

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Chairman Tim Kaelin
Asst Town Administrator Becca Meekins
Lauren Bailey-Jones
Mariam Ibrahim
Shika Holland
Hamilton Soriano
Virginia Simms George
Mary Leach



MEMBERS ABSENT:

Diedra Wrighting

OPEN AND WELCOME FROM CHAIRMAN, Tim Kaelin:

Selectman Kaelin welcomed the committee for a meeting of the Northborough Diversity & Inclusion Committee Meeting on May 20th meeting 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 May 6, 2021 Minutes:

Motion to approve: Shika Holland

Seconded: Mariam Ibrahim

Roll call vote: Lauren Bailey-Jones: aye; Shika Holland: aye; Mariam Ibrahim: aye; Becca Meekins: aye; Virginia Simms-George; sustain; Hamilton Soriano; aye; Tim Kaelin: aye; minutes are approved.

Mary Leach joined the meeting at 7:05pm.

Survey and Results:

Tim shared the survey results on screen for the Committee to review and ask questions. Tim walked through the results shown on the Tableau screen and explained how the data breaks down. Information includes the average response for each question and the standard deviation for each question. Mary Leach asked about the racial breakdown of the respondents. Tim responded with the data breakdown

information. Virginia Simms-George stated that after reviewing the data and comments, she felt like education should be our priority moving forward. Shika Holland agreed. Shika mentioned that this is simply a baseline for where we are, and how can the community move the needle with the recommendations that we put before the Board. Committee members agreed.

Discussion of 21-Day Challenge:

Tim Kaelin discussed the 21-Day Challenge from Debbie Irving. Debbie Irving has been working in the DEI field for 15 years and wrote a book called “Waking Up White”. This challenge was introduced by her and it is an excellent tool that the Committee can use and that we can share with people who want to begin their own journey on DEI. The Challenge is free of charge for users. Tim mentioned that Diversity Equity and Inclusion professionals are very overworked and drained right now. Virginia Simms-George voiced concern that this is just the “flavor of the month” and she hopes that the changes we’re seeking are lasting and effective. Lauren Bailey-Jones asked about whether the Diversity & Inclusion Committee could have a Facebook group so that we can be a voice with people on social media and provide resources like this. Shika Holland expressed that she felt similarly and felt that the group needed to have a way to communicate directly with the community. Lauren stressed that the group needs to have a plan and strategy if we are going to move forward with this. Shika, Lauren and Hamilton will work on a plan to bring the Committee.

Update on Medium and Long-Term Objectives:

Mariam and Lauren went through the draft Community Engagement Goals and Recommendations that the group put together for the Board. Highlights include the Lyceum, recognition of non-Christian holidays and events, and ongoing communication and data collection for the community around DEI topics and goals. The group feels strongly that the Committee should conduct focus groups as soon as possible. Mariam mentioned that the group was planning to reach out to surrounding town’s DEI Committees both formal and informal, to get information about what kinds of things they are working on.

Lauren Bailey-Jones updated the Committee to let them know that she was in touch with the Northborough Guide. Their representative reached out and let Lauren know that they are willing to help in any way to the Committee felt relevant. Lauren also spoke to the Junior Women’s Club. They had a representative that served the Welcome Wagon at one time. They do not do anything formal right now to welcome folks to town, but they are willing to partner with the group in any way.

Becca asked the group about whether the group wanted to pursue focus groups now, or wanted to wait until after the recommendations were made. Tim mentioned that he felt the timeline was very tight. Lauren mentioned that Diedra has a trainer who may be willing to come train the committee on running focus groups. Tim mentioned that both he and Diedra have taken the course in order to conduct the focus groups around this topic.

Prepare for July 19th Board of Selectmen Update:

Tim told the group that the D&I Committee would be making a presentation to the Board of Selectmen to give an update on where things are at with the Committee. This includes ideas, information, and what to expect from the final recommendations. Tim stated that he put together notes and an agenda for the presentation with the Board in July. Items include survey data, objectives, results of various discussions that the group has had with stakeholders, and high-level takeaways from those stakeholders.

Discussion – Board of Selectmen Representative to the Diversity & Inclusion Committee

Tim Kaelin recused himself from the meeting at this point. Becca Meekins asked whether the members were able to review the Board of Selectmen meeting in question. Members responded that they had. Becca explained that the Board of Selectmen was concerned about the fact that there is no direct representation from the Selectmen to the D&I Committee now that Tim is no longer a member of the Board of Selectmen. The Selectmen asked that the Committee provide feedback on whether this was a concern for them. Mary Leach stated that she has no concerns with Tim continuing as a member of the Committee. Virginia Simms-George agreed with Mary Leach. Virginia mentioned that the best person to lead a D&I Committee is a white man. Becca explained that the Board has requested formal feedback from the group. She will draft a letter for the D&I Committee to review at their next meeting to go to the Board of Selectmen at their June 14, 2021 meeting.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion to adjourn made by Virginia Simms-George.

Motion seconded by Shika Holland.

Roll call taken as follows:

Ms. Meekins: Aye	Ms. Ibrahimi: Aye
Ms. Bailey-Jones: Aye	Ms. Leach: Aye
Ms. Simms-George: Aye	
Ms. Holland: Aye	
Mr. Soriano: Aye	

Meeting is adjourned at 8:33 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

by Becca Meekins

Northborough Diversity & Inclusion Committee