

Scituate Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee

Previously known as: Advisory Committee on Equity and Justice for All

MINUTES

Tuesday, March 02, 2021 6:30pm (Eastern time)

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=gWsDAVjWnCA>

Members Present:

Non-voting Members:

Bob Clark
Maura Curran
Amanda O'Shea
Lucia Silveira

Voting Members:

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

All members present.

AGENDA

1. Call the Meeting to Order, Read the Remote Participation and Viewing Options, & Tribal Acknowledgement - Madame Chair Sanders

Madame Chair Sanders called the meeting to order at 6:34pm and read Governor Baker's declaration about remote meetings along with viewing information (posted above). Motion to convene the meeting - Ms. Yasin. Seconded by Rev. Stewart. Voted through a roll call vote - 7-0

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

2. Safe Space and Norms

- a. This is a safe space for people of color and for all underrepresented people and communities. 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.

- b. This is a safe space where people can bring up challenges and questions without fear of repercussion or hostility
 - c. Take the learning, but leave the story, so that people feel comfortable sharing their experiences
 - d. Assume best intentions. All participants are embarking on this journey at different starting points
 - e. Listen/read and be kind
 - f. Use respectful language - ask when you are unsure.
 - g. Administrators may remove anyone with inappropriate content or acting inappropriately
3. Acceptance of Minutes of 2/16/2021. Motion to accept the minutes by Vice Chair Secaur, with a Second by Rev. Stewart.
Voted through a roll call vote - unanimous acceptance 7-0.
Kim Harriman - yes
Angela Riberio-Dray - yes
Celia Richa - yes
Ewuniki (Nikki) Sanders - yes
Thomas Secaur - yes
Natasha Stewart - yes
Ruth Yasin - yes
4. Public Comment: What are your hopes for the DEI Committee? What Goals do you think the DEI Committee should have? Will you volunteer to assist the Committee?
 - Vice Chair Secaur read the Charge for the Scituate Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee (SDEIC): *The establishment of an Advisory Committee to the Board of Selectmen for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI), 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.*
 - Stephanie Burke - Concerned about the lack of representation of different cultures in Scituate. Could look at this not just as policies and procedures, but also look using a culturally inclusive lens to include more multicultural/ethnic perspective into the current celebrations or institute new celebrations that are focused on cultures other than Irish.
 - Emily Mathews - encourage committee to work on gender neutral bathrooms for all town properties. This would support gender neutrality within the community, and shows support for gender equality.

- Jackie Thornton - Suggested a diversity quota for town entities to hire/include females, people of color, LGBTQ+, and other people who are underrepresented. A second suggestion is to designate a specific space as a hub for a diverse cultural center. Thirdly, create ways to encourage dialogue between Scituate entities/town employees and general community members, both so that town citizens become more knowledgeable about what is happening in the town, but also so that they can give their feedback into the processes.
- Craig Dias - Scituate Concerned Citizens - Wants a place for people to be able to speak about community issues and feel comfortable - feels that as a black person he has been asked not to be adversarial when trying to question the town about a possible hazardous waste site, but this doesn't happen when issues are raised in other areas of town, like problems with Egypt Beach, that are not being reported by people of color. Feels that underrepresented people fear that there will be a backlash if they speak out. Agrees that we could have a cultural center and could put it at Pier 44. Would like a task force where underrepresented people could share their stories without retaliation and have recourse if they feel that they haven't been given the same treatment as others (eg. being denied permits). Does not feel that Town Hall has significant diversity of color, and wishes that the town organization chart would be reviewed to confirm this and to make plans about how we can change this.
- Emily Mathews - Wanted to thank the committee for giving people of color and marginalized groups the space to have these conversations and ask the questions.
- Ms. Curran noted that usually public comments from individuals not present at a meeting are given as correspondence rather than in a public comment session. This allows the comments to be entered into the agenda as correspondence and become part of the public record. People can specify whether a written communication is personal communication or is to be read aloud to the committee.
- Jackie Thornton - questioned if the note that had been passed to a committee member was meant to be addressed at the meeting, so it was suggested that these notes be read today, but in the future, that any written material be submitted as correspondence.
- Vice Chair Secaur read an email from Conor Doherty who recommended that the Select Board keep the SDEIC informed about ideas coming down the pipeline so the SDEIC can advise the Select Board about how to enact these decisions in an equitable, inclusive, and just manner.

