - Community participation was mostly individual conversations and some public comment. The challenge was to find a balance between structure and a free form discussion. Public comment was sometimes angry and questioned the need for the commission because commenters did not see a problem.
 - Community conversations did include students' sharing their own experiences.
 - The commission discussed creating an incident reporting system but decided that they would not be able to manage such a system.
 - A survey was sent out to the community (sent in the tax bill envelope and through social media) that had a 7-week window. Responses matched the racial makeup of the town and it appeared that most acts of hate occurred in the schools.
 - It appears that their September report will recommend a 1.0 Diversity Officer for the town. That role will be responsible for training town staff and creating a reporting system.
 - The Acton website might be a good model for us to look at.
- b. Commission members volunteered to reach out to other communities:
- | | |
|-------------|-----------------------|
| • Nalini | Lexington |
| • Yana | Wayland |
| • Stephanie | Concord |
| • Katina | Shrewsbury |
| • Nuha | Northborough |
| • Nancy | Scituate |
| • Sue R. | North Andover |
| • Sue A. | Sudbury Social worker |

Reporting back: Everyone should submit a written report to Nuha and Nalini (we can use the questions Joanna used with Acton as a template.) Nuha will check with IT and Henry about uploading the docs to the website. The reports will be discussed at a meeting.

- c. Nalini suggested we plan some summer events, including, perhaps, a summer read.
- d. Scott Nix shared a series of police department outreach events planned for October 5-8. He will share the flier with the commission.
- e. A discussion of how to arrange office hours will be included in a future agenda.
- f.

6. Commission Goals

The group identified several goals that should include timelines and milestones as well as qualitative analysis. We can continue to build on these goals going forward and a vote to finalize them will be made at a future meeting.

- Survey-this is a high priority as it will serve multiple purposes: provide a tool to inform the committee's work and a basis for analysis at the completion of our work. The survey should include town employees as well as residents.
- Personal stories that will give more specific examples of inequalities than a survey. Commission members will reach out to different groups for focus groups.
- Outreach to other DEI commissions.

- Subcommittees may need to be formed given the enormous scope of this work. The constraints of the OML will be part of this decision.
- Office hours
- Training for the commission
- Support legislation that is consistent with our mission.

Nancy volunteered to research the bill that would allow non-citizens to vote in local elections. It would help to know how many residents are not US citizens.

7. Approval of Minutes of June 10,2021 meeting

Motion to approve the June 10 minutes was made by Nalini and seconded by Joanne.

Joanna Steffey	Aye	Nuha Montasser	Aye
Katina Fontes	Aye	Sue Abrams	Aye
Yana Bloomstein	Aye	Sue Rushfirth	Aye
Nancy Kimble	Aye	Nalini Luthra	Aye
Stephanie Oliver	Aye		

8. Upcoming agenda items/next meeting planning.

a. Suggestions:

- Reports on outreach progress
- Identify goals, timelines, and subcommittees
- DEI Office hours
- Strategies to give the commission more visibility in town
- Survey questions
- Invite another member of the clergy to speak to the commission

b. Reminder to post the meetings online as well as at Town Hall.

9. A motion to adjourn made by Nuha and seconded by Sue A.

Vote:

Sue Rushfirth	Aye	Joanna Steffey	Aye
Katina Fontes	Aye	Stephanie Oliver	Aye
Yana Bloomstein	Aye	Sue Abrams	Aye
Nancy Kimble	Aye	Nuha Montasser	Aye
Nalini Luthra	Aye		

Meeting adjourned at 9:41PM

Respectfully submitted,
Sue Abrams
Co-Clerk

