

# Scituate Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee (SDEIC)

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

## MINUTES

Tuesday, April 20, 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=pRScmvhC6QU>

### **Members Present:**

#### Non-voting Members:

Bob Clark

#### Voting Members:

Angela Riberio-Dray

Celia Richa

Ewuniki (Nikki) Sanders

Thomas Secaur

Lucia Silveira

Natasha Stewart

Ruth Yasin

Absent non-voting members: Maura Curran, Amanda O'Shea

Visiting: Karen Canfield - Chair of the Scituate Select Board (SSB), & Jim Boudreau - Scituate Town Administrator

## **AGENDA**

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

Motion made to open the meeting by Ms. Yasin. Seconded by Vice Chair Secaur.

Roll call vote - Unanimous approval 7-0

Angela Riberio-Dray - yes

Celia Richa - yes

Ewuniki (Nikki) Sanders - yes

Thomas Secaur - yes

Lucia Silveira - yes

Natasha Stewart - yes

Ruth Yasin - yes

- Madame Chair Sanders called the meeting to order at 6:32 pm and read Governor Baker's declaration about remote meetings along with viewing

information (posted above) and an acknowledgement for the Wampanoag tribe.

- She acknowledged the verdict in the Chauvin trial and that people feel hopeful that justice will continue to be served in instances where police officers have not acted in ways that were what they agreed to do in their jobs. The work that has started will need to be continued to seek justice.
- Also noted that the Scituate Select Board (SSB) has issued a statement decrying violence and hatred of Asians in the US, and that those negative views are not acceptable in Scituate.

## 2. Safe Space and Norms

- 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.
- 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 03/30/2021. Motion made by Ms. Richa. Seconded by Vice Chair Secaur.

Roll call vote - Unanimous approval 7-0

Angela Riberio-Dray - yes

Celia Richa - yes

Ewuniki (Nikki) Sanders - yes

Thomas Secaur - yes

Lucia Silveira - yes

Natasha Stewart - yes

Ruth Yasin - yes

## 4. Public Comment (comments taken out of order)

- Stephanie Burke - Noted how important it is that people of color, including those of Asian American backgrounds, can be heard and have representation. Various people of color will have different perspectives, and that though we may not all agree we need to listen.
- Sheena Smead - Hears defensiveness when controversial issues are raised, but it is important to listen to people of color even when the discussions are on difficult issues.

## 5. Old business

### ● Liaison Reports

- School Committee Member - Michael Hayes - Scituate played Duxbury in a football game played last week - the schools were requested by the MIAA to turn it into a learning experience where the captains of each team made a public statement before the game. There will be continued discussions about the issues in Duxbury and how they will be resolved. Not all members of the SPS community were pleased with this decision to play. Duxbury football had been using Anti-semitic language in their field plays, and Duxbury's head coach was fired and some games cancelled.
- Ms. Richa noted that this is an example of how Scituate's town and schools reputations are linked - that an incident like this paints us all in a bad light and seemingly perpetuates the perspectives that Boston and the South Shore are racist.
- Select Person Karen Canfield - clarified that the DEI committee within the high school did not have the time to respond to this issue. She advised that SDEIC puts something in place when quick moving decisions have to be made. We should review this incident, think about what should have happened, what gaps are there in our evaluation process, and recommend how future incident response can be improved.
- Madame Chair Sanders - Doesn't feel that Scituate had a strong say in this, and feels that we were used as a pawn. There should be a process to follow, and it is important to have a person of color in the room and have a representative of SDEIC when these decisions are made. She will draft up a process, and others are encouraged to do so also - for the committee to review and recommend to the SSB. We will discuss at the next meeting.
- Selectperson Canfield - However we need to be careful that the committee's work is intentional and not reactive - do the homework. When there is an incident we first need to identify what resources are in place, and then figure out what is still needed to help solve the problem. The people involved need to have background knowledge before trying to problem solve. In other words, if there is an incident that deals with DEI where the Town needs to make a statement, then we might propose that an advocate would be in place who would know what resources are available. Who might that person be? What could the SDEIC recommend to the SSB?
- Ms. Dray - Asks that if a person calls in an incident, for example of vandalism, then the person taking the call should be sensitive to the victim's concerns - that the issues happening around us in the world may affect how fearful the victim is.

