

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Asst. Town Administrator Becca Meekins
Tim Kaelin
Shika Holland
Diedra Wrighting
Mary Leach
Lauren Bailey Jones
Mariam Ibrahim

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Virginia Simms-George

OPEN AND WELCOME FROM CHAIRMAN Tim Kaelin:

Mr. Kaelin welcomed the committee for a meeting of the Northborough Diversity & Inclusion Committee Meeting on October 21, 2021, at approximately 7:05pm.

Mr. Kaelin conducted a roll call of present members.

Ms. Meekins: Pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021; a Bill Relative to Extending Certain COVID-19 Measures Adopted During the State of Emergency; signed into law June 16, 2021; this meeting will be conducted via remote participation. No in-person attendance by members of the public will be permitted. This meeting will be streamed live but will not have an option for public participation. To view or listen only, please visit the Town of Northborough's web page which will bring you to the Town of Northborough's You Tube link.

Approval of September 16, 2021, Meeting Minutes:

Motion to approve: Diedra Wrighting

Seconded: Becca Meekins

Roll call vote: Shika Holland; aye; Diedra Wrighting; aye; Becca Meekins; aye; Lauren Bailey Jones: abstain; Mary Leach; aye; Tim Kaelin; aye. Minutes approved.

Review and Discuss Community Listening Session

Tim felt that the listening session went very well. It is important for community members to hear stories like the ones told during the session. Mary Leach agreed and felt it was important to hear the stories of our community members. Mary asked how many attendees there were. Becca responded that there were approximately 20 attendees, and of those, 7 or 8 of them participated in the discussion. The Committee is hopeful that in the future, they can host more listening sessions.

Lauren asked about whether the group felt that the information from the listening sessions could inform the community engagement recommendations from the committee to the Board of Selectmen. Mary Leach stated that she felt that the listening session solidified the direction that the group is headed in. Shika agreed that she felt there is an appetite in the community to continue the conversation around diversity, equity, and inclusion. Tim also felt that perhaps the committee should hold listening sessions once per quarter if the Board chooses to move forward with creating a permanent committee.

Mariam Ibrahim joined the meeting at 7:17pm.

The Committee thanked Shika for her work on the Facebook page and recommended that we use that moving forward to communicate future listening sessions. Shika asked about whether the committee could get some basic training around diversity, equity, and inclusion so that the group can feel more comfortable discussing and addressing things that come up in meetings or listening sessions. Diedra recommended the book entitled “We Can’t Talk About That At Work” by Mary Frances Winters which helps prepare folks for those difficult discussions. Diedra’s takeaway from the book and from the listening session is the importance of building trust with community members so that they feel comfortable sharing.

Mariam and other committee members agreed that it would be important to better define future listening sessions by topic to get the information that the committee is seeking to move the needle on their various goals. Mariam also reiterated that she felt getting some baseline training for the committee would be important moving forward. Tim suggested added public comment to our regularly scheduled meetings so that folks can interact with the group on a more regular basis. Lauren did mention that because of Open Meeting Law, there are challenges to having full discussions during public comments.

There was discussion about the celebration of the diverse cultures in town and how best to achieve that. Mary Leach recommended reaching back out to the Community Affairs Committee to assist with planning.

Discuss Final Recommendations for Board of Selectmen

Tim had planned on going back through the meetings with departments and outlining the recommendations that way. Shika mentioned that the Committee had initially divided the work into categories, and she thought that the discussions with departments may easily fit into those categories. Mariam agreed that there would likely be three or four categories that would frame the recommendations. Diedra asked whether we would supplement the report with real data that may not have come out of the discussions. Becca recommended that the Committee utilize an outline and a presentation to the Board of Selectmen during the actual meeting. To supplement that discussion, the committee could prepare a full report that the Board could consume outside of the meeting, but that would provide more detail on the recommendations set forth in the meeting. The committee agreed on that process. Becca mentioned that she has a draft Scope for the committee to review tonight and hopes to have a draft outline of recommendations to the committee for the next meeting.

Becca let the committee know that the tentative date for the Board of Selectmen presentation will be January 24, 2022. She shared the draft scope for the permanent committee with the group. The group briefly discussed the draft and will finalize the draft at the next meeting.

Upcoming Meeting Schedule:

Becca informed the committee that the Community Affairs Committee will be attending a future meeting, likely in November, to finalize the discussion about the recommended event schedule. Shika asked whether the remaining meetings would be used to finalize the recommendations. Tim and Becca answered yes, the final meetings in November and December would be heavily focused on the report and the final presentation and recommendations to the Board of Selectmen.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion to adjourn made by Mariam Ibrahimi

Motion seconded by Becca Meekins

Roll call as follows:

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|--------------------|-------------------|
| Ms. Meekins: Aye | Ms. Ibrahimi: Aye |
| Ms. Leach: Aye | |
| Ms. Wrighting: Aye | |
| Ms. Holland: Aye | |
| Mr. Kaelin: Aye | |

Meeting is adjourned at 8:08 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

by Becca Meekins

Northborough Diversity & Inclusion Committee