

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Commission Meeting Minutes
December 16, 2021

1. Call to Order

Nalini Luthra called the meeting to order at 7:33 pm.

Nuha Muntasser took the roll call:

Present: Nalini Luthra, Peju Champion, Katina Fontes, Vona Hill, Paula Hudson,
Stephanie Oliver, Sue Rushfirth Janine Taylor, Peng Zhou, Nuha Muntasser
Absent: Sue Abrams, Yana Bloomstein Joanna Steffey, Tanisha Tate

2. “Storytelling”/ “Lived Experiences” project with Dr. Nichole Argo

Dr. Nichole Argo of the Lived Experiences Project gave an overview of the proposed storytelling project. She explained that she had created the Lived Experiences Project with Anna Giraldo-Kerr after George Floyd’s murder. It was a qualitative, anonymous survey designed to collect stories of identity-based mistreatment. The result was a wealth of stories and aggregate data that provides an important starting point for conversations.

In the proposed project, Dr. Argo would work with a committee on creating a survey, developing an outreach strategy, work with an intern to clean and organize the survey data and work with a webmaster to develop a website to share the results.

Dr. Argo answered questions from the Commission, including:

- Whether the project timeline was realistic
- Process for finding a webmaster/intern.
- QR codes used for the Needham survey and anonymity of responses
- Discussion of project costs and next steps
- What was done with data after it was collected
- How to address barrier to survey responses, such as need for translation

Stephanie Oliver provided more detail on the project funding and confirmed that the project costs would be covered by the \$5,000 recently awarded by the Sudbury Foundation. There was some additional discussion about the project timeline and whether there is any flexibility with the May deadline for the end of the Commission’s work.

- Sue Rushfirth made a motion that the Commission approve the storytelling/lived experiences project as proposed by Dr. Nichole Argo and Stephanie Oliver with a cost of up to \$5,000. Nuha Munhtasser seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote: Nuha Muntasser: yes; Peng Zhou: yes; Sue Rushfirth: yes; Janine Taylor: yes; Katina Fontes: yes; Paula Hudson: yes; Peju Champion: yes; Vona Hill: abstain; Nalini Luthra: yes; Stephanie Oliver: yes
The motion passed.

Nalini Luthra asked for volunteers for the sub-committee. Janine Taylor, Katina Fontes, Peng Zhou, Nuha Muntasser, Stephanie Oliver and Nalini Luthra volunteered. It was noted that Commission members not present at the 12/16 meeting who would like to join the sub-committee should reach out to the co-chairs.

- Stephanie Oliver made a motion to establish a sub-committee consisting of Janine Taylor, Katina Fontes, Peng Zhou, Nuha Muntasser, Stephanie Oliver and Nalini Luthra. Katina Fontes seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote: Nuha Muntasser: yes; Sue Rushfirth: yes; Peng Zhou: yes; Katina Fontes: yes; Peju Champion: yes; Janine Taylor: yes; Paula Hudson: yes; Stephanie Oliver: yes; Vona Hill: abstain; Nalini Luthra: yes.
The motion passed.

3. Public Comments

Nalini Luthra opened the meeting to public comments. There were none.

(Not on agenda)

Sue Rushfirth read the Land Acknowledgement and provided a reflection on a cultural art installation by the Oneida Indian Nation, "Passage of Peace".

4. Subcommittee, working groups and initiative updates.

Stephanie Oliver shared that in addition to working on the Lived Experiences project, she had reached out to the Parmenter Foundation about possible ways to work together, and had coordinated with Nuha Muntasser on a budget request from the Town.

Janine Taylor shared that she had been in touch with someone from the Sharon Rotary Club to learn more about the international flags on display in Sharon, and was in the process of setting up a call to learn more.

Nalini Luthra said that she had a call scheduled with author Jennifer DeLeon and would send an update to the Commission after that call.

