

Advisory Committee on Equity and Justice for All
Town of Scituate
MINUTES

Tuesday, January 26, 2021 6:30pm
via Remote Participation due to COVID-19

In response to Governor Baker's declaration of a public health emergency and the related Emergency Executive Order dated March 12, 2020, Town of Scituate public meetings shall meet remotely until further notice. This meeting will be recorded by Scituate Community Television and can be viewed live on Scituate Community Television Facebook Live. The recorded meeting will be available the following day on Comcast Channel 9 and YouTube Scituate Community Television: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zjhWFm3dr8U>

Members Present:

Non-voting Members:

Bob Clark
Maura Curran
Amanda O'Shea
Lucia Silveira

Acknowledgement

Voting Members:

Kim Harriman
Angela Riberio-Dray Celia Richa
Ewuniki (Nikki) Sanders Thomas
Secaur
Natasha Stewart
Ruth Yasin

1. Call the Meeting to Order &

- Madame Chair called the meeting to order at 6:33 pm. Motion to convene the meeting - Rev. Stewart. Seconded by Ms. Dray. Voted unanimously through a roll call vote:

Kim Harriman - yes
Angela Riberio-Dray - yes
Celia Richa - yes
Ewuniki (Nikki) Sanders - yes
Thomas Secaur - yes
Natasha Stewart - yes
Ruth Yasin - yes

- Madame Chair read the declaration from Governor Baker about remote meetings and an Indigenous American Peoples Land Acknowledgement - and provided information about the Massachusetts Center for Native American Awareness.

2. Safe Space and Norms for Language During Meetings

- This is a safe space for people of color. Any comments that are inappropriate or have an animus

in racism or bias will not be allowed. Will turn off sound if your comments are offensive to the meeting.

- This is a safe space where people can bring up challenges and questions without fear of repercussion or hostility
- Take the learning, but leave the story, so that people feel comfortable sharing their experiences
- Assume best intentions. All participants are embarking on this journey at different starting points
- Listen/read and be kind
- Use respectful language - ask when you are unsure.
- Administrators may remove anyone with inappropriate content or acting inappropriately

3. Acceptance of Minutes of meeting on January 12, 2021

- Referred to the Disability Council's statement that they use with their meetings and asked committee members to review it.
- Intent that will stay focused and on-task when open-up meeting to community members. • On a motion by Ms. Dray - seconded by Ms. Harriman, it was voted unanimously to accept the 2021 minutes via roll call vote, with an amendment to correct the spelling of Tom Secaur's name. Selectperson Curran noted that other documents sent to the committee for review would also need to be posted.

Kim Harriman - yes
Angela Riberio-Dray - yes
Celia Richa - yes
Ewuniki (Nikki) Sanders - yes
Thomas Secaur - yes
Natasha Stewart - yes
Ruth Yasin - yes

- Discussion of appropriate titles for committee members for use in committee minutes.

4. Administrative

a. Read the Charge for the Committee

The establishment of an Advisory Committee to the Board of Selectmen on Equity and Justice for All, whose charge is (i) to review Town policies, procedures, and budgets for the purpose of advancing equity and justice for all, with a focus on eradicating from the Town of Scituate oppression, racism, injustice, and violence against all people (ii) to report to the Board of Selectmen on the results of its work at least one time per calendar quarter, (iii) and to make recommendations based on the results of such work for the consideration of the Board of Selectmen within twelve (12) months from the date of appointment of a Chair of the Committee.

b. Discussion on Name of Committee

- Because the name, "Advisory Committee on Equity and Justice for All" is challenging to remember or use, and because the phrase "Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion" is a commonly used and accepted way of referring to the work of such a committee, Ms. Yasin proposed that the Scituate Select Board would consider changing the name of the committee to, "Scituate Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee."
- A motion was made by Rev. Stewart, seconded by Mr. Vice Chair, and there was a unanimous vote to accept the name change through a roll-call vote.