- Chairperson Sanders - has an email from Carey Borkoski, a STRIDE Steering Committee Member who recommends that all town meetings have a safe space and norms so people feel comfortable in sharing and coming to meetings. Also, a note from Michelle, an SPS student - would like a DEI position to help students like her be given coping mechanisms, training, and extra attention to help them feel comfortable speaking up for herself.

5. Old business

- a. Review of Committee Goals - Madame Chair Sanders stated that Goals are a work in progress. She is concerned with the Charge - where primarily white SDEIC members will discuss with primarily white heads of the departments in the community about issues that affect people of color. We need to reach out to communities of color and other underrepresented groups in our work. There is a concern that we will need to reach out to members of the Cape Verdean community because they might not feel comfortable going to committee meetings. Ms. Dray stated that we need community outreach to make the Cape Verdean community feel welcome and heard. Madame Chair Sanders followed that we need to invite people who are underrepresented to talk to us to make sure that these voices inform our decision making.

Ms. Dray said that she liked the goals and introduced the concept of setting up at least two subcommittees. Vice Chair Secaur stated that the goals seem to be related to all of the suggestions that people had made in the public comment section. Ms. Harriman acknowledged Nikki's comments about the committee being mostly white people who are involved in work for people of color (POC), and stated that she felt that it was up to white people to be doing this work to help break down barriers for people of color, and that is why many of us joined this group. Wondered if we could use our outreach to various groups and see if we can reach out to POC in these groups to gain their input, either through meetings or surveys. Madame Chair responded that race was very difficult and uncomfortable to talk about. Also, that POC were not, to her knowledge, using Senior Services. Hingham Community Council has developed a survey about racism in the community and that we should be involved with something like that to survey the community in a meaningful way. Ms. Dray noted that she has a wide range of people within her own neighborhood that she can speak to directly, but it will be more challenging to elicit honest feedback from minority community members through more formal means - they are more likely to say positive things than to be honest about negative issues.

She recommended a subcommittee and other members of the community to help us in this effort.

Michelle Crawford - SPS METCO Director - re outreach to marginalized populations - suggest that we do community based participatory action research (Patricia Krueger Henney from U. Mass. Boston as a resource) to train a small groups to have conversations with community members about what they'd like in the community through strategic questions. It wasn't focused on telling questioners the bad things going on, but on asking people what services they would want. Ms. Crawford will email Ms. Sanders the contact info for Ms. Henney.

Ms. Curran likes the idea of having a survey to reach out to community members to get their input to help us identify concerns of underrepresented populations in Scituate.

Ms. Richa/Mr. Secaur - would like to divide up into subcommittees based on Goals 1 & 3 - to help us focus on both policies and procedures group and community engagement. Will need further discussion to help us figure out how to include more members of underrepresented groups in the conversations we are having. **Madame Chair Sanders suggested bringing the topic of how to break up this work into the next SDEIC meeting.**

- b. Discussion/Vote - Setting up Youth Subcommittee
 - c. Discussion/Vote - Setting up Subcommittee on Hate Crimes
- Madame Chair Sanders....

Madame Chair noted that we need to make recommendations about what is going on in town, but we don't have time to find that all out. Also we would like to include the voice of young people about concerns that they have. For the Hate Crimes Subcommittee it would give people a place to go to report. It could give people a place to come to or submit grievances that would be a place of support for them and that they'd feel safe in reporting. For both of these subcommittees, there are people in the community who would help with these tasks and suggest recommendations for the SDEIC to consider.

Ms. Yasin clarified that any subcommittee will always have at least one member of the SDEIC on it. She asked that before voting that a written charge and scope for these two proposed subcommittees be provided - what are the deliverables that a committee would provide to the SDEIC?

Ms. Harriman is concerned that we already have so much work to do and so many other ideas are being offered, that these two subcommittees may be too much for us to take on at this time.

