

## Background and Introduction

On May 25, 2020, a white Minneapolis police officer murdered George Floyd, a 46-year-old African American man. This incident sparked protests across our nation over the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor in Louisville, Kentucky, and Ahmaud Arbery in Brunswick, Georgia, and many others. Protests continued through the summer in response to the institutional racism still engrained in our society. Moved by these events, on August 10, 2020, the Northborough Board of Selectmen voted to establish a Diversity and Inclusion Committee. The Committee consisted of a diverse group of Northborough residents who are representative of the town population with the following charge:

- Review any existing policies and procedures currently in place within the Town of Northborough related to diversity and inclusion.
- The Committee will offer opportunities for community engagement and input through interviews, public listening sessions, surveys, and social media.
- Identify potential areas for improvement based on relevant local, state, and national research and experts on best practices.
- Provide quarterly updates to the Board of Selectmen on the progress being made.
- Submit a written report detailing the findings and recommendations of the Committee to the Board of Selectmen within 12 months from the date of the Committee's first meeting.

By November of 2020, the Committee members were chosen by the Board of Selectmen and include:

**Tim Kaelin:** Tim Kaelin grew up in Northborough, has served on the Board of Selectmen, and chairs the Diversity and Inclusion Committee. Tim has worked in the field of diversity and inclusion training alongside Verna Myers, a well-known activist, influencer, thought leader and author in the field of diversity and inclusion.

**Mariam Ibrahimi:** Mariam grew up in Northborough and graduated from ARHS in 2019. She recently ran for Regional School Committee and is the Vice-Chair of the Diversity and Inclusion Committee. She is currently a junior in college and has strong roots in local activism.

**Shika Holland:** Shika is passionate about the betterment of our community and has been excited to serve on the Diversity and Inclusion Committee. Shika is a newer resident of Northborough and lives with her husband, son, and young daughter.

**Mary Leach:** Mary is a client relations specialist and Realtor and has been a resident of Northborough since 1999. She has two children, now 22 and 24, who both graduated from ARHS.

**Virginia Simms George:** Virginia is a long-time resident of Northborough and has served on many different Boards and Committees. She currently serves on the Assabet Valley Regional School Committee, and the Personnel Board.

**Lauren Bailey Jones:** Lauren has lived in Northborough for four years and has served on the Northborough School Committee for the past three years. She is currently part of the school district's Coalition for Equity and is the school Committee representative on the Diversity and Inclusion Committee.

**Diedra Wrighting:** Diedra has lived in Northborough for five years with her husband and her sons. She has been an active member of the community serving in number of different ways.

**Hamilton Soriano:** Hamilton Soriano works in financial advising and had been an active member of the community for the last few years. He served as a Library Trustee, as well as a member of the Diversity and Inclusion Committee. Hamilton's participation was instrumental in the initial stages of our Committee's work. Unfortunately for us, Hamilton relocated to Worcester during his term and could no longer serve on the Committee. We thank him for his service and dedication to Northborough and wish him good luck in Worcester.

**Becca Meekins:** Becca is Northborough's Assistant Town Administrator and represents the town administration on the Diversity and Inclusion Committee.

The importance of the diverse representation shown on the Diversity and Inclusion Committee cannot be overstated. Each member comes with a diverse background. There are various ethnicities, races, sexual orientations, abilities, and genders represented on our Committee. The benefit of diverse voices has been established both quantitatively and qualitatively by science. A 2015 McKinsey report on 366 public companies found that those in the top quartile for ethnic and racial diversity in management were 35% more likely to have financial returns above their industry mean, and those in the top quartile for gender diversity were 15% more likely to have return above the industry mean. In more recent years, the science has become clear: working with people who are different forces us to overcome stale ways of thinking and sharpens our performance. Diversity breeds innovation which leads us to change. Change allows us to become the best version of our collective selves.

## Timeline and Overview of Work

Beginning in December of 2020, the Diversity and Inclusion Committee embarked on a path to achieve the goals set forth by the Board of Selectmen in August of 2020. Initially, we approached our work as a comprehensive needs assessment of the community. Did the stakeholders have the resources they needed to make real impactful change? Did they know what type of change needed to be made? Were there gaps in our existing service delivery models? The needs assessment prompted us to begin meeting with various town departments and community stakeholders in February of 2021. The participants of the meetings were transparent about their practices and experiences, and open to feedback and recommendations from the Committee. In fact, the Committee found that many of the stakeholders desired recommendations on improving their departments or organizations through a diversity and inclusion lens. Much information was traded between the Committee and the stakeholders during these meetings. While we are not able to make specific recommendations related to all the following highlights, we feel it is important for the Board of Selectmen to see an overview of the diversity of the discussions that were had during the various meetings.

