

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Commission Meeting Minutes

Date: July 10th, 2025

Location: Virtual

Present: Janine Taylor, Joanna Steffey, Thomas Plihcik, Safa Khan

Select Board Liaison: Radha Raman Gargeya

Absent: Serena Hu, Nnenna Uneke, Isaac Tesfay

Meeting Begins:

The meeting opens at 7:05 pm and Janine Taylor, the Co-chair for the Commission welcomes the attendees and takes a roll call. Joanna, Thomas, Safa and Janine are present.

Janine then reads the Land Acknowledgement statement.

Joanna shared a personal connection between the movie Elemental and discussions about land markers, highlighting cultural representation and name changes.

Thomas mentioned he met with film makers of the documentary Dawn Land, which documents the indigenous experience in New England, and expressed interest in hosting a screening.

The commission agreed to review Meeting Minutes of May 29th at the next meeting.

Public Comments:

No public comments were made, however at 7:17 pm, Select Board liaison Radha Raman Gargeya joins the committee and informs the commission that he is the new liaison for the DEI Commission.

Report out from SPS School Committee meetings:

The DEI Commission discussed updates on a racism incident at Curtis Middle School involving Pallavi and Vidya Parvani. Pallavi, who had come to the previous DEI commission meeting as a panelist had shared her concerns as a parent who felt the racism issue her child faced at Curtis Middle School was not handled properly by the authorities.

In the SPS Meeting of June 16th, Vidya Parwani made a public comment highlighting this issue.

Discuss/vote on updated letter to school committees and next steps:

The commission then reviewed their draft statement regarding the equity audit and holiday recognition.

Joanna suggested inviting school committee members to join future DEI meetings. The commission agreed to proceed with sending the statement to the school committee, requesting information about implemented equity audit recommendations and advocating for more inclusive recognition of religious holidays: Diwali, Lunar New Year and Eid.

Janine Taylor suggested posting the contents of the letter on the Sudbury DEI Commission's official facebook page.

At approximately 7:43 pm Joanna made a motion to grant Safa Khan and Janine Taylor Admin Access to the Facebook page of the Sudbury DEI Commission. All present replied in affirmative.

The commission then planned to review Raul's recommendations before presenting a report to the Select Board.

Janine Taylor mentions requesting the Select Board Chair that the DEI Commission would like to present its report a date after July 15th and that the Chair accepted the request.

At 7:50 pm, Safa shared an update about a previous DEI Commission meeting where they discussed a scheduling conflict between Field Day and Eid Al-Adha. She mentioned that the school administrators were unable to reschedule the event due to being close to the end of the school year. Janine noted that this was not the first time this issue had occurred, but Safa confirmed she did not recall if it had happened before.

Safa also shared that at the SPS meeting of June 2nd, community members commented sharing their disappointment and requested the School Administration to reschedule Field day scheduled for June 6th.

Safa also mentioned sending an email to the School Administration regarding the issue. The school administrators sent a joint apology email acknowledging the oversight and expressing commitment to improving their planning process in the future.

Janine also mentioned sending an email to Andy Sheehan requesting removal of a member who despite being an appointed member has not attended all 6 consecutive meetings.

Joanna and Janine discussed the Original Mission Statement according to which the commission will invite 6 advisory non-voting members in the upcoming meetings. The non-voting members being: Sudbury Police Chief or a delegate, Town Manager or a delegate, School Committee member or a delegate, Sudbury Clergy Member, Commission on Disability Member and a Select Board liaison. Janine Taylor volunteered to draft the letter of invitation and Joanna made a motion for Janine to send a letter on behalf of the DEI commission to invite the Advisory members to the upcoming meetings. All present replied in the affirmative.

Discuss Consultant recommendations for DEI commission

Janine shared her screen displaying Dr. Raul's Memo. The commission assessed the feasibility of their DEI goals and provided suggestions for streamlining the commission's work. Joanna expressed appreciation for Raul's efforts, acknowledging the challenges faced by previous commission members.

Janine proposed inviting the Wayland DEI Commission chairs to share their partnership model, as their commission has 15 members compared to Sudbury's smaller group.

Report Planning and Goal Alignment

Janine proposed drafting a report for the next meeting, outlining accomplishments, challenges, goals, and recommendations, with a potential budget request. Thomas suggested highlighting the work with consultant Raul as an accomplishment and aligning goals with prior recommendations. Joanna raised questions about the timeline for the last report and the effectiveness of the commission's right-sizing, emphasizing nimbleness. Joanna shared that our major two goals could be amplifying voices for community members who share their issues with us and second would be getting input from our advisors.

Commission Focus on Community Building

The commission discussed their challenges, including membership stability and bandwidth issues, and agreed to focus on foundational building by improving relationships with advising members, providing annual reports to the select board, and collaborating with other community groups. They decided to recommend that the town invest in a DEI professional and potentially allocate a budget for consultant services or event signage. Janine will prepare a report for the next meeting, and the group needs to finalize their meeting schedule to improve organization and attendance.

At 8:55 pm, the committee discussed scheduling their next meeting for the second Thursday of each month. The next meeting dates decided were August 14th and September 11th.

Meeting Adjournment:

At 9 pm Joanna made a motion to end the meeting. Everyone present replied in the affirmative, following which the meeting was adjourned.