Kim Harriman - yes

Angela Riberio-Dray - yes

Celia Richa - yes

Ewuniki (Nikki) Sanders - yes

Thomas Secaur - yes

Natasha Stewart - yes

Ruth Yasin - yes

- Selectperson Curran will ask the Select Board at their next meeting to consider this change.

c. Review Processes to Run a Meeting Under Robert's Rules of Order

No questions or clarifications at this time

d. Open meeting law and Collection and Sharing of Information

- Members as a committee can't discuss topics unless in open meeting format. Documents can not be shared and commented upon by the committee as a whole. However, it is important to be able to document our work, and so would like a central location for collecting documents generated by various subcommittees so that all members of the committee can view the materials which will help us with our quarterly reports to the Select Board. Ms. Dray willing to take on the documentation about tasks/documents. Will investigate and report back on how this in a future meeting about this will be done so as not to violate the Open Meeting Law.
- Clarification from last meeting's discussion - Quorum for meetings would be 4 out of the 7 voting members. No more than 3 members can meet at a time outside a formal meeting and discuss any topics that might seem business for the committee. When a group from our committee meets with another committee, they also need to limit their group to their appropriate quorum. If we wanted more committee members to attend, we would then

need to have a joint publicly posted meeting.

- Question as far as why certain members are not voting members. Will follow up this discussion for a future agenda item.
- Written materials may be disseminated to the whole committee, but members should not use reply-all for any comments. There cannot be a back-and-forth conversation outside of a public meeting.
- Subcommittees are not required to follow the open meeting laws. So in a subcommittee group (less than 3 members of the entire Committee), they can send their information back and forth among themselves for comments. They can also confer with other persons outside of this Committee about these documents. Once they have a report, then they can disseminate this information to the Committee as a whole for formal discussion within the public meeting format.
- Written info clarification: Will check with Ms. Devin to see if we post addendum documents, or just list them in the minutes. Will also revisit this topic at another meeting to make sure there is clarity among members.

5. New Business

- a. Report about Civil Service & Hiring Requirements - Lt. Amanda O'Shea, with some additions from Mr. Clark -

Scituate is a Civil Service Town - one of 142 towns in MA which have adopted this process to hire public safety personnel. The Civil Service exam is usually given every other year rotating between Police and Fire exams. COVID has delayed testing since 2019. An applicant must be 21 or over to sign up for the exam. It is about a \$100 application fee, and is an approximately 100 question test. Then the score is developed, and a list is made. The way the list is formed takes into account multiple other priorities. For example, besides the candidates score on the exam, any candidate who is a child of a police/fire person killed in the line of duty and who has passed the written, medical and physical part exam will be put at the head of the list. Also, there is a lay-off list - so personnel who had been laid-off from a town would also go to the beginning of the overall list. After these two categories of applicants, then priority goes to residents of a town within which they reside. Within the resident's category, disabled veterans, and then veterans, would be ranked at the top of this section. We have people who work part time in the Police Dept. which lets us know if these permanent-intermittent officers are a good fit and then these are also a pool of potential applicants.

For every one open position, the Civil Service Board will give the town three names to

consider. Then those three people are notified, and they can sign up to apply for an interview with the town for the open position. At the end of a specified time period, if any of the first proposed applicants have not signed up to interview, then the Civil Service Board would give the town the next set of names on the list. Applicants who are considered for hire must pass a CORI and Scituate's own extensive background checks. They then need to pass standardized State agility, physical, psychological, and drug screenings. If chosen to go to the Police Academy, then there are another set of physical fitness standards that must be passed. The Fire Academy lasts about 55 days, and the Police Academy is about 7 months (about 900 hours) - some at the Academy and 8 weeks back in Scituate in the field. If a person is an intermittent officer, then the Reserve Intermittent Academy is 400 hours of training. Due to recent Police Reform Legislation, the town is actively working out a bridge academy for what certifications will be needed to get training for the new intermittent officers to bring them up to expectations.

It can be years between when you take the exam until you are hired. Also for the Fire Department, a person must live within 15 miles of Scituate for call-back if needed, to staff-up to an acceptable level in case both our ambulances leave town at the same time. SFD for the most part only hires paramedics - different from SPD. The SFD can specify the certifications they are looking for, but it is often a challenge to vie for these specialized applicants among 5-7 other towns.

