

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Selectman Tim Kaelin  
Asst Town Administrator Becca Meekins  
Mariam Ibrahimi  
Mary Leach  
Hamilton Soriano  
Diedra Wrighting  
Virginia Simms George  
Lauren Bailey-Jones



**GUESTS PRESENT:**

Gregory Martineau  
Rhoda Webb

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

**Vice Chair Ibrahimi** welcomed the committee to the May 6th, 2021, meeting of the Northborough Diversity & Inclusion Committee Meeting at just past 7 PM. Becca Meekins followed with provisions of the open meeting law.

**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.

**OPEN DISCUSSION:**

**Vice Chair Ibrahimi** initiated roll call.

Ms. Ibrahimi: Present	Ms. Holland: Present	Ms. Leach: Not present for roll call
Mr. Soriano: Present	Ms. Simms George: Present	Chair Kaelin: Not present for roll call
Ms. Meekins: Present	Ms. Bailey-Jones: Present	
Ms. Wrighting: Present		

**Ms. Meekins:** First order of business is to approve Meeting Minutes. Motion to approve.

**Ms. Wrighting:** Motions to approve minutes.

**Ms. Holland:** 2nds motion.

Ms. Ibrahim: Aye	Ms. Holland: Aye	Ms. Leach: Not present for motion
Mr. Soriano: Aye	Ms. Simms George: Aye	Chair Kaelin: Not present for motion
Ms. Meekins: Aye	Ms. Bailey-Jones: Abstain	
Ms. Wrighting: Aye		

**VICE CHAIR IBRAHIMI:** Introduces guests Gregory Martineau, Superintendent of Algonquin High School and Rhoda Webb, Director of English Language Education

**SUPERINTENDENT MARTINEAU:** Outlines the Vision 2020 program which resulted in developing a new vision and strategic plan to guide the work of equity and inclusion. What type of graduates do we want leaving ARHS, Melican, and our elementary schools? What attributes do we want our graduates to leave with?

- Critical & Creative Thinkers
- Communicators
- Socially & Civilly Engaged
- Healthy & Balanced

Equity of Opportunity was one of our five strategic objectives. What types of opportunities do students need to develop those skills and attributes. Equity does not mean equal but rather what does the student need to move along their education journey.

We reaffirmed our core values as a District:

- Integrity
- Empathy
- Equity
- Inclusivity
- Perseverance
- Respect

This all connects because the work around DE&I is essential to learning. It goes to understanding perspectives. We are culturally diverse and are becoming more diverse.

One of the goals was to establish a Coalition of Equity which was formed over the summer and began its work in the fall. Purpose was to capture the expertise and knowledge of experts in our community. We have students, faculty, staff, parents, and community members.

**MS. WEBB:** Work of the Coalition, which will not end at the end of the school year, is to build community partnerships and create conditions for courageous conversations. Members of the coalition were represented on the Mascot Study Group. We have members who are focused on curriculum and instruction as well as policy and procedures. They have met almost monthly throughout the year. This journey began a few years ago while attending Professional Development.

They will be forming a partnership with the Anti-defamation League to work with students as peer leaders to run an anti-bias peer training program "A World of Difference" which will run in the fall at Melican, Trottier, and Algonquin.

We all need to be using the same language and to navigate very difficult conversations. We need to be aware of our own biases and build a more equitable society. Another plan for next year is an Equity Audit.

**SUPERINTENDENT MARTINEAU:**

We are helping our staff to break down stereotypes. We are also discussing what will be most impactful in terms of what students are experiencing. What's most important is the learning experiences of the students in the classroom. A World Of Difference is very exciting and hot off the press. This will be an exciting program launching in the fall with the Middle Schools. A new History and Social Science framework has also been launched. What tools and resources are best suited to achieve our goals in terms of history and social science? Part of that work is evaluating through the lens of DE&I. We are launching Discovery Education as the primary tool. It is a dynamic tool not a static textbook. As the world changes, content is updated in real time. There is a strong DE&I perspective.