Below is a visual representation of our meetings and work, along with a summary of each meeting.

PROGRESS OF THE

# D&I COMMITTEE



## AUGUST 2020

The committee was established by the Board of Selectmen and its charge was finalized

## NOVEMBER 2020

Nine committee members were appointed to the committee

## DECEMBER 2020

Virtual bi-weekly committee meetings began

## JANUARY 2021

Set a plan to meet with various town departments to identify opportunities to partner

## FEBRUARY 2021

Met with Police Chief Lyver and also conducted a D&I focused survey

## APRIL 2021

Met with Fire Chief Parenti

## MAY 2021

Met with Superintendent Martineau and Rhonda Webb. We also issued a statement re: AAPI violence.

## JUNE 2021

Met with the Community Affairs committee, Recreation Dept, Library, and Sr. Center. We also issued a statement re: Juneteenth

## AUGUST 2021

Met with Town Administrator John Coderre and the Historic District Commission

## SEPTEMBER 2021

Engaged the community at the Applefest Fireworks and launched a Facebook group (>100 members in 1 week)  
Hosted our first community listening session!

## OCTOBER- DECEMBER 2021

Finalize the D&I recommendations for Northborough

## JANUARY 2022

Present the recommendations to the Board of Selectmen

OUR COMMITTEE IS IN PLACE FOR A ONE YEAR TERM TO DRAFT D&I RECOMMENDATIONS TO BE PRESENTED TO THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN IN 2022

**February 4, 2021: Meet with Police Chief Bill Lyver. Main Takeaways:**

- Recruitment challenges. Currently no female or officers of color
- Physical assessment presents challenges for female recruits
- Living radius – 15 miles from border of Northborough required
- Tattoo policy
- Northborough had the first female police officer hired as a patrol officer in 1973 (Linda Richardson). She was the first in the country to become a female patrol officer!

**March 4, 2021: Meet with Joseph Heiland of the Greater Burroughs YMCA**

- Potential partnerships with Senior Center or Library
- Use of pool at Y through partnership with Sr. Center
- Will help push survey to members

Survey goes out in early March and is due back by late March. Over 700 engagements.

**April 1, 2021: Meet with Chief David Parenti of the Fire Department**

- Progress on radius for living – used to be 15 miles door to door, now expanded to borders. Collective bargaining contract updated 2016/2017.
- Education requirements to become a Paramedic as town runs Advanced Life Support services (change has been made in last several months to cover part of the cost of paramedic school for recruits to make it more financially reasonable for new recruits to join)
- No female firefighters on department. Facility makes it difficult. Benefit of new facility.

**May 6, 2021: Superintendent Martineau and Rhoda Webb**

- Vision 2020 Program includes work of equity and inclusion
- Mascot Study Group
- Diverse electives at ARHS that many districts cannot offer \*including languages at a younger age\*
- Challenges around recruitment and retaining a diverse staff. “Deans of Diversity”
- United response to tragedy between Town and School – can the Diversity and Inclusion Committee bridge that gap?

**June 3, 2021: Community Affairs Committee and Recreation Director, Allie Lane**

- More diverse representation of celebratory events during holidays and events in general
- Menorah on the Common; Kwanzaa; etc.
- Advertising of events on the Common – would like to work with the Diversity and Inclusion Committee on coming up with a calendar of diverse events that the CAC can work on for the upcoming season
- Fully accessible walking path around the Senior Center
- Programming for kids around Diversity and Inclusion or training for counselors around Diversity and Inclusion
- Construction at Assabet to create fully accessible park

**July 1, 2021: Jenn Bruneau Library Director, and Liz Tretiak Senior Center Director**

- Dewey Decimal System change due to biases/discrimination in organization of books
- Events with partner libraries for diverse opportunities
- Hiring – tends to be white, highly educated, women. Would love ideas to expand that.
- Offers diverse programming (LGBTQ awareness) and disability sensitivity training
- Similar recruitment issues and desire for more training

**August 5, 2021: John Coderre, Town Administrator**

- Recruitment challenges are industry wide
- Local managers have been working for several years to create a pipeline for local government employees.
- Due to negative impacts of social media, fewer people are choosing forward facing public service careers and even positions that may not have previously been forward facing, such as department heads, have become so, adding significant pressures on staff.

