

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Commission
April 9, 2026
Meeting Minutes

Attendees (Virtual Meeting): Janine Taylor, Thomas Plihcik, Safa Khan, Isaac Tesfay, Nnenna Uneke, Kimberly Lezak, James Goudie-Murray (Town of Sudbury Staff Liaison)

Agenda Items:

1. Welcome, roll call, and opening of Meeting
2. Land Acknowledgement Statement - Janine Taylor
3. Public Comments: None today
4. Approve Prior Meeting Minutes: None today

Dawnland Documentary

The meeting began with Thomas sharing his experience of watching the documentary "Dawnland" about Maine's truth and reconciliation regarding Native children taken into reform schools, suggesting it could be shown locally with discussion groups.

Pride Day

Discussion Topic - Sudbury PRIDE Day: Invitation to participate in PRIDE Day on June 14th, 2-5pm at Curtis Middle School

Tom O'Brien, a resident and pastor, joined to discuss Sudbury Pride Day on June 14th at Curtis Middle School from 2-5 PM, inviting the DEI Commission to attend and have a presence at the event which typically draws 300-400 people. The Sudbury DEI Commission voted to participate in the upcoming Sudbury Pride event on June 14th.

The group discussed creating marketing materials for their table, including flyers and potentially a QR code linking to their town website page. Isaac offered to help create a flyer design, with Gemini assisting through Canva. The commission noted they had participated in Pride events twice before, including activities like making pride bands.

The deadline for confirming participation is May 8th, with vendor fees waived for town boards. Janine agreed to reach out to Joanna, who had previous experience with Pride events, to see if she would like to help with the Commission's participation.

Constitution public reading

Update - Lincoln's IDEA Committee invitation to collaborate re public reading of the U.S. Constitution on Thursday, 9/17/2026 (co-chairs invited to share update).

For the Constitution reading, the Commission voted to appoint Isaac and Joanna to lead efforts to partner with Dr. Katina Fontz on creating promotional materials.

Future workshops and training

Discussion Topic - Building Connections Workshop (Joint Event with neighboring Human Rights and DEICs)

Regarding the Building Connections Workshop, Janine expressed disappointment that only 16-17 out of 25 seats were filled, despite opening registration to the broader community. Safa provided context by comparing attendance numbers to other towns, while Isaac suggested hosting future workshops in person with a smaller group and longer duration to improve engagement. The group also discussed the possibility of using their town meeting as an opportunity to promote future diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives.

The DEI commission discussed organizing training on having difficult conversations, with Janine proposing to work with Essential Partners or Wayside for an in-person training session. Thomas suggested focusing on DEI-specific content and ensuring facilitators have expertise in racial analysis, while Kimberly emphasized the importance of addressing power imbalances and historical context in the conversations.

The group considered conducting an equity audit first to identify specific areas for improvement before implementing training programs, with James noting the remaining budget of approximately \$15,000. Safa raised questions about the scope and scale of the proposed training, suggesting more details are needed before making decisions. The group discussed two potential paths for their project: conducting an equity audit or working with a partner to facilitate community conversations.

After debate, they voted to prioritize the equity audit first, with James tasked to check with the select board for their support and confirm the deadline for spending ARPA funds.

Eid Celebration

Update - Eid Celebration on March 28 at the Goodnow Library

Safa reported on a successful Eid celebration held at the Goodnow Library, which was well-attended and included various activities and food.

Resilience Coaching Program

Update - Resilience Coaching Program

James explained the purpose and status of the town's climate resilience coaching program, organized by Town Sustainability Manager, Eric Sims, that will be provided to residents to improve resilience of homeowners to climate impacts. Kim Lezak is serving as a DEI Commission representative for this process. Future training to be held in April and May.

Sudbury 250th Anniversary

Discussion Topic - Sudbury 250 Day Participation: The Sudbury 250 Committee invites the DEI Commission to participate in Sudbury 250 Day on Saturday, 5/16/2026 (10 AM–3 PM) at Town Hall, including the opportunity to host a table.

The DEI Commission discussed the Sudbury 250th anniversary celebration on May 16th, 2025. The commission voted unanimously to participate in the 250th event with Isaac volunteering to coordinate setup and materials, which James offered to print on town equipment.

Jame noted that the celebration would include The Minutemen Militia who would open the day with a musket firing ceremony, and close out the day with a cannon firing ceremony. Craft vendors, affinity group organizations, local religious organizations, local nonprofits, boards and commissions from the town of Sudbury, food vendors, history reenactors conducting blacksmithing or lace making were listed as attendees. James noted that historic sites around the town center, including the Hosmer House, the Hearst House, the Revolutionary War Cemetery, and the Town Pound, would be open to the public and staffed with docents. The Meeting House plans to show a production of Declaring Freedom, Then and Now, a play developed by Freedom's Way.

Anti-Semitism Definition

Discussion Topic - IHRA's definition of antisemitism: Resident Email re SPS School committee's adoption of IHRA's definition of antisemitism.

The group briefly addressed a resident's concern about the SPS school committee's adoption of the IRA definition of anti-Semitism, with Janine noting that appropriate engagement was already underway between the school committee and residents.

Essay Competition

Discussion Topic - Racial & Social Justice Essay Competition

Susan Berry, resident of Dawson Drive and member of Sudbury for Racial and Social Justice joined discussion and reminded the group that all essays would be compiled into a booklet for display at the school or town hall, and they discussed the importance of obtaining student permission for sharing their stories while ensuring de-identification for those under 18.

Janine led a discussion about essay prompts for a student competition focused on racial and social justice, sharing updates from the Racial Climate Community Group meeting. The group had developed several student-generated prompts, including questions about creating a just world, describing misunderstood aspects of identity, connecting across differences, imagining a just future, and reflecting on realizing something was bigger than oneself. Janine noted that while the prompts were student-driven, some language might be updated to reflect more current terminology, particularly replacing "tolerance" with terms like "understanding" or "accepting." The group agreed to allow submissions in either essay (up to 1000 words) or video format (3-5 minutes), with Jason, a teacher working at LSHS, taking the lead on developing evaluation criteria.

The group discussed essay prompts for students, focusing on questions about justice and personal experiences. They debated between general and specific prompts, particularly around themes of racial and social injustice. The team agreed to prioritize the more general questions first, such as "Imagine a just future" or "What is your vision on how we can create a more just world."

The group discussed and finalized two essay questions for students. They agreed on "Write about a time when you navigated a conflict rooted in differences in identity and/or beliefs, and how the experience ultimately left you feeling hopeful" as the personal question. For the general question, they selected "Write about an experience of connecting across differences that has brought you hope." Susan Berry requested the two finalized questions be sent to her.

Meeting close:

- Future agenda topics recommendations - email Safa or Janine with items to add
- Confirm Next meeting Date: May 14, 2026