

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Commission
May 14, 2026
Meeting Minutes
(Virtual Meeting)

Attendees

Janine Taylor, Thomas Plihcik, Safa Khan, Isaac Tesfay, Kimberly Lezak, and James Goudie-Murray (Town of Sudbury Staff Liaison)

Welcome and Opening

Janine Taylor called the meeting to order at 7:04PM and conducted a roll call.

Land Acknowledgement

The Commission recognized the traditional territories of the Nipmuc, Pawtucket, Pennacook, and Massachusetts peoples.

Public Comment

No public comments were received.

Approval of Prior Minutes

No prior meeting minutes were presented for approval.

Reflections

Isaac reflected on the importance of understanding the historical context of the land and the communities in which residents live. Janine emphasized the value of thoughtful communication, empathy, and developing skills to navigate difficult conversations respectfully.

Updates

Lincoln's IDEA Committee invitation to collaborate re public reading of the U.S. Constitution

The meeting focused on discussing potential collaborations for public programs, particularly around Constitution readings and resilience coaching. Janine shared information about a previous Frederick Douglass reading event led by Dr. Katina Fons, which included discussion and engagement activities following the reading. The group discussed the possibility of organizing a similar event, with Janine offering to connect with Dr. Fons about potentially presenting at the next meeting. The conversation also touched on updates regarding resilience coaching initiatives, though specific details were not fully discussed as the meeting appeared to end mid-conversation.

Sudbury Resiliency Coaching Program

The group discussed Sudbury's new resiliency coaching program funded by a Massachusetts vulnerability grant. James explained that trained coaches will visit residents' homes to discuss environmental challenges like drought, flood, heat, and fire risks. James will provide additional information regarding opportunities for community participation. Janine clarified her initial misunderstanding about the program's focus on mental health versus environmental resiliency.

Discussion

Sudbury 250 Day Planning

Radha Gardhe from the Sudbury Select Board provided an overview of the upcoming Sudbury 250 Day celebration.

Event Highlights

- Living history demonstrations
- Music and dance performances
- Food trucks
- Children's activities
- Native American storytelling
- Lincoln-Sudbury essay winner recognition
- Historic site tours
- Shuttle transportation to historic locations
- Bicycle parking accommodations

The meeting discussed plans for Sudbury's 250th anniversary celebration event taking place from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Radha and James provided details about the event. The group confirmed that Isaac and Kim would represent the Commission at the event, with Isaac handling setup from around 9:30-11:30 a.m. and Kim joining later at 1:30 p.m. due to a soccer commitment. A gap in coverage from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. was noted, and James suggested placing the Commission's table near another organization to ensure oversight during this time. The conversation ended with a brief mention of reviewing a brochure that Isaac had created, though the discussion was cut off.

DEI Brochure Design

The team reviewed a brochure design for DEI initiatives, focusing on donations language and formatting adjustments. James confirmed that donations to support DEI programs could be made with proper guidance from the Select Board office, and the group agreed to modify the donations section to direct supporters to contact the Select Board office for further instructions.

Radha suggested exploring a shorter Facebook group name or using Bitly for easier access. James offered to handle printing the brochures.

Janine suggested revisions to the "Who We Are" section of the document, proposing to streamline the language around the commission's mission while maintaining its essence. The group agreed to the suggested language changes, which aimed to make the text more concise while preserving the original meaning of the mission statement. Janine led the discussion on refining the language to emphasize fostering an inclusive community by valuing and uplifting all identities, voices, and backgrounds. The group agreed on the final phrasing: "We are Sudbury residents who are passionate and committed to fostering a thriving, inclusive, and healthy community where all identities, voices, and backgrounds are valued and uplifted."

The group discussed revising language for civic engagement and DEI commission activities. They agreed to change "events" to "activities" and specified examples like surveys, town celebrations, and competency-building activities. The commission's role was clarified to make recommendations to the Sudbury Select Board on policies and programs aimed at promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion in Sudbury's historically disenfranchised populations. The Commission approved the brochure, incorporating the discussed edits.

Sudbury PRIDE Day

The brochure discussion will be revisited during the next meeting to support the DEI Commission attendance at the June 14th Sudbury PRIDE Day. The committee discussed several items including PRIDE Day planning, where Janine and Isaac confirmed they would attend. Janine suggested sharing the Canva document in advance for feedback. Additional planning and coordination for the event will happen at the next DEI Commission meeting.

Racial & Social Justice Essay Competition

Regarding the essay competition, Janine proposed pivoting it to a summer program format due to lack of progress. James confirmed the funding deadline is in September.

Town Equity Audit

James reported that the Sudbury Town Select Board approved moving forward with a Town Equity Audit using available ARPA funding. James explained they have approximately \$8,000 remaining and noted that since the project is under \$10,000, they don't need to go through an RFP process but can apply sound business practices. Kim volunteered to work with James to research prior RFPs for equity audits in Sudbury and surrounding communities to help define the project scope.

DEI Commission Membership and Scheduling

The DEI Commission meeting focused on member renewals

- Thomas Plihcik indicated he does not plan to renew his appointment
- Nena indicated she intends to step down
- Isaac Tesfay plans to renew
- Janine Taylor does not plan to renew

Janine and Thomas expressed willingness to stay on until new members are appointed to maintain quorum. James reviewed the appointment process and noted that the Commission may provide recommendations regarding appointments and final appointment authority rests with the Sudbury Select Board. The Commission acknowledged the need to recruit new members to maintain continuity and quorum.

Meeting Close

The group rescheduled their next meeting from June 11th to June 9th to ensure adequate attendance, and discussed upcoming agenda items including the approval of pending meeting minutes, Pride Day planning and attendance, Commission membership and recruitment, end of June Report to the Select Board, Town Equity Audit progress update.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.