Part of the strategic plan was thinking of having an outside lens to evaluate our learning organization. Best practice to have another outside set of eyes and ears ... a lens to evaluate how we are doing and if it can be improved. We evaluated a number of companies to help us launch this Equity Audit. Decided to use Mass Insight due to the alignment that their process had with the District's strategic plan. This will take place over the next four to five months. It is an in-depth process and will require a lot of conversation, community forum, and review of curriculum. This is a long-term commitment that we have as a public school system.

**CHAIR TIM KAELIN:** Thanks Greg and Rhoda for all of their work. As a committee we wanted to learn about what you are doing and to identify how we can work together. We want to be a resource and partner in any way that we can.

**SUPERINTENDENT MARTINEAU:** We are one community. We are a community of Northborough. Part of the work that we do is making connections. When you really get to know students, or students get to know their peers, or teachers get to know their students, they are more apt to be successful. We have the same philosophy with the community ... making connections.

**CHAIR TIM KAELIN:** Asks if anyone has any questions.

**MS. BAILEY-JONES:** What resources do you need to help support your goals?

**SUPERINTENDENT MARTINEAU:** Our primary goal is to educate. How can we move toward educating our students, faculty, staff, and larger community? Part of the work we've done is to have keynote and community speakers. Secondly, supporting the school budgets and looking at what capacity we need to do this work well. Lastly, we have a tremendous resource in our District that is underused and that is our students. We need to listen to our students, to learn from them, gain their perspective.

**CHAIR TIM KAELIN:** With all the work you are doing particularly at the high school, are other high schools doing similar work? And does taking part in this enhance a student's college admission in any way?

**SUPERINTENDENT MARTINEAU:** We are involved in many professional organizations. We are connected with the metro west school systems. Rhoda meets with her counterparts often and Greg meets with

Superintendents. The topic of DE&I is a conversation that is happening. At the high school, we have a great proof of concept in terms of concentration program which is a business concentration. ARHS has a significant elective offering that most high schools do not have. Britney Burns is looking at a global citizen concentration where students can select this concentration Sophomore year that would lead Algonquin with a concentration in global citizenship. Also looking at international travel opportunities and experiences abroad. And we are looking at the seal of bi-literacy which celebrates multi-lingual students. A seal goes on the student's transcript that signals to employers or colleges they speak multiple languages. This is something we would like to celebrate and move forward with.

**CHAIR TIM KAELIN:** That sounds great. With the number of students at the high school that do go on to college is there a way to support this type of work/help students get some advantage when they are applying to competitive schools? Invest when they can see a tangible result?

**SUPERINTENDENT MARTINEAU:** We are preparing students for college or career. Those tangible certificates do make students more marketable. We are also looking at opportunities for our students to engage in college work sooner during their Junior and Senior years. We would like to expand our offerings by partnering with colleges and universities in the area.

**CHAIR TIM KAELIN:** College and careers. Thank you for pointing that out. It is an important distinction.

**MS. WRIGHTING:** With the focus on global citizenship and being multi-lingual, is there thought to increasing language learning at the elementary and middle schools?

**SUPERINTENDENT MARTINEAU:** Two or three years ago (Rhoda correct me if I'm wrong) we had a language study group that looked at K-12. The study group made several recommendations. One is to expand language offerings at the high school looking at mandarin and other languages. Secondly was the importance of early acquisition of language and opportunities for our youngest learners K-2. That is something we are looking at. This does come at a cost for re-tooling for educators and hiring (staff/faculty) who are multi-lingual.

**MS. WEBB:** It is so important to be multi-lingual in this world. In our community we have several families speaking Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese, Arabic. It is difficult to keep a child bi-lingual when the family is not around them at school. We are more multi-lingual than the community likely realizes. This is a level of awareness that is important for the committee to have.