Civil Service was begun in the 70's, and was meant to get rid of problems with people hiring personnel based only on knowing them. It was a more fair way of getting qualified applicants. However, the Civil Service process limits a town's ability to quickly approve someone and limits affirmative action practices. It is possible to opt-out, but would be a process involving the unions and a town vote. Besides the fairness issue, there are also many benefits, including grievance procedures for personnel. Did not think that Fire or Police personnel would want to make a change away from Civil Service at this time.

A question was raised about a minority person, a police officer, who left Scituate. It was confirmed that he had been hired through the Civil Service process, but Lt. O'Shea thought that he had left because he would make more money in another town.

Clarification was made that the list of preferences is set by the State - the Town can't add other preferences. Might it be up for discussion through Police Reform Legislation as it moves forward? Not sure. Also raised was the issue that not as many people are taking the Police and Fire Exams - we are currently exhausting the list of applicants as we try to fill positions. Clarification was later made that we still only consider applicants who have passed

the exam.

Further questions were raised to consider about the Civil Service Exams - whether there was identified bias within the test, and whether the fee would be prohibitive and would keep people from applying. It was suggested that Scituate might consider setting up a fund to help under-represented populations overcome the fee as a hurdle.

Also with Town background checks, especially relating to the changing laws on Cannabis, is SPD reevaluating the content in background checks? The response was that SPD is constantly evolving its criteria and doing a better job about evaluating candidates using latitude to really get a thorough understanding of candidates' backgrounds.

The point was made that there are very good jobs available in the Town, and many do not need advanced degrees. Scituate residents have priority for these jobs, like at the Water Department and other departments, so residents should keep that in mind. How do we reach the communities within Scituate to help them get these jobs?

b. Review of Charge and Discussion on Committee's Goals

We need to have goals in order to organize ourselves to help us attack our tasks.

- Ms. Dray - We want Scituate to be equitable and inclusive, but that means we have to talk to the residents. Can we do surveys? And find out what the town is doing now? Madame chair responded that yes we can do surveys both to town residents and personnel. Will need to work out that process.
- Ms. Harriman - What is the scope of what can be done? Will there be resources for training to help personnel learn why we are doing this work - how biases may affect their jobs e.g. online training about unconscious bias? And then how do we continue these conversations about these ideas within our larger community? How do we look to the structures that promote bias that exist and how do we dismantle them? Madame Chair responded that we can consider resources for these types of training and facilitate these conversations. But want to make sure that we keep focused on the underrepresented voices. How do we keep focus on direct assistance to underrepresented people?
- Ms. Richa - We need a holistic approach about how to promote diversity within Scituate that includes conversations about these issues. This means that we need not only (1) training for town personnel, but (2) conversations and convenings to impact the structural change in Scituate among its residents. Scituate can be known for more celebrations than the St. Patrick's Day Parade that would honor a multitude of cultures, ethnicities, LGBTQIA,

...including having conversations with our community about how to talk about racism to your family. And then the (3) analyze policies, procedures and budgets to see how we can increase equity within Scituate. Further discussion included breaking down the goals by stakeholders.

- Rev. Stewart - Agreeing with above. One goal is having a variety of types of conversations with the Scituate community at large including how we can be more welcoming as a community. A second goal would be to hire more minority people, and so on.
- Mr. Vice Chair - a goal to review policies, procedures and budgets.
- Ms. Yasin - to make the above goal more specific- conduct this review with more specific focus - eg. 1. to increase BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) representation in Town positions, including in administrative positions; 2. To increase diversity within the town of Scituate.
- Madame Chair questioned if it is enough to use the wording in the Charge for the Committee? She proposed these goals: 1. Engage and educate the community in a way to change the atmosphere in the town; 2. To complete a review of the Town's policies, procedures, and budgets in order to make improvement; and 3. This would include training on the value of diversity, equity, and inclusion within town departments.
- A clarification that there is a Resource Officer at the schools and Detective Owen Kirkbride is the Civil Rights officer.