### ● Discussion of Select Board Meeting on 4/6/21

- Reviewed the written comments on the 4/16 SSB meeting (K Canfield)

Notes on DEI ProgressRecommendations.pdf). Select Person Canfield reminded that the charge of the SDEIC is to **Review, Report, and Recommend** - the members of the SDEIC are not charged with solving the problem. Also, recommendations need to be actionable - be more complete to be able to tell the Select Board on how this recommendation would be executed. Do the homework first so that the committee has researched enough background to make detailed recommendations, but be clear that the SDEIC does not have the authority or directive to tell town departments or employees what they should do.

- Madame Chair Sanders reminded the committee that if there is a recommendation that SDEIC has developed, then it can be brought up to the Select Board at any time, not only at the quarterly review.
- Mr. Clark noted that he has surveyed the bathrooms in various buildings, and we could include that information to go forward with the recommendation for gender neutral bathrooms. Select Person Canfield encouraged the recommendation to include all new builds to include gender neutral bathrooms.
- Town Administrator Boudreau - please provide specific and focused information and make sure that you have a full picture in order to understand the statistics that the SDEIC requests.
- Select Person Canfield noted that the Select Board does not do programming. So the SDEIC would need to do the homework to figure out which groups in town would do this type of programming and facilitate or encourage this happening.
- Madame Chair replied that she is contacting Ms. Martell from the Mass Cultural Council to join us at our next meeting. Also, has also reached out to the Scituate Cultural Council and Harbor Cultural District Commission in the hopes that heads of these committees will also join our next meeting.
- Flag idea - please develop further to be more inclusive. The current flags that are flown in town have been supplied by non-profit groups, and the DPW just puts them up.
- TA Boudreau noted that the Cultural Council provides funding for events, but that it has to be sponsored by a group and be much more specific.
- Next meeting will review this document for how we can proceed with recommendations.

(Moved to #7 - New Business, and many items taken out of order)

- Youth Subcommittee Application
  - Chairperson Sanders noted that she had sent out to SDEIC Draft Applications for both the Youth and Incidents Based in Bias Subcommittees. Ms. Yasin commented that the applications looked good. Discussion suggested that these could be disseminated via the Scituate Town email, web site, and FB page. Also recommended that other groups such as STRIDE, Scituate Clergy, and others

might be amenable to help spread the applications. How specifically could we reach youth, and not just Scituate residents? Will ask Michelle Crawford and the person who is head of the Metco Parents group to help, and they may also be able to figure out ways to reach youth within the schools. It was noted that Ms. Dray had volunteered to work on the Youth Committee with Madame Chair Sanders.

- Rev. Stewart asked about how many members should be allowed in one of these Project Teams. Ms. Yasin's view was that the Project leaders could decide this and other administrative issues for the team. Mr. Clark noted that it would be similar to what the SSB did to start up this committee, though as Ms. Yasin noted, it would not have to be as formal.
- Incidents Based in Bias Subcommittee Application (see above)
- Update on the collection of Surveys from Department Heads
  - Vice Chair Secaur - We are still collecting survey responses through 4/22/21. Currently there are 15 completed out of 23 sent out. Mr. Clark will remind those who haven't yet responded. We will bring this info back to SDEIC with some analysis of this data. We will then want to develop our follow-up questions for the virtual meetings. Ms. Richa suggested that when we send the completed survey to the SDEIC members, that individuals could review that data and make notes of things that stuck out to us so that we do not have to go row by row through the data to help us prioritize what we tackle first. She also noted that people in the Town government are at different places understanding DEI, and that we will need to educate people more, not just inform them. Mr. Clark agreed, and stated that certain departments don't see how their department is reflected in DEI work.
- Discussion/Vote on Next Steps for Evaluation of Initial Departments
  - Madame Chair Sanders noted that Police, Fire & Public Safety have the largest budgets, and then Public Works, so we might want to talk to them first. Also, because we have gotten feedback that cultural experiences are of interest to this committee, she would recommend that we include departments that deal with these issues including the Cultural Commission and Recreation.
  - Mr. Clark noted that the Cultural Commission is not a department. He recommended the Recreation Department and the Library as organizations which are very active in programming, and DPW because so many services throughout the town come from them.
  - Vice Chair Secaur noted that there was confusion about the Cultural & Recreation section of the town organization chart. The organization chart under Cultural/Recreation consists of the Recreation Dept., Library, and SSCTV.
  - Ms. Yasin noted that we need to know who does cultural events in

town.

- Conor Doherty clarified that the Cultural Council reviews proposals and awards grants to groups who have applied - that's their sole purpose. Anyone can apply, even people not in Scituate. He also suggested that different groups in Scituate might help for celebrations like Juneteenth, for example Scituate Stands or STRIDE.
- Chairperson Sanders noted that Ms. Martell is the South Shore representative for the Massachusetts Cultural Council and will come to our next meeting and ask that the Scituate Cultural Council representative also attend. We can ask her questions about funding and organization sources.
- Update on HUC Survey
  - Madame Chair Sanders noted that she has sent to SDEIC the survey responses from the Hingham Unity Council Survey. We will follow up this discussion next meeting.
  - Ms. Silveira - noted that she wants to contribute to the committee and will do so honestly, but that because she doesn't live in Scituate that it makes it more difficult. She is not sure how to contribute effectively, but perhaps in Project Teams rather than in these long meetings. She feels sad that there are Cape Verdeans who do not feel comfortable acknowledging their background. Chairperson Sanders validated the value of Ms. Silveira's role in this committee.
  - Ms. Yasin noted that from the approximately 260 responses to the survey, and about 200 of them were from Scituate, so our methods of dissemination within this town were quite effective. After a quick view, it is clear that many people were neutral on many of the questions, suggesting that many people are not very invested in this type of information, suggesting that there needs to be more education done so that people will feel more involved. Many people felt very positive about our libraries and other organizations, whereas they do not really feel that they know what the local DEI group is doing. We need to group information to help prioritize issues that we might want to deal with next. She also noted that the comment section has a lot of worthwhile suggestions.
  - Vice Chair Secaur will work on this information to further aggregate it by race and gender and he encouraged anyone else who wished to do further analysis to do so.

## 6. Administrative

- Discussion - Project Teams vs. SubCommittee - Ruth Yasin
  - Ms. Yasin noted that if a small group, even if less than a quorum, is called

a subcommittee, then it has to follow all of the Open Meeting Rules including posting in advance, minutes, ... However, on the advice of Lorraine Devin, the PA for the Select Board, she noted that the groups that we have formed are all research, information gathering, and perhaps even making recommendations to the SDEIC. If these small groups are called Project Teams, then they do not need to follow open meeting rules.

- We will discuss and vote next meeting to see if we would change the names our current groups
- Discussion - Liaison Positions - Ruth Yasin
  - Ms. Yasin asked SEIC if they would like to include more information from various DEI groups in town to be included in the liaison section of the meetings. Also Mr. Secaur suggested that this committee liaison with whatever committee the new SPS Director of DEI, Jamele Adams, begins when he starts his position in May. Chairperson Sanders has been in touch with Mr. Adams and it is hoped that we can develop a close working relationship. Ms. Yasin asked to be able to provide updates from STRIDE to the committee. Chairperson Sanders suggested that this be done in the public comment section to be fair to other groups until this option was offered to them.
- Calendar Review
  - Madame Chair Sanders asked that the committee members check the dates we have and think if they will work. Remember that we do not have to bring recommendations to SSB only at quarterly review time.
  - Ms. Richa - wondered if we could keep these meetings on Zoom even when meetings reopen to the public. It is easier for many people to tune in rather than to go to a location. Also worries about the timing of 2 ½ hours plus on peoples' engagement.
  - Rev. Stewart - wondered if over the summer we could move to once a month or once every three weeks - especially challenging to those who have small children.
  - Chairperson Sanders mentioned that when we go to live meetings that it will be in the new Senior Center. And the SSB will be discussing a replacement member for the SDEIC at their next meeting, 4/27.
  - Conor Doherty suggested that there be a timing noted on the agenda to help keep meetings along. Also recommended to not use the phrase "you guys" to instead use other non-gender specific terms.