**CHAIR TIM KAELIN:** It is important. I see this on almost a daily basis. We have neighbors who speak another language.

**SUPERINTENDENT MARTINEAU:** It's important to celebrate multi-lingual opportunities and the diversity. If you look at our pre-school and K population, it is incredibly diverse which is exciting. You can see the diversity. As leaders of the school district we can see this in action.

**CHAIR TIM KAELIN:** Have you seen the documentary on Blue Eyes Brown Eyes?

**MS. WEBB:** Yes, I have.

**CHAIR TIM KAELIN:** It was in the late 60s/early 70s. A 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teacher in Iowa had an all white class. To teach the class about racism, she split the class up into brown eyes and blue eyes. One day if you had blue eyes, you were better than the brown eyes. It is well-done.

**MS. WRIGHTING:** Have there been efforts to bring more diversity among the faculty and staff?

**SUPERINTENDENT MARTINEAU:** Our goal is to have faculty and staff reflective of the diversity of our student body and our community. Our human resources director, Heather Richards, is rethinking how we recruit and seek candidates for positions. Our typical advertising would center around our local geographic area. We are reaching now into Boston and Worcester where there is more diversity to make sure we are casting a wider net in terms of recruiting. We are looking at different methods of advertising. We find the most effective is networking. Having conversations with other Superintendents, other educators, other directors and really telling the story why are our schools are a great place to work. It is a difficult time for recruiting. This past year during the pandemic it has been very challenging to hire. We are not seeing a diverse set of candidates, and we are asking the question why and how can we change that. We do not have the answer. We are reaching out to colleges and universities speaking with the "Deans of Diversity" trying to make those connections.

**MS. SIMMS GEORGE:** Have you reached out to some of the historically black colleges?

**SUPERINTENDENT MARTINEAU:** I'm not sure. I can ask Heather Richards. She is well-connected. She worked for the Newton Public Schools. This is her 2<sup>nd</sup> year. She has really changed how we recruit, network, and connect. I can speak with her. That is a great suggestion.

**MS. SIMMS GEORGE:** There is also an organization called Coaching for Change. They spoke at MASC a few years ago. They partner with universities and diverse candidates. They would work with the students at the school pursuing their degree. So, when they graduate, they have a home. I can get the contact information.

**SUPERINTENDENT MARTINEAU:** One of the things we started to do is look at different sectors. Looking at people who haven't thought about the field of education. There is recruiting but also once hired, there is retaining. The people we welcome need to feel connected and valued.

**MS. LEACH:** Thank you for being here this evening and for the efforts of the Mascot Committee. My question is what can we do as a committee to support the decision that has been made to change the mascot and the lack of support being expressed by ARHS alumn?

**SUPERINTENDENT MARTINEAU:** This has been a 2-plus decade debate. It was always our position that a mascot should not divide but unite. The mascot study group's job was to collect information for the school committee to make an informed decision. Even when there is an informed decision it can be polarizing because of dissenting opinions. They feel they lost something. Just be a voice that you support the decision "School Committee we support you." That is not who they are hearing from. They are hearing it was an ill-conceived, wrong decision. As we move forward to determine what the next mascot will be, getting involved, and participating in the decision will help.

**MS. LEACH:** Thank you. One additional question, can you share how many Native Americans we have in our community and how did they help in coming to this decision?

**SUPERINTENDENT MARTINEAU:** I encourage folks to spend some time on the department of elementary and secondary web site. They have district profiles. It's a nice way to get a sense of our school district in terms of ethnicity and gender, etc. Based on that data, we have zero students at the high school who identify as Native American. That is the current data. We do have Native Americans in our community. In the Southborough school District, we have Native American children. How did that weigh into our decision? We really leaned on the tribal councils, the Wompanaug and the Nipmuc. Those are the voices we listened most strongly to throughout this

process. They also did some outreach to indigenous people in the community. There was a woman in Maine they connected with and some folks out of Western MA who they sought for their advice and input.

**MS. WRIGHTING:** One thing that has come up a little bit is that concept of belonging. I see the mascot change as a signal of that. Are there other deliberate things that you are planning that are more about creating community and belonging?

