



TOWN OF NORTHBOROUGH

63 Main Street
Northborough, MA 01532-1994
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**DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION & BELONGING COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES – December 21, 2022 @ 6:00 PM**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mariam Ibrahimi
Diedra Wrighting
Cynthia Moore
Ashish Verma
Melissa Diglio
Yong Tan

OTHERS PRESENT: Becca Meekins, Assistant Town Administrator

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM.

Becca Meekins read the statement regarding the suspension of certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law, giving the Board the ability to meet remotely. Pursuant to Governor Baker’s March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, and the Governor’s March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitation on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting will be conducted via remote participation. No in-person attendance by members of the public will be permitted.

Becca Meekins conducted a roll call of members.

Cynthia Moore: Aye
Ashish Verma: Aye
Melissa Diglio: Aye
Diedra Wrighting: Aye
Mariam Ibrahimi: Aye
Yong Tan: Aye

1. Introductions

Becca Meekins – Participated in the temporary committee to make recommendations to the Selectmen. DEI is something that she is passionate about in her professional life and personal life. She is glad the Selectmen took the recommendations to create this permanent advisory committee and is excited about the work the committee will set out to do.

Ms. Moore – Northborough resident for 21 years. Currently serves on 2 other town committees. She is a special education advocate by profession. Identifies as a person with disabilities and this work is important to her in terms of her personal life and professional life.

Mr. Verma – Northborough resident for 15 years. First time serving on a town committee. He is a physician who treats patients with kidney diseases.



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Ms. Diglio –Northborough resident for 1.5 years. Works at University Police Department, division of student affairs. She currently serves on 2 boards at the University and looks forward to bringing that experience to her hometown by serving on this committee.

Ms. Wrighting – Northborough resident for nine years. Served on the ADHOC committee and is excited to continue to serve on this committee. Also serves as a member of the Coalition for Equity with the Northborough Southborough Schools.

Ms. Ibrahim – Grew up in Northborough, graduated from Algonquin Regional High School and is currently in her last year of undergrad. Served as Vice-Chair on the ADHOC committee. Excited about the work they will do on the committee.

Mr. Tan – First time on Town committee. Resident since 2015. From Shanghai China and this is his first location in the US. Works for Microsoft, a company with very strong inclusion and diversity. He is very excited about the work this committee will be doing and looking forward to working with everyone.

2. Election of Officers

Becca Meekins reviewed the process to appoint the Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, and Secretary. She discussed the rolls and responsibilities for each position and asked for volunteers.

Mariam Ibrahim volunteered for position of Chairperson.

Motion to appoint Mariam Ibrahim for Chairperson of the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Committee: Becca Meekins. Seconded by Cynthia Moore. Roll call vote: Rebecca Meekins; aye, Cynthia Moore; aye, Melissa Diglio; aye, Diedra Wrighting; aye, Ashish Verma; aye, Yong Tan; aye. The vote was unanimous in favor.

Ashish Verma volunteered for the position of Vice Chairperson.

Motion to appoint Ashish Verma for Vice Chairperson of the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Committee: Becca Meekins. Seconded by Cynthia Moore. Roll call vote: Mariam Ibrahim; aye, Rebecca Meekins; aye, Melissa Diglio; aye, Cynthia Moore; aye, Yong Tan; aye, Deidra Wrighting; aye. The vote was unanimous in favor.

Rebecca Meekins volunteered for the position of Secretary.

Motion to appoint Becca Meekins for Secretary of the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Committee: Mariam Ibrahim. Seconded by Ashish Verma. Roll call vote: Cynthia Moore; aye, Melissa Diglio; aye, Mariam Ibrahim; aye, Yong Tan; aye, Deidra Wrighting; aye, Ashish Verma; aye. The vote was unanimous in favor.

3. Brief Overview of Local Government and Open Meeting Law

Ms. Meekins provided a quick overview of local government operations noting the following:

- All meetings need to be posted 48 hours in advance (2 business days before).
- There must be a quorum to meet. This committee has 9 members, therefore, needs to be a minimum of 5 members present to conduct a meeting.



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- Remote meetings require that all votes must be taken by roll call.
- There should be no communication with a quorum outside of a meeting including emails.

4. Brief Status Update on Towns Current Activities Related to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Ms. Meekins noted that this is an advisory committee to the Board of Selectmen. This committee's job is to advise the board on matters of DEI. The Selectmen are the executive body. They set policies, set the town meeting warrant, hire the Town Administrator who runs the day to day operations of the town. She noted that, from an administrative and operational perspective, the town and schools are two separate entities. Policy making at the school level happens at the school committee and through the school superintendent. There is a coalition for equity representative on the DEIB Committee. It is important that this committee continues maintain a good working relationship with the schools in Northborough.

5. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee Recommendations and Next Steps

Ms. Meekins provided a brief update on what has transpired since the ADHOC committee has finished its work. Recommendations were made to the Board of Selectmen, the first of which was to create a permanent committee, which they did. Another item was to complete an ADA self-evaluation and transition plan to ensure that the town meets the requirements under Title 2 of the ADA. The plan assesses the public buildings and public park spaces from an ADA compliance perspective and then drafts up a road map of deficiencies and recommends necessary changes to the town. The completion of the ADA Self Evaluation and Transition plan will qualify the town to apply for construction grant funding from the Massachusetts Office of Disability to assist in bringing those facilities up to compliance. The town is currently speaking with vendors to complete the Self Evaluation and Transition Plan.

Ms. Moore had the following questions:

- How many proposals received? Ms. Meekins replied that there were three others, but this vendor had good references and was the most responsive.
- Can we include IT? Ms. Meekins thought that was a good idea and will include it.
- Does this include trails? Ms. Meeks replied no, just public buildings and parks/playgrounds
- What about voting access? Ms. Meekins responded that because voting takes place at the middle school, it is school property.

Mr. Tan asked if the proposal included manhours? Ms. Meekins replied that she worked with the DPW Director and Facilities Manager on the request and they have confirmed that this vendor will be physically on sight at each of the locations.

Ms. Meekins mentioned other items include in the recommendations:



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- Complete review of all job descriptions, making sure that they are in compliance with respect to language. This process was done last year.
- Juneteenth was included in contract negotiations and is in the contracts that have settled.
- A formal request was made to the Board of Selectmen for funding to complete the DEI strategic Plan. There is a placeholder on the capital plan and a request has been made to be part of the ARPA process.

Regarding next steps, Ms. Meekins asked if members can review the recommendations and think about the things they would like the committee to focus on for discussion at the next meeting.

Ms. Wrighting would like to see a process for putting out public statements. She would also like to see town recognition of holidays. Ms. Moore agreed that there should be a more inclusive calendar of events. She noted that the disability community has a lot of things going on, which should be included in the calendar. Ms. Meekins noted that the town put up a Menorah last year and it did go up again this year. Ms. Meekins also mentioned that the Senior Center held a Diwali celebration.

6. Meeting Schedule

Ms. Meekins would like to see this committee meet monthly on a recurring basis. No decision was mad with respect to the meeting schedule.

7. Any other business to come before the Committee

There being no further business before the Committee.

8. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 6:50 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Becca Meekins
Assistant Town Administrator