

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Selectman Tim Kaelin
Asst Town Administrator Becca Meekins
Mary Leach
Virginia Simms George
Lauren Bailey-Jones
Mariam Ibrahim
Shika Holland
Diedra Wrighting

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Hamilton Soriano

OPEN AND WELCOME FROM MEETING HOST, Assistant Town Administrator Becca Meekins:

Selectman Kaelin welcomed the committee for a meeting of the Northborough Diversity & Inclusion Committee Meeting on March 18th just past 7 PM.

Ms. Meekins: Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020, orders suspending certain provisions of the open meeting law General Laws Chapter 38 Section 18 in 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. 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.

Tim Kaelin conducted a verbal roll call of all present members. Becca Meekins followed with provisions of the open meeting law.

Approval of February 18, 2021 Minutes:

Motion to approve: Lauren Bailey-Jones

Seconded: Mariam Ibrahim.

Roll call vote: Marcy Leach: aye; Diedra Wrighting: abstain; Lauren Bailey-Jones: aye; Virginia Simms-George: aye; Shika Holland: abstain; Mariam Ibrahim: aye; Becca Meekins: aye; Tim Kaelin: aye; minutes are approved.

Survey and Results:

Tim notified the Committee that the survey has received 691 engagements with the survey, with a 79% completion rate. Committee members were happy with the level of engagement. Tim expressed that he was pleased people filled out the demographic information as well.

Becca informed the Committee that she had spoken to the YMCA representatives and they had pushed out the survey through their social media pages on Tuesday March 16th. Becca explained that most engagements with that survey through the YMCA social media page has likely already occurred and she asked the Committee how they felt about closing the survey on Friday the 19th of March.

Shika was comfortable with closing the survey on Friday, and Lauren added that she would like to see the group do one last reminder posting on social media ahead of closing the survey but agrees that the committee has likely received all the responses it will for this survey round. Tim explained that he would not have time this weekend to review the data and suggested that the Committee keep it open over the weekend. The Committee agreed with this decision.

Tim Kaelin wanted to inform the Committee about a few negative comments that were received on the survey. He explained that most of the negative comments were directed at him but wanted to give the Committee the opportunity to discuss it. There were comments that were criticizing the fact that the Committee is lead by a white male. Tim expressed to members that he was happy to step down from the Chair position if anyone else wanted the seat.

Virginia Simms George expressed her sympathies to Tim regarding that type of comment. She expressed that the best person to do this work is a white male. She told Tim that she was comfortable with him being Chair. Diedra Wrighting agreed with Virginia Simms George and added that the strength of the committee is the diversity of the committee. Mary voiced her agreement with Virginia and Diedra as well. Tim explained that it is unfair to place the burden of improving the system on those who have been negatively impacted by the system.

Community Listening Sessions:

Becca Meekins expressed that she felt Community Listening Sessions would be the next step in the public outreach process for the Committee. The group will need to see the results of the survey before discussing the sessions in detail, but Becca felt that it is necessary to give the community the opportunity to engage with the Committee on the issues that the Committee has discussed over the last few months. Requested the Committee's input on how the sessions would look in terms of whether we would invite a pool of people, or post an open invitation, conduct on zoom or in person.

Tim Kaelin expressed he would prefer not to have those conversations over Zoom.

Lauren Bailey-Jones would like to have focus groups being cognizant of Open Meeting Law. This would require multiple groups with less than a quorum of the committee to listen in.

Virginia would like to see the results of the survey before deciding on how to move forward.

Diedra conducted 3 focus groups early in the pandemic. She expressed that Zoom is a good medium because its easy to record, and people do not have to travel to attend, and may improve attendance. Lauren asked about whether the Committee should be concerned about biases in the discussion. Diedra

suggested we discuss our biases so we can call them out and be made aware of them. There should be a lot of structure to it. Mariam and Mary agreed with Diedra on utilizing Zoom. Tim clarified that he had concerns using Zoom for just a public hearing type of setting, not necessarily for focus groups. Diedra has a connection with William T. Lewis who conducts trainings in Brave Conversations. She will follow up with the group via email regarding information on these and she will ask if he would be willing to give members a brief training, so members are prepared to host sessions/focus groups.

Update on Medium and Long-Term Objectives:

Tim identified four topics for the group to investigate. Training, Hiring, Consultant, and Community Engagement. Tim asked the committee which topic they were each interested in digging into. Diedra explained that the School Diversity Group would like to meet with the group. Lauren Bailey-Jones would like to focus on community engagement as there is overlap there with the schools. Mariam will also work on community engagement. Becca and Mary will work on the consultants and DEI plan reviews. Virginia Simms George and Tim Kaelin will work on hiring, recruitment, and internal training. Diedra will share information on training for hiring. Shika is interested in training for the community.

Tim explained that now that the tasks are divided up, the recommendation report will come together quickly. Lauren Bailey-Jones recommended that the Committee have a check-in meeting with the Board of Selectmen during the summer with an update. Tim let the Committee know that he gives regular updates to the Selectmen during their meetings. The Committee was in agreement that there should be a 6-month check-in in July or August.

Questions for Fire Chief for next meeting:

Diedra volunteered to identify questions that we had asked Chief Lyver during his visit and align those questions for Chief Parenti but Deidra noted that it was very conversational and that may be better for what we're looking to get. Tim did ask Chief Parenti to touch on the importance of a new Fire Station. There are questions regarding training and cultural training as EMS responders do enter homes. Diedra would also like to touch on policies that need to be updated that can improve recruitment and any internal training that goes on. Becca will forward the general topics to the Chief so he can prepare for the April 1 meeting.

Future Guests:

Lauren Bailey-Jones will reach out to the School Diversity Committee to attend a joint meeting with the Diversity Committee in May. Guests will attend the first meeting of the month and the second meeting of the month will be for regular business of the board. Becca and Tim will work on scheduling the guests for the upcoming meetings.

New Business:

Tim asked the Committee if they wanted to make a statement in support of the AAPI Community. Mary Leach would like to loop back to the Lions Club sign in the center of town as it would be great for this type of thing. The Committee is in favor of putting out a statement from the Committee in support of the AAPI Community. Mariam Ibrahim and Tim Kaelin will put the statement together.

ADJOURNMENT:

Ms. Simms George moved the Committee vote to adjourn.

Diedra Wrighting seconded the motion.

Roll call taken as follows:

Ms. Meekins: Aye	Ms. Ibrahimi Aye
Ms. Simms George: Aye	Ms. Bailey-Jones: Aye
Ms. Leach: Aye	Selectman Kaelin: Aye
Ms. Holland: Aye	Ms. Wrighting: Aye

Meeting is adjourned at 8:46 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

by Becca Meekins

Northborough Diversity & Inclusion Committee