**SUPERINTENDENT MARTINEAU:** Some of the deliberate work we do is having conversations with students around what it means to belong? One student may feel connected in one way, another student may feel another way. What do they feel is a strong connection to faculty or an adult? For some students it's music, others it's art, others it's through a club or activity. There are many ways for our students to get involved at all levels (K-12). We are encouraging that sense of belonging, to be part of something bigger than themselves.

**MS BAILEY-JONES:** What role do you feel the school district plays for being that voice in local and global issues that come up whether it is a tragedy or something positive or anything related to DE&I?

**SUPERINTENDENT MARTINEAU:** I'll use Needham as an example. They have a strong DE&I committee that intersects with the schools as well as the town. When something horrific happens where there is a response needed to an incident whether local, state, or country, they have a united response. So, it is not just the town or just the school. It is united which is very powerful. That would be very helpful for us as a school district to partner a response rather than being the lead, because we are not a political arm. What do we respond to? What do we not respond to? The waters are choppy. One way to calm the seas is when there is a unified voice from the community. We have a role to educate and communicate.

**CHAIR KAELIN:** When we are preparing a statement as a response would you like to have the school's name included? We can offer that option.

**SUPERINTENDENT MARTINEAU:** Anytime we can have a unified message, it is more powerful. I think it is a larger conversation with John Coderre, this committee, the Police Chief. There can be a lot of power in unifying messages.

**CHAIR KAELIN:** That can be included in the recommendations we make to the Board of Selectmen.

**MS. BAILEY-JONES:** Greg, in our last meeting you talked about Northborough as a community and the role the community plays, however we are regionalized at the high school. Since you sort of live in both towns, do you see any partnership opportunities to come together, to unify?

**SUPERINTENDENT MARTINEAU:** One role the District can play where we serve two communities is providing a connection between the two. Grass roots efforts are happening in Northborough and are also happening in Southborough. Anything we can do together sends a strong message to our students.

**CHAIR KAELIN:** Asks Greg and Rhoda if they have any questions.

**SUPERINTENDENT MARTINEAU:** We are looking for guidance. This is not going to be a perfect but important journey. We will learn along the way as we move forward. It's all about the students for us.

**MS. MEEKINS:** We have split up our group into three pockets. One of the groups is Community Engagement. Greg, I know you brought up the speaker series. That's a group we can connect and partner on.

**SUPERINTENDENT MARTINEAU:** Thank you for inviting us. If you think of an idea, we are all ears. Feel free to reach out to us.

**CHAIR KAELIN:** And if we can be a resource, please do not hesitate to let us know.

**CHAIR KAELIN:** That was great. Any follow-up comments?

**MS. HOLLAND:** Being new to the community, it was helpful to get the insight. Some of what we saw in the survey results is people don't think they need to be focused on diversity, it's "not their problem". I think the more DE&I is integrated into the school system, they can grow up knowing this is part of life. You don't have to fit into a bucket.

**MS. MEEKINS:** Happy to hear they are moving forward with an Equity Audit as we are recommending for the town. Glad to see we are doing it for both the Education and Administration arms.

**MS. IBRAHIMI:** Very excited to hear about some of the projects they have going on.

**MS BAILEY-JONES:** I liked your recommendation, Virginia, to reach out to the historically black colleges and universities to see if there are partnership opportunities. Lauren adds she will follow-up with Heather.

**MS. SIMMS GEORGE:** The University of Puerto Rico and University of Hawaii are also good sources. The MASC has a diversity and inclusion division. We are working on two speakers. One I might be able to have in May and the other in September or for the MASC meeting in November. When we know, I'll share with this committee and we should also share with them. We are paying for it, and they could just join us. MASC will pay.

**MS. WRIGHTING:** You mentioned the coach organization. I wonder if they have some best practices. It can be very isolating moving from a different state and then being from a different background than the majority of people in town. Do they have ideas to connect people? Resources would be helpful.

**MS. SIMMS GEORGE:** There is NSBE, the National Society of Black Engineers. We also have the Latino society out of Boston. They have chapters in the local communities. I'll pass that information onto Lauren so she can share with Greg and Rhoda.

**CHAIR KAELIN:** I would not have thought of that perspective of moving to town and how isolating that can be. I wonder if we do have those resources. If we have a DE&I web page for the committee. We could list those resources on our part of the web site.

**MS. LEACH:** Didn't we use to have the Welcome Wagon? Is it still around?

**MS. SIMMS GEORGE:** I don't think so. Yes it was called a Welcome Wagon. When you came to town they gave you a bag of resources.

**MS. HOLLAND:** I didn't see it [haha]

**MS. BAILEY-JONES:** The Junior League does some sort of welcome or they have in the past. I don't know if it is something they currently do.

**MS. SIMMS GEORGE:** There's also the Women's Club. Is that the one you're talking about?

**MS. BAILEY- JONES:** Yes, the Junior League is a Women’s Club.

**MS. LEACH:** Would it be too expensive to bring it back for new residents?

**MS. SIMMS GEORGE:** If you go on the web site, there are different committees. A good resource would be Diane to identify some of those. Becca as well.

**MS. MEEKINS:** When I was in Grafton we had a welcome packet for new employees and new residents. It was not as much about resources but more when to put out your trash, things like that. It’s a little different. We could tailor to include resources, information on how to get involved in committees. It is doable.

**MS. SIMMS GEORGE:** Do real estate agents give packets when people buy homes?

**MS LEACH:** It varies. Some do and some don’t. Over the last 12 months, there have been over 200 units sold (condos and single family) in Northborough just on MLS.

**MS. SIMMS GEORGE:** There is a resource book that was distributed at Applefest last year. Do you have that booklet? [Members shake heads “no”]

**MS. LEACH:** Asks Shika, what would have been helpful to you to receive when you moved to Northborough?

**MS. HOLLAND:** We have family that live in Westborough. It is harder to find a connection here. Opportunities to highlight key events coming up, committees like this, have a destination. Drive people to the web site or follow us on social media, we can keep them informed and engaged over time. Understanding the resources and connections to committees would have been helpful to me.

**MS. LEACH:** Maybe the group Virginia referenced who has already prepared the booklet would be helpful to tap into.

**MS. BAILEY-JONES:** I can reach out to the Junior League because they may have provided that resource book and see what they’ve done in the past to welcome residents.

**CHAIR KAELIN:** I think it’s a great idea and important to have ... putting all of the resources together. Something we should tackle at a later date with everything else we have in front of us over the next couple of months.

**MS. LEACH:** Liz Nolan just messaged that the guide Virginia referenced is a printed book of businesses as well as organizations and resources. Liz thinks Marile Borden is updating it and may be interested in adding some information.

**CHAIR KAELIN:** If you have a follow-up conversation with Liz, let us know. At our next meeting, I will have survey information and data to share.

**MS. MEEKINS:** Just want the group to know there was a public records requests made for the survey data. The information will go out before we have the opportunity to digest it.

**MS. WRIGHTING:** What is a public records request?

**MS. MEEKINS:** Any work that is done by a public body, which we are, is considered a public record. All documentation that we create is subject to public record law. Anyone can make a public records request. We



have 10 days by law to comply with the request. We could get extensions if there was an issue with data. The request comes through the Town Clerk's office. I do not know the intent of this request.

**CHAIR KAELIN:** Anyone have anything else?

**MS. HOLLAND:** We do not have a means for getting messaging out in a timely manner. There is opportunity for us to be more timely with communicating what is happening. We can perhaps talk at our next meeting.

**CHAIR KAELIN:** I will add that for our next meeting.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

**CHAIR KAELIN:** If there is nothing further, a motion to adjourn.

**MS BAILEY-JONES:** So moved.

**MS SIMMS GEORGE:** Second.

Roll call taken as follows:

Ms. Ibrahimi: Aye	Ms. Holland: Aye	Chair Kaