

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Asst Town Administrator Becca Meekins  
Tim Kaelin  
Mary Leach  
Shika Holland  
Diedra Wrighting

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Lauren Bailey Jones  
Mariam Ibrahim  
Hamilton Soriano  
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 August 5, 2021, meeting just past 7 PM.

**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.

Mr. Kaelin conducted a roll call of present members.

**Approval of July 1, 2021, Minutes:**

Motion to approve: Diedra Wrighting

Seconded: Becca Meekins

Roll call vote: Shika Holland; aye; Mary Leach; aye; Diedra Wrighting; aye; Becca Meekins; aye; Tim Kaelin; abstain.

**Guest Speaker: Town Administrator John W. Coderre**

Tim Kaelin introduced John Coderre, the current Town Administrator. John has been working for the town for 19 years, has been Town Administrator for 13 years, and has lived in town for 24 years. Tim explained that the Committee had met with several different town departments and committees, and the goal of those meetings was to get an overview of the diversity and inclusion goals of those individual departments. The D&I Committee has been offering to act as a resource for all those departments, boards, and committees in achieving those goals moving forward.

Diedra asked John what his role is and who he works with in the town. John explained that he has always had a standing policy that he will meet with any group to talk about anything related to the town at any

time. John equated the towns form of government to a corporate structure, where the Board of Selectmen act as a Board of Directors, and they hire a CEO to manage the day to day. That person is typically the Town Administrator or Town Manager. John described his role as a coach and a coordinator to get the most out of his team. The goal is to get the pieces of the organization to function well together. From an external perspective, policy decisions are largely driven by the elected and appointed volunteers that work on board and committees like the Diversity & Inclusion Committee.

Tim explained to John that one of the themes that has come up through discussions with other departments is the hiring challenges that local governments are having. Tim asked if John was seeing the same challenges around hiring and recruiting. John explained that the issue is industry wide. The number one complaint from the membership of the Chamber of Commerce is that businesses are having trouble recruiting and retaining qualified people to work for them. Local government is facing those same challenges. Some Municipal positions have become more and more challenging to hire for, specifically Police. There is not an existing pipeline of people looking to enter the field of municipal government. Many municipalities end up poaching staff from one another because there are so few qualified candidates in the area.

John did express that he has worked with a future managers group to try and encourage people, specifically women and minorities, to enter the field, specifically as managers or assistant managers. He has also worked with Suffolk University to teach a finance course to encourage folks to try a career in municipal government. John added that the public sector does not have the same flexibilities that the private sector does when it comes to hiring and salary. The public sector is highly regulated and tends to be a unionized environment which limits flexibility to some extent.

John explained that Northborough has been in somewhat of a growth spurt in the last 10 years, but that has slowed down recently. The Town is largely built out, and there is not available land left for major residential growth. Commercial development is limited as well. There are a handful of parcels still available, but the Town is approaching build out as a mature community. This brings new challenges because it means that revenues are limited as a result and budgets need to be monitored and planned so that the town can continue to provide core services at a reasonable price point.

Tim asked if John could speak more to culture within the organization. John explained that people want to feel like they are a part of something bigger than themselves. People want to feel valuable and validated. John spoke about building trust in the organization between departments and committees and how important that is for consensus building and achieving goals.

Diedra asked more about the pipeline for future municipal government employees and mentioned that other departments have discussed this with the committee. She asked if there is a trajectory for types of positions that we need to fill in local government? If there is, how do we strengthen that as a pipeline and are there specific programs for that? John explained that local managers have tried to develop partnerships with local universities with Public Administration programs to provide information about a career in local government.

Mary Leach asked what the committee and community could do to make the local staff more diverse. John explained that when it comes to recruiting, it is the most difficult part of the job right now. The Town has gone out to recruit specifically for a female police officer, and the Town has been unable to find someone who meets the minimum requirements to do the job. If the Committee has suggestions to

increase the applicant pool, the town is all in favor of that. As a follow up, Mary Leach asked whether the hiring challenges have been exclusive to the Covid environment, or has it always been difficult to find qualified people. John explained that he feels it has been more difficult in the last 5 to 10 years, it has grown increasingly more difficult. Fewer and fewer people want to go into government, and Covid exacerbated that issue. John also spoke to the challenges of governing in an era where social media is very prevalent. Mary Leach asked if there were any openings right now. The town is currently hiring for a Senior Center Director, Police Officers, Dispatchers, Firefighters.

John Coderre exited the meeting at 8:03 p.m.

Tim Kaelin mentioned that the Committee will discuss Applefest at the next meeting.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

Motion to adjourn made by Becca Meekins

Motion seconded by Diedra Wrighting

Roll call as follows:

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

Meeting is adjourned at 8:13 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

by Becca Meekins

Northborough Diversity & Inclusion Committee