**September 2, 2021: Historic District Commission**

- Potential for event partnership with Library to focus on Northborough specific history.

**September 30, 2021:** Committee hosts Public Listening Session for community members to interact directly with members of the Committee and share experiences. Approximately 20 residents attended and about 8 participated in the discussion. The listening session was an opportunity for the Committee to have a direct dialogue with residents and business owners about their own experiences around diversity and inclusion in Northborough. From those discussions, we were able to justify and, in some cases, expand specific recommendations made to the Board included in this report.

## Public Outreach

Throughout the course of the year, the Committee established two opportunities for direct contact/feedback from community members. The two methods used were the survey and the public listening session. Early in the process, the Committee agreed that it needed some baseline data from the community to establish a launching pad for future discussions and ultimately, recommendations.

In February 2021 the D&I Committee released a survey to the community so that we could use the results of the survey to establish a baseline for understanding Northborough's attitudes, reactions and opinions about diversity, equity, and inclusion. Part of the D&I Committee's charge is to engage with the community and the committee believed that a survey was an effective way to begin engaging with the residents of Northborough.

The D&I Committee spent a considerable amount of time considering what the format of the survey should be and what questions would be best to include. The Committee agreed on a 15-question survey that consisted of:

- 1 filter question – this was the first question on the survey. It was a Yes or No question that asked whether the respondent lived in Northborough. If the respondent answered No, then the

survey ended. If a respondent answered Yes, they were allowed to continue with the survey. This is how we tried to keep all respondents as Northborough residents.

- 9 DEI questions – these questions were on the Likert scale. Likert scale questions are on a 5-point scale. The scale is a range that generally runs from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree”.
- 5 demographic questions – these questions would allow the survey data to be segmented into different categories (gender, race, school district, etc.)

The survey was hosted on Survey Monkey within Northborough’s town account. The survey was shared with the public through a link that was shared on Facebook, published in the Community Advocate, shared on the town website, sent to residents through the town email and word of mouth among residents.

Overall, the survey received 773 responses. Out of those 773 respondents, 672 were residents of Northborough and were given the opportunity to complete the survey. We were pleased with the response from the public and very appreciative of those who took the time to complete the survey.

While we are excited by the results of the survey, it does need to be stated that the survey and the review of the data is in no way a scientific analysis.

The survey did bring to light a few attitudes in our community around DEI. When cleaning the survey data for analysis, two groups were created. The first group is BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) and White. This was done so we could see if there was a difference between the attitudes and beliefs of people who represent most of the population in our community (in 2019 White people made up 82.7% of the population in Northborough) and those who are in the minority.

For each question, the average response and the standard deviation of the responses was calculated. For clarity, the answers to the questions were given the following numerical value:

- Strongly Agree = 1
- Agree = 2
- Neither agree nor disagree (neutral) = 3
- Disagree = 4
- Strongly Disagree = 5

Below are the results of the survey.

Race	Question	Avg Respon...	Std Dev	Race
BIPOC	Activities And Events	2.35	1.13	
	All Backgrounds And Beliefs In Activities And E..	2.67	1.20	
	Cultures And Backgrounds Respected	2.45	1.13	
	Different Are Treated Fairly	2.57	1.15	
	Disabilities	2.49	1.39	
	I feel included and respected	2.44	1.14	
	My Background And Cultural	2.43	1.23	
	Strong Leadership Support Of Diversity And Inclusion	3.02	1.07	
	The Town address diversity, equity, and incl..	2.28	1.42	
	Activities And Events	1.89	0.74	
White	All Backgrounds And Beliefs In Activities And E..	2.46	0.93	
	Cultures And Backgrounds Respected	2.36	0.87	
	Different Are Treated Fairly	2.47	0.89	
	Disabilities	2.48	1.29	
	I feel included and respected	1.96	0.74	
	My Background And Cultural	2.02	0.85	
	Strong Leadership Support Of Diversity And Inclusion	2.77	0.81	
	The Town address diversity, equity, and incl..	2.22	1.02	



The average responses in both groups generally ranged from 2 (agree) to 3 (Neither Agree nor Disagree/Neutral). In the BIPOC groups the average responses ranged from 2.28 to 3.02. In the White group responses ranged from 1.89-2.77. There is a difference (reminder – this is not a scientific analysis) between the groups. This is important because it shows that the majority group sees DEI in town in better shape than the minority group.