Ms. Curran clarified that subcommittees are usually formed to help the main committee with a specific task, and that it is important to know what a subcommittee's purpose would be. Because there is a lot to do in this committee it is important to prioritize, and these two subcommittees wouldn't be as high a priority as some suggested earlier. And if it were determined after investigation, then A Hate Crimes Task Force might be a recommendation to the Select Board later on. There is already a place to report Hate Crimes and a legal definition of Hate Crimes, so there is already a process for this.

Madame Chair responded that she didn't think that we have too much to do, but that we may miss important issues because we don't have the important information. Subcommittees would help reduce the load. Hate Crimes is a definition that can be changed. We can't recommend much if we don't know what is going on, and we need to hear other people's views.

Ms. Richa agrees that we need perspectives of communities of color and underserved communities. Perhaps rather than a subcommittee, we need a youth voice?

Vice Chair Secaur asked that we write down more information to help us keep track of subcommittees and tasks.

Madame Chair Sanders will draft up information about the two subcommittees for next meeting. She stated that these two subcommittees would provide us needed information and help fulfill needs within our community. Confirmed that for our Select Board report that we were not planning on reporting on any specific town committees/boards, but rather on our organizational efforts and low-hanging fruit.

- d. Discussion/Vote - Questions to ask Town Boards/Committees and next steps forward - Mr. Clark, Ms. Richa, Mr. Secaur & Ms. Yasin

Vice Chair Secaur displayed Excel spreadsheet (Scituate DEI Committee Questions-2-28-21.xls) and reviewed the tabs.

Ms. Curran responded to the question about use of Slack, and confirmed that the process is following guidelines about not allowing people to comment on documents. However, Lorraine Devin and/or Michelle need to have administrative access so that they could pull any documents they need for Freedom of Information inquiries. It was confirmed that we can just invite them to join this Slack channel.

Vice Chair Secaur reviewed the Process about how the committee would approach asking the questions to the Department Heads of the Town Boards/Committees. And that there is a new section for questions - a total of seven which would be the same for

all departments. Mr. Clark noted that departments can be grouped to decrease the number of total meetings with SDEIC members.

Rev. Stewart - clarified that these questions are ones that we expect the department heads to answer because so many other questions we had, Mr. Clark would be able to answer.

Ms. Yasin stated that these questions have been pared down from our initial set to eliminate questions we can get from Mr. Clark or other sources. These are also open-ended questions so that they are encouraging department heads to be thoughtful and generate ideas for their own departments - that they are part of the process. There will then be a follow-up step that will drill down into the departments to question personnel about their perceptions. Taking it one step at a time, analyzing the data, and then taking the next step will help us gain more usable information.

Rev. Stewart liked the questions because of the open ended nature and encouragement to engage the stakeholders in the process. Also that working as subgroups as we go forward helps us be more effective and increases our understanding.

Madame Chair Sanders noted that the focus on not being offensive should not overrule our task of serving the needs of people who have experienced trauma, whether mental or emotional. We need to make sure that we keep in mind that being overly concerned about the town departments, whose job it is to answer these questions, is not going to be appreciated by people who do not share the perspective of the town department heads, who are not of color.

Ms. Dray - liked the questions, especially those that go to the personnel, not just the department heads. Would like to review the information before moving along to further questioning before we present any findings.

Michelle Crawford - under the section of diverse hires, it is important to note where a job is posted and how it is posted because it affects a prospective hire's perception about whether a person of color would be accepted within the culture of the hiring body. Another important consideration is what support do they need to retain a diverse workforce? Hiring is different from retainment.

Madame Chair questioned about where to find the information about money paid by gender. Also, where is information about where to get support if a problem arises? Does not agree with the process entirely but does like the interaction in small groups with SDEIC members.

Mr. Clark responded that he wants to work on a town wide anti-discrimination harassment and retaliation policy, which would

address Madame Chair Sander's question. Often the complainant wishes to keep the incident private, and is dealt with within HR. Mr. Clark can also gather the information about pay and gender.

Ms. Richa noted that the questions purposefully did not include information that was easily obtained from any of the SDEIC town employees and that we could **start a list of these questions to address.**

Ms. Yasin noted that committee members **review this document and write up any suggested changes, additions or amendments for next meeting.** We can then discuss at our next meeting and hopefully vote on them.

Madame Chair Sanders responded to Mr. Clark's previous comments, and noted that she was looking for information beyond harassment policies,. She wanted to know what is in place for support - is it just the HR department? Would like to know from every department and in writing about what support is offered.

- e. Suggestions for initiatives - Mr. Clark, Lt. O'Shea, & Ms. Silveira
Mr. Clark - needs to create a comprehensive Personnel Handbook for the town - many of the policies and procedures were only in the Union contracts. Would like help to review the policies to see how we can tweak the policies, though some of these would also need Union approval in order to enact. **Ms. Yasin suggested that these documents be sent out to the whole committee.** Madame Chair Sanders and Ms. Yasin volunteered to assist in updating these policies.
- f. Administrative - Ms. Dray/Selectperson Curran update on Slack - covered earlier
- g. Discuss/Vote liaison with SPS DEI Committee - do not need to vote on a liaison. Ms. Jen Arnold - Asst. Supt. of SPS was welcomed, and noted that she appreciated the opportunity to represent the schools - good to have the connection between town and district. She would be happy to share what the schools have already done. Ms. Curran noted that Michael Hayes was voted a liaison from the School Committee.
- h. Discussion/Vote on adding the employee position as a voting member of this committee - Madame Chair Sanders noted that Ms. Silveira is a very valued member of this committee. Ms. Curran stated that if we vote this, then it would be brought up to the Select Board for them to vote. She also noted that if there is a tie vote, because we would have an equal number of voting members, then the convention is that the motion does not pass. A quorum would become 5 voting members, and a small group meeting could have

not more than 4 voting members to remain in compliance with Open Meeting Laws.

Vice Chair Secaur moved to accept the employee position as a voting member of the SDEIC. Rev Stewart seconded the motion.

Voted through a roll call vote - unanimous acceptance 7- 0.

Kim Harriman - yes

Angela Riberio-Dray - yes

Celia Richa - yes

Ewuniki (Nikki) Sanders - yes

Thomas Secaur - yes

Natasha Stewart - yes

Ruth Yasin - yes

6. New Business

7. Other Business (that may properly come before the Committee after agenda is posted)

8. Future Agenda Items -

Ms. Yasin noted that Public Comment had been moved to the beginning of the meeting this week, and asked Madame Chair Sanders if this would be a regular feature at the beginning. She suggested that more people be informed about this so that we can encourage more voices to be heard, especially if we schedule time to have an open forum specifically designed for community input on how we can gather information from our various communities.

Madame Chair noted that we post our agenda and that people receive e-notifications are sent out to anyone who signs up for it on the town website.

Ms. Curran suggested a standard public comment time at the beginning to avoid people leaving and know that they have a spot they can give their views.

Madame Chair Sanders noted that people can submit information to be put on the agenda before it goes out for the next time.

9. Motion to adjourn at 8:38pm by Ms. Yasin. Seconded by Ms. Dray. .

Roll call vote- Unanimous acceptance 7-0

Kim Harriman - yes

Angela Riberio-Dray - yes

Celia Richa - yes

Ewuniki (Nikki) Sanders - yes

Thomas Secaur - yes

Natasha Stewart - yes

Ruth Yasin - yes

10. Future Meeting Dates - 3/16, 3/30*, 4/20, 5/4, 5/18, 6/1, 6/15, 6/29*, 7/13, 7/27

* We will finalize our presentations to the Select Board on these dates.

****Public comments will be limited to one (1) minute per individual. “Public Comment” time will be limited to 10 minutes total. Any time beyond that will be at the discretion of the Chair so the Advisory Committee on Equity and Justice for All can proceed with items on the agenda. Any person making a comment that is deemed by the Chairperson to be offensive or inappropriate may be silenced. The committee will take items under advisement and items raised may, at the discretion of the Chairperson, be added to a future agenda. At the Chairperson’s discretion, public comment may be allowed on today’s agenda items when they occur during the meeting. If no public is present at the public comment section, this section may be concluded early.**

List of Documents: Scituate DEI Committee Questions-2-28-21.xls (and previous revisions)

Respectfully submitted:
Ruth Yasin