Sue Rushfirth reported on the two meetings held by the Structure Advisory Sub-Committee. The sub-committee developed recommendations based on the goals set in the Commission's mission statement, as listed in the meeting materials. The sub-committee's final recommendations are that 1) Every DEI Commission member will be expected to be on at least one committee or have an individual task and that 2) Before the January SDEIC meeting, the

Structure Committee will generate a list of action items that will require a committee/working group/individual action. Commission members will be asked to rank the items, and three will be selected. Criteria for ranking to include: 1) Feasibility of completion by March and 2) Personal commitment to a particular action.

There was some discussion about whether there should be a committee devoted to data collection, in light of the work that would be happening with the Lived Experiences project and whether there might be other demographic data that the Commission would want that would not be collected as part of the Lived Experiences project.

5. Quarterly Report revision and approval.

Nuha Muntasser explained that the quarterly report was designed to be as comprehensive as possible, and that some items would be updated based on new developments. The report will be presented to the Select Board at their January 4th meeting. There was some discussion about whether the report could be presented later in January, so that there would be more time for the Commission to finalize its structure, given that the Structure Advisory Sub-Committee planned to meet again before the end of December. It was mentioned that any follow-ups/updates would be added to the report.

- Stephanie Oliver made a motion to approve the Quarterly Report as submitted, with the understanding that any follow up items would be submitted to the co-chairs prior to the January 4th Select Board meeting. Janine Taylor seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote: Nuha Muntasser: yes; Peng Zhou: yes; Janine Taylor: yes; Katina Fontes: yes; Peju Champion: yes; Paula Hudson: yes; Sue Rushfirth yes; Vona Hill: yes; Stephanie Oliver: yes; Nalini Luthra: yes.

The motion passed.

6. Discussion on inquiries and concerns submitted to the Commission.

Nuha suggested that because the Structure Advisory Sub-Committee is already discussing this question, perhaps they could advise the Commission on it at a future meeting, rather than taking the time to discuss at this meeting. Nalini Luthra mentioned that she and Nuha would like to confirm their understanding that part of the role of co-chair included having some meetings outside of the full Commission meetings, such as meetings with stakeholders like the Police Chief, SPS representatives, etc. She explained that the co-chairs would not make any commitments on behalf of the Commission, and wanted to confirm that Commission members were comfortable with the co-chairs continuing in this way. No Commission members expressed any concerns.

7. LWV DEI Roundtable Invitation.

Nuha Muntasser explained that the Commission had received an invitation to participate in a DEI roundtable hosted by the League of Women Voters. She asked whether the Commission is comfortable participating and who should represent the Commission at the event. Nuha commented that she thought it would be an ideal platform to share what the Commission is

doing, particularly the Lived Experiences project, and to potentially get ideas for other initiatives. Several Commission members indicated their support. Nuha Muntasser commented that there seemed to be consensus that the Commission should participate, and invited Commission members to consider whether they would like to represent the Commission at the event. She added that the speaker should not have the burden of developing speaking points, and that those could be developed at the next meeting. Nuha Muntasser said that she or Nalini Luthra would reach out to the event organizers to confirm interest and details, and that a decision would be made at the next meeting regarding who would represent the Commission at the event.

8. Review and approve minutes of November 18, 2021 meeting.

Nalini Luthra asked if there were any suggestions or edits to the minutes. She noted that the spelling of Jennifer DeLeon's last name was incorrect.

- Katina Fontes made a motion to approve the minutes with the spelling amendment. Stephanie Oliver seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote: Nuha Muntasser: approve; Katina Fontes: approve; Peng Zhou: approve; Sue Rushfirth: approve; Janine Taylor: approve; Paula Hudson: approve; Stephanie Oliver: approve; Peju Champion: approve; Nalini Luthra approve.

9. Adjourn Meeting by roll call vote.

Nuha Muntasser wished everyone happy holidays and happy new year, and expressed her hope that the Commission can start strong in the new year. Nalini Luthra echoed Nuha's sentiments.

- Janine Taylor made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Katina Fontes seconded the motion.

Roll call vote: Nuha Muntasser: yes; Sue Rushfirth: yes; Peng Zhou: yes; Paula Hudson: yes; Peju Champion: yes; Stephanie Oliver: yes; Janine Taylor: yes; Katina Fontes: yes; Nalini Luthra: yes

The meeting was adjourned at 9:36 pm.