## 7. New Business

- Town Finance
- Cultural Celebrations
- Town Charter
- Warrant for Next Town Meeting Advisory Statements

- Madame Chair will talk about meeting with Martell about Cultural events, but would like more information about how Town Finances work and who controls the budget and process of voting. Also understands that there is a suggestion for the Town Charter changes and would like to know how to develop a warrant for town meeting.
- Select Person Canfield responded that on Scituate Community TV there is a video recording of the joint committee of Advisory Committee and the Select Board and in this meeting TA Boudreau made a great presentation on how the operating budget gets put together (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ZBwE05OoOU> 11:00 start). (TA Boudreau clarified that the capital budget is different from an operating budget - it is for items that cost over \$5000 and have a use of over 5 years.) The Town Charter is online and is our governing constitution. The Charter Review Committee is reviewing the charter which has not been updated since 2003. There will be a series of public meetings to discuss the Charter, and these may be discussions that the SDEIC might want to be involved in. It is intended that the final recommendations on the Charter will be brought forth to the next Annual Town Meeting in April 2022. The role of the SSB is to review documents and make recommendations for the operating & capital budgets and warrants to Town Meeting, or Special Town Meetings, where town residents have the authority to approve or not. The Advisory Committee is a body appointed by the moderator, and is a group of impartial citizens who will look over recommendations provided by the SSB and decide whether or not they agree with these recommendations. It is a way of fact checking the SSB - the Advisory Committee represents the citizens.
- TA Boudreau would be happy to come in and answer any questions after we would review the video about how the budget is determined. He also clarified that the Annual Town Meeting is for the upcoming fiscal year, whereas a Special Town Meeting would be for issues occurring in the current fiscal year (which begins in July).
- Conor Doherty - The Advisory Committee is a very visible committee when you review the documents for Town Meeting - should it be so visible? How can the SDEIC be more visible to the town? Eg affordable housing might be a place for the DEI committee to weigh-in. What are ways that the DEI committee can be more visible in Town Meeting?
- Select Person Canfield - replied that the SDEIC advises the Select Board and is not an independent body. For example, with the Town Warrant, the Select Board could ask SDEIC for its input before the Select Board votes on accepting articles for the warrant. If the SDEIC wants to become an independent group, like the Advisory Committee is, then the SDEIC will need a completely different structure and that would need to be proposed and discussed.
- Select Person Canfield mentioned that over the weekend Madame Chair Sanders reached out to the police department about an incident that occurred in town.



She discussed this matter with Select Persons Curran and Canfield. Select Person Canfield wanted to remind this board, and all boards in town, that board members do not have the directive or authority to direct or insist on feedback from town employees. It puts the town employee in a difficult situation and undermines the process of what they need to do. Be mindful that board members need to figure out the chain of command. It is not your job to fix the problem.

- TA Boudreau - reiterated that it is important to follow the chain of command starting with the Select Persons or Town Administrator, not lower level employees. And gave a reminder that town business is slow to get anything done.

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

9. Future Agenda Items

10. Motion to adjourn the meeting made by Ms. Yasin. Seconded by Vice Chair Secaur. Meeting adjourned at 9:12pm.

Roll call vote - Unanimous approval 7-0

Angela Riberio-Dray - yes

Celia Richa - yes

Ewuniki (Nikki) Sanders - yes

Thomas Secaur - yes

Lucia Silveira - yes

Natasha Stewart - yes

Ruth Yasin - yes

#### **List of Documents:**

- South Shore Community Diversity & Wellbeing Survey (HUC) -Scituate V1-excel
- Youth Subcommittee Application, Incidents Based in Bias Subcommittee Application - Email Nikki Sanders
- Suggestions for agenda for upcoming SDEIC meeting 4/20 - Email Ruth Yasin
- K Canfield Notes on DEI ProgressRecommendations.pdf (from presentation to the Select Board 4/6/21)

Future Meeting Dates - 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.