Also interesting is that the Standard Deviations in each group are very different. The standard deviation is a measure of how disperse the answers to each question are. This helps explain how close all the answers are to average. The larger the standard deviation the further the answers are from the average (either over or under the average). In the majority group, 7 out of 9 standard deviations are below 1, which shows that there was a general agreement about the average. Whereas in the BIPOC group all of the standard deviations were above 1 that could mean that there was some difference of opinion in some of the questions. This can be seen in the chart above in the red sections on the graph. Red represents Strongly Disagree. The White group had very few Strongly Disagree answers whereas in the BIPOC the range of Strongly Disagree answers is 4.4% up to 14.89%.

These differences can be interpreted to mean that Northborough, as a community, has room for improvement in our diversity, equity and inclusion. It is recommended that there is a follow-up survey conducted in 12-18 months to see if there are any improvements, especially if the Board of Selectmen decide to implement any of the D&I Committee's recommendations. It is also recommended that when the follow-up survey is complete that a scientific analysis is done on both the new survey data set but also from this current survey data set. By conducting a thorough analysis of each data set, comparisons between the survey's will be able to be made with confidence.

During the public listening session, the Committee was able to have a direct dialogue with participating members of the community. Many of the ideas and topics of discussion aligned with the recommendations that the Committee had already established as priorities. Overall, much of the discussion was focused on representation of diverse cultures in town sponsored activities. Some specific ideas included expanding cultural celebrations throughout the year, and the installation of a cricket field for recreational purposes. In addition, there was significant discussion about residents with disabilities and the infrastructure and resources provided to that population. While many of the suggestions or ideas were already in motion, either as part of the Committee's process, or separate from the Committee but within regular town operations, listening sessions are a tool that the Committee would like to continue to use in the future. The direct evidence heard from participants during that listening session prompted the Committee to include additional recommendations set forth in this document, such as the pursuit of the Massachusetts Office on Disability Grant for Self-Evaluation and Transition Plans. The information gathered through the public listening session and the survey helped to shape and inform the Committee's recommendations to the Board of Selectmen.

## Direct Actions Taken by the Committee

Throughout the course of its work, the Committee took many public actions. We felt that activism and advocacy were important in our role on the Diversity and Inclusion Committee. This means speaking out publicly against injustice and practicing anti-racism. On March 22, 2021, the Diversity and Inclusion Committee put out a statement in solidarity with the Asian-American and Pacific Islanders community

amidst a rise in violence against members of the AAPI community. You can read that statement posted here: <https://www.town.northborough.ma.us/diversity-and-inclusion-Committee/pages/news-announcements>. On June 19, 2021, the Committee put out a statement highlighting the importance of celebrating June 19<sup>th</sup> as a day of liberation commemorating the end of slavery in the United States. You can read that statement here: <https://www.town.northborough.ma.us/diversity-and-inclusion-Committee/pages/news-announcements>.

Over the summer of 2021, the Committee developed a Facebook group in order to provide a more direct means of communicating with our community. The page would give the Committee the ability to build a digital footprint without a high demand on resources, would allow us to engage with social media users, and would provide us with a way to communicate in a timely manner to our community members. In addition, the page would provide a space for authentic stories and information to be shared. Prior to establishing the page, the Committee drafted guidelines for the page which included terms of use and moderation of content. Those terms of use can be viewed on our Facebook page at: [https://www.facebook.com/groups/northboroughDiversity and Inclusion](https://www.facebook.com/groups/northboroughDiversity%20and%20Inclusion). Thus far, the Facebook page has been an extremely useful tool for the Committee to communicate with the public, share stories, ideas, and spread awareness of important topics and events throughout town. It is our goal to continue utilizing the Facebook page and to expand to other social media platforms in the future.

# Diversity and Inclusion Social Media Presence

Strategy: Develop a consistent cadence of social media posts related to the Diversity and Inclusion in the Town of Northborough\*

DE&I Information	Stories in Northborough	Community Engagement	Evergreen Content
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is DE&amp;I?</li> <li>• Demographics from the town</li> <li>• Historical info re: Northborough and DE&amp;I</li> <li>• Survey Data- a "We've Heard You" series to include:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verbatims</li> <li>• Data points</li> <li>• Overall findings</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Highlight local diverse businesses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Video snippets from residents               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why is DE&amp;I important to you?</li> <li>• How are you committed to a more inclusive <a href="#">NBoro?</a></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Quotes from residents               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus group verbatims</li> <li>• Support from local businesses</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote DE&amp;I committee events</li> <li>• Educate on upcoming holidays/ "awareness" months</li> <li>• Issue a response to important current news (local/ national/ international)</li> <li>• Document the <a href="#">21 day</a> challenge/ other activities</li> <li>• Post pictures from events (future state)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feel good content               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self Care</li> <li>• Books/ Movies to Watch</li> <li>• Cultural Recipes</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Reshare existing content- other related pages</li> <li>• Help promote other town's DE&amp;I efforts (to fill gaps when we do not have content)</li> </ul>
<p>Pros:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Build a digital footprint</li> <li>- Budget friendly</li> <li>- Reach social media users</li> <li>- Messaging is timely</li> </ul>	<p>Cons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Needs a moderator to manage               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consistently post!</li> <li>- Build following</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Social media can limit reach</li> </ul>	<p>Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Create a Facebook Group Name</li> <li>- Assign moderator(s)</li> <li>- Develop a content calendar</li> <li>- Align with Northborough BOS</li> </ul>	

\*Recommend launching on Facebook and can consider other social media platforms in the future

## Recommendations

The Committee is excited to present the Board of Selectmen with its final recommendations for future work around diversity, equity, and inclusion. There are five main categories of recommendations for the Board of Selectmen, each with additional detail and steps included in the respective categories. Those are: establish a permanent diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging Committee; immediate actions for the Board of Selectmen to take; staffing, recruitment, and training; community engagement and sense of belonging; strategic planning and grant programs.

1. Establish a Permanent Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Committee to Serve as an Advisory Committee to the Board of Selectmen

The current Diversity and Inclusion Committee requests that the Board of Selectmen establish a permanent advisory Committee to the Board of Selectmen hereby known as the Northborough Committee for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging, and to adopt the recommended draft charge attached to this report as “Northborough Committee for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Charge”.

Over the last year, it has become abundantly clear to the Committee, through discussions with community members, various town departments, and the continued nationwide oppression of marginalized groups, that there is more work to be done. Results of the survey and the listening session indicate that there is a strong appetite for an ongoing discussion around diversity, equity, and inclusion in the community. Over the last year, the Committee has tried to act as an advocacy group for marginalized communities, as a resource to town departments and Committees, and has provided support for internal and external stakeholders. During meetings, we were often asked for ideas and recommendations on how to inspire a culture of belonging and create spaces for increased representation of marginalized communities. There is a strong desire to do more and to be better, but many people need and want guidance.

In addition to the overwhelming appetite to continue this work from the community, we are also making several recommendations to the Board of Selectmen that require future oversight (partnerships, projects, plans). It is our hope that the Board will establish a permanent advisory Committee to oversee those future projects and provide advice and recommendations to the Board of Selectmen on an ongoing basis.

2. Immediate Actions for the Board of Selectmen

The following recommendations include short-term changes that the Board of Selectmen can make that have a long-term impact. The following two recommendations came up during our listening session with the public as well.

- a. **Recognition of Juneteenth as a local holiday**

In June of 2021, President Biden signed a bill to recognize Juneteenth, the celebration to commemorate the end of slavery in the United States, as a federal holiday. June 19, 2021, marked the 156<sup>th</sup> year since Juneteenth originated and the first year that it was celebrated as a federal holiday. Also known as

Freedom Day, Jubilee Day, Liberation Day, and Emancipation Day, Juneteenth commemorates the end of slavery in the United States. On September 22, 1862, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation that declared that enslaved people “shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free.” Though slavery had been outlawed, federal troops were deployed to enforce the release of slaves. It was, thus, not until almost two and a half years later that slaves in the farthest parts of the country became free. The following year, in 1865, freedmen in Galveston, Texas organized the first Juneteenth celebration.

Since then, annually, African Americans have celebrated Juneteenth with food, festivals, and fellowship. By making Juneteenth a federal holiday, President Joe Biden has made this day significant for ALL Americans. This act signals a national recognition of our past, an opportunity for us to openly acknowledge that slavery was an atrocity that has lasting impacts of inequity and exclusion in our society today. Justice and equity for Black people in our communities is an ongoing work that requires the contribution of each community member. In our town, we are proud to say that we are in step with the nation as we make strides to promote equity and inclusion. The Diversity and Inclusion Committee is now asking the Board of Selectmen to do the same for the Northborough Community and recognize Juneteenth as a holiday to be celebrated by all Americans.

To recognize Juneteenth locally, Section 1-64-110 of the Personnel Bylaw will need to be modified to include Juneteenth in the list of holidays. We hope that the Board will support this change at Town Meeting in the Spring.