i. 10 minute Public Comment on Suggested Committee Goals- No public comments

c. Creation of Task Force on Hate Crimes and Civil Right Task Force

- Madame Chair said that she was interested in the creation of a subcommittee/task force on Hate Crimes and Human Rights. Also possibly a youth committee or task force to help them express their concerns. Asked Stephanie Burke to share what she has found:
- Stephanie Burke - reported that in 2017 Governor Baker reinstituted the MA State Hate Crimes Task Force in response to the growing number of hate crimes in Massachusetts. This task force makes recommendations to the education system, schools, and police department. This task force is meant to promote full and effective cooperation and coordination among law enforcement agencies and communities, and improve the prevention, investigation, and prosecution of hate crimes. Not all communities seem to be accurately reporting hate crimes. There were recommendations made to police departments including that a hate crime is any incident based in bias.
- Scituate has been implementing some of the Task Force's recommendations, but Ms. Burke would recommend that Scituate go further with community programming and forums to

educate people about Hate Crimes and incidents based in bias. Suggest that Scituate include easy access to the information about Hate Crimes reporting and the Civil Rights officer on the town website - it is not easy to find this information. Would also like statements acknowledging the urgency in addressing hate crimes and the importance of hate crime education and to urge victims to come forward. Although the SPD has already begun this work, there is not transparency to the community that this work is being done and valued.

- Ms. Burke would ask this Committee to look at the recommendations of the Hate Crimes Task Force, ask the SPD to adopt these recommendations, and make a statement that these are priorities. This will help marginalized communities feel that they are welcome, safe, and supported - because there are members of our community who do not feel safe right now.
- Ms. Burke will provide the Committee with the list of recommendations provided by the Hate Crimes Task Force. We will discuss further at the next meeting. Madame Chair suggests that this topic be further publicized to the town. Ms. Burke suggested that we do like Hingham did and to introduce our Civil Rights Officer with a direct publicized line to help people find information.
 - Lt. O'Shea confirmed that Detective Owen Kirkbride is the Civil Rights officer and that any crime can be reported on the web site. Ms. Burke says that it isn't easy to find information on Hate Crimes/Discrimination/or other educational resources on this topic. Madame Chair wanted the website to be more descriptive about Hate Crimes and resources available.
- Selectperson Curran suggested that Lt. O'Shea conveys the questions about the website back to the Police Chief and reports back to us. Madame Chair would like to invite Detective Kirkbride to attend our next meeting.
- Madame Chair brought up the establishment of a Youth Committee and a Human Rights Committee. Questions about both were raised and there was discussion. Because the youth of the town has played a role and wishes to play a role in addressing anti-racist issues, it was suggested that we get a youth liaison from the Anti-Racism club at Scituate High School. Mr. Vice Chair volunteered to look into getting a student who would come to our meetings as a liaison. There were questions about a Human Rights Committee and if it was beyond the scope of our charge. The discussion was tabled for now to be brought up at a later meeting. Members were asked to think about what a Human Rights Committee would look like and do.

6. Other Business -

Assignment of departments to look into - refers to the Organizational Chart Selectperson Curran sent last meeting:

- Ms. Harriman - Health and Human Services, Council on Aging, and Veteran Services
- Ms. Yasin & Ms. Richa - Public Safety

- Sanders & Ms. Dray - Finance - including Capital Planning Committee and Advisory Committee
- Mr. Vice Chair - Cultural, Recreation, and Library
- Rev. Stewart - Conservation, Coastal Resources and Planning
- Ms. Silveira & Madam Chair - Facilities and Public Works

In order to more standardize the questions that we might ask, committee members are asked to brainstorm questions and submit to Ms. Yasin. She will collect the questions and disseminate them to the committee members for their review before next meeting.

7. Future Agenda Items

8. Future Meeting Date - 2/2/21. Will confirm the following meeting dates to make sure they do not conflict with Select Board Meetings.

(Proposed - 2/16*, 3/2, 3/16, 3/30, 4/13, 4/20*, 5/4, 5/18, 6/1, 6/15, 6/29, 7/13, 7/27)

* School vacation weeks

9. Adjourned at 8:44 pm on a Motion by Rev. Stewart, Seconded by Mr. Vice Chair, and approved unanimously via roll call vote.

Kim Harriman - yes
 Angela Riberio-Dray - yes
 Celia Richa - yes
 Ewuniki (Nikki) Sanders - yes
 Thomas Secaur - yes
 Natasha Stewart - yes
 Ruth Yasin - yes

List of Documents Provided -

- 2021-01-12 Town of Scituate Overview Docs

Minutes Respectfully Submitted

Ruth Yasin, Secretary

Date: February 1, 2021