#### **b. Permanently renaming and recognizing Columbus Day as Indigenous Peoples’ Day**

Seven U.S. States, and over 120 U.S. cities currently recognize Indigenous Peoples’ Day. Over 20 cities and towns in Massachusetts recognize Indigenous Peoples’ Day, in addition to various school districts. In October of 2021, President Biden signed a presidential proclamation declaring October 11, 2021, as Indigenous Peoples’ Day.

The recognition of Indigenous Peoples’ Day is about more than a name change. The change represents a recognition of Indigenous humanity, and a recognition of the brutal colonization of an entire land of people. Columbus Day was first enshrined as a federal holiday in 1934, initially to appreciate and recognize the mistreatment of Italian Americans. However, upon deeper inspection, the historical representation of Italian heritage by naming a day of recognition after Christopher Columbus is misplaced. Columbus was sailing for the Spanish monarchy when he first came upon the Americas in the 1400s, because Italy would not fund his colonial expedition.

The idea of renaming Columbus Day was first introduced by Indigenous peoples at a United Nations conference in 1977. South Dakota became the first state to replace Columbus Day with Indigenous Peoples’ Day in 1989, marking 1990 the first year it was celebrated in the United States.

By renaming Columbus Day as Indigenous Peoples’ Day, our local community can rectify the historical rhetoric around the “discovery” of America and recognize that Indigenous people were here first.

The overwhelming sentiment from members of the Committee, as well as members of the community who we spoke with was the importance of recognizing that words do matter. The words that we use to describe our history and important. One staff member provided the Committee with a poignant anecdote about a recent recruitment experience. There was a prospective employee who was brought into the interview process with the town for a vacant position. When asked why they were interested in working

for Northborough, the prospective employee referenced the public statement made by the Board of Selectmen after the murder of George Floyd. This example proves that the actions that the Board of Selectmen has already taken and the words that we all choose to use to describe the actions and experiences of others matter. This prospective employee was drawn to Northborough because of the Board's statements and your willingness to speak out against injustice.

To modify the local holiday schedule and to permanently change Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples' Day, the list of holidays in Section 1-64-110 of the Personnel Bylaw will need to be changed. We hope that the Board will support this change at Town Meeting in the Spring.

### 3. Staffing, Recruitment and Training

Many of the discussions had with town staff spoke to the Town's ability to recruit and retain qualified employees that are representative of the Northborough community that they serve. Below are recommendations that work towards recruiting and retaining a highly qualified, representative, and educated workforce.

- a. Review all job descriptions to ensure that requirements of position are current based on the market and the work; review all positions to ensure salary is comparable and competitive with the market.**

This recommendation we learned is currently being addressed by existing town staff. Over the summer of 2021, the town entered into an agreement with the Edward J. Collins Center for Public Management out of UMass Boston, to conduct a full Classification and Compensation Analysis and Report. This process is currently underway at the direction of the Personnel Board and staff. This project will provide an exhaustive review of all job descriptions for positions within the existing Classification Schedule, as well as a market survey to analyze the current salary ranges for those positions. This will provide the town with an updated list of accurate job descriptions and a competitive and comparable salary range for those positions which will allow the town to offer competitive salaries and benefits to the most qualified candidates.

- b. Develop relationship with Public Safety Academy Schools (Fitchburg State University Police Program)**

The Police Department is aware of the 5-year academy at Fitchburg State University which allows candidates to pursue their bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice, a Massachusetts Police Training Certification required to become a full-time Massachusetts municipal police officer, and a master's degree in Criminal Justice. Developing an ongoing relationship with the academy could install a communication pipeline and provide the town with highly educated, qualified and academy trained police officers. The Police Chief is aware of this recommendation and has contacted representatives from the Fitchburg State University Police Program. He will continue to nurture that relationship for potential qualified, diverse recruits coming out of that program.

- c. Continued support for the Fire Station Building Project which will allow for more aggressive recruitment of female Firefighter/Paramedics with separate male and female quarters within the building.**

The Fire Station Building Project has been delayed by the seller. However, it is our understanding that the project is now moving forward again. This project will allow for separate male and female living quarters, which the current station does not have. The current station was built almost 45 years ago and was built to serve a population of fewer than 10,000 residents. Although the station has been well maintained, it no longer adequately serves the needs of the town; as the town's population has increased by over 50%. The department has evolved from a part-time volunteer staff to 22 full-time staff and has no accommodations for female firefighters. The Committee will continue to educate the public about why this project is needed to allow the town to further diversify its current Fire Department.

**d. Review of current recruitment policies and procedures, training requirements for staff, and develop a routine required training and leadership building calendar for all staff**

The review of existing policies, procedures, and hiring requirements and processes for all departments, as well as a comprehensive review of the training requirements and development of a training manual with estimated costs will require assistance from an outside vendor. Many of the goals set forth in this set of recommendations are different in nature but can be tied together through the lens of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging. One of the Committee's recommendations will request that the Board allow the Committee to pursue a Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Planning process which will, with a vendor's assistance, address the issues contained in this recommendation and draft a roadmap for the Committee and the Board to use moving forward. More detail on the strategic planning process can be found in recommendation #5.

Additionally, the Diversity and Inclusion Committee would like to thank Fire Chief David Parenti and the Board of Selectmen for their work on modifying the education reimbursement process for prospective Firefighter/Paramedics. Providing financial assistance to prospective employees removes economic barriers and increases the pool of candidates for vacant positions. This change will move the needle when it comes to diversifying town staff.

**4. Community Engagement and Sense of Belonging**

Our Committee focused heavily on creating spaces and opportunities for ongoing community engagement for diverse groups. This need was identified early on through our survey. The below recommendations are intended to create new and/or alternate opportunities for residents and community members to interact with one another and to recognize a more diverse calendar of events.

**a. We recommend that a calendar of events be developed by the Diversity and Inclusion Committee, in partnership with the Community Affairs Committee, to publicly recognize more diverse cultures within our community.**

Through our meetings with the Community Affairs Committee, they were open to and excited about the possibility of expanding the existing calendar of events that they currently oversee. The community events that occur in town are a place to bring community members together for a celebration, learning event, cause or demonstration. Below is a list of the current events that are held:

- Munchie Madness
- Town Clean-Up

- Summer Concert Series
- Jack O' Lantern Stroll
- Tree and Menorah Lighting Ceremony
- Applefest

We recommend that the Town of Northborough expand the community event offerings to include holidays and celebrations that are inclusive of the many cultures, religious backgrounds, and demographics in our community, such as:

- Chinese New Year (January/February)
- Ramadan (Spring)
- Eid (Spring/Summer)
- Juneteenth (June)
- Pride Month (June)
- Diwali (October/November)
- Recognizing additional holidays in December with Menorah and Tree Lighting
- Holi (March)

This will require ongoing collaboration between the Community Affairs Committee and the Diversity and Inclusion Committee. Additionally, we would like to recognize that the Community Affairs Committee is a volunteer Committee. The members of that Committee often have other responsibilities and have limited time to dedicate to developing various events throughout the year. While we are grateful for their excitement and willingness to work with the Committee on developing a full calendar of events, in recognition of the limited resources and volunteers that they have, we also would recommend that the Board of Selectmen adopt a formal Town Common Use Policy which will allow for inclusive use of the Town Common for various cultural events that may be organized by community members.

The recommended draft Town Common Use Policy is attached to this document for your review.

- b. We recommend that the Town of Northborough support the creation of a Lyceum group with an appointment liaison from the Diversity and Inclusion Committee to work in partnership with the Schools Coalition for Equity, and the Library to develop a listening/workshop series for the community.**

Historically, Northborough participated in an educational community gathering called a Lyceum. These gatherings were opportunities for adult education and discussion. In the 1800s, these Lycea brought notable speakers to Northborough, such as Frederick Douglas. We have spoken to members of the Coalition for Equity, as well as the Library, and they are excited about the prospect of developing a listening series for community members to come together and learn about one another's culture and history.

- c. We recommend that the Town continue to explore opportunities for Town/School partnerships to create and disseminate united statements and messages to the community about local and national events of import.**

Events and tragedies are commonplace in our society - both locally and nationally – that necessitate a statement by leaders in the community. The school district will often use email communication for these types of statements, and the Town of Northborough does not yet have a system in place for making statements on diversity, equity, and inclusion. While the Diversity and Inclusion Committee did its best throughout the year to draft statements in response to national events, there will always be a time lag with the release of the information to the public due to Open Meeting Law requirements. We would like to continue to explore the possibility of a partnership with the schools that would allow for a unified statement in a timely manner in response to various tragedies and events. This may include a discussion about joint public relations staffing.

## 5. Strategic Planning and Grant Programs

### **a. ADA Accessibility Self Evaluation and Transition Plan Grant Program**

One of the overarching themes of our survey and listening session was a recognition that the town can do better when it comes to addressing the needs of our residents with disabilities. This ranges from issues with mobility along roads and streets, to accessibility of town owned buildings, to consideration of sensory limitations in public spaces. The list of possible improvements is endless, and with infinite resources and time, we may be able to achieve them all. Given the limited resources that the town does have, the Committee learned of a grant opportunity that can assist the town in first conducting a self-evaluation which would review existing town infrastructure from a legal accessibility standpoint. This self-evaluation will provide the town with cost estimates and a roadmap for ongoing improvements, a process which the Diversity and Inclusion Committee would be happy to assist with. Additionally, there is a construction grant that entities become eligible for following the completion of a self-evaluation.

It is the Committee's understanding that town staff has already applied for this year's round of grant funding through MOD. Grant notifications are due to occur in December of 2021. Should the town not receive the grant, we recommend that the Town apply for the Massachusetts Office on Disability ADA Self Evaluation and Transition Plan Grant Program during the next round of funding.

### **b. Pursue the completion of a Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan and allow the Diversity and Inclusion Committee and designated town staff to oversee that process and provide implementation recommendations to the Board of Selectmen.**

A strategic planning process will tie together many of the individual recommendations from above and will provide the town and the Committee with a road map moving forward on matters of diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging. The intent of the strategic planning process is to review policies, procedures, communication practices, overall agency culture, training, and leadership through a diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging lens. All recommendations for new programming, additional policy oversight and implementation included in the 5-Year Strategic Plan shall include detail on whether the existing resources from the town are adequate to manage any additional requirements. If not, detail on additional resources needed shall be included in the recommendations. (Additional staff, funding, infrastructure, etc.)

This 5-Year Strategic Plan will guide Northborough towards being a more inclusive community. Below are the items that should be included in the Statement of Work for this project. Many of them directly address other goals and recommendations that have come through the Committees work as expressed above. These items must be included in the Strategic Plan and Audit and should be considered the minimum

requirements. A more detailed Request for Proposals (RFP) will be developed by staff and the Diversity and Inclusion Committee should the Board of Selectmen take this recommendation.

- Conduct Assessment of Town’s workforce and compare to population and census data. Identify gaps. Provide areas that require improvement and make recommendations on how to implement positive change.
- Audit/Assessment of current policies and procedures as it relates to Diversity and Inclusion (include policies of all departments including public safety). Includes hiring (recruitment process, outreach/advertising, applicant tracking, selection process), internal and external communication, overall agency culture, professional development opportunities. Provide recommended changes or additions to improve overall outcomes.
- Conduct at least 1 survey of the public to gauge education level and belief systems around Diversity and Inclusion.
- Conduct at least 1 survey of town employees/elected and appointed bodies to gauge education level and belief systems around Diversity and Inclusion.
- Surveys should be used to inform at least 2 focus groups with members of the public and 2 focus groups with employees/elected and appointed members to gain more insight into public perception of Diversity and Inclusion – include aspects of organizational culture. Address findings in Strategic Plan document.
- Create a plan or guide for ongoing community outreach and education on topics of racial and social equity. Guide should include topics or events that may be of import to continue the conversation and provide educational opportunities and spread awareness to the general public. Include cost estimates. This will be used to inform the creation and work of the Lyceum.
- Training – Develop Diversity and Inclusion Training Manual/Plan for staff that is easy to follow and implement with a “Train the Trainer” model so that staff can manage training on an ongoing basis or provide online training that is sufficient to meet the needs of the staff. Should include best practices that promote welcoming and inclusive environment. May provide recommended firms or trainings and should include pricing estimates.

## Conclusion

Lastly, the committee would be remiss if we did not place credit where credit is due. Our entire process was born out of an awareness brought about by the Black Lives Matter movement. A movement which began in 2013, by three radical female black organizers, Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi, in response to the acquittal of Trayvon Martin’s murderer, George Zimmerman. Since 2013, the Black Lives Matter movement has grown to a global network of over 40 chapters, working towards a world that recognizes the humanity of black lives, their contributions to society, and resilience in the face of oppression. We owe much of our knowledge and education on this topic to the Black Lives Matter

movement, who continuously works to propel the conversation around the institutional racism and violence that black and other under privileged populations endure on a regular basis.

The Diversity and Inclusion Committee would like to thank everyone who participated in this process with us over the last year. Thank you to our listening session participants who generously shared their thoughtful personal stories; to town staff and leadership who have willingly participated and been transparent and open to change; to other boards and committees who shared their passions for their work and who were excited about new opportunities; and to the Board of Selectmen for setting us on this journey to begin with and allowing us the opportunity to serve you and the Northborough Community. We hope that you've found our recommendations enlightening, and that you continue to support us in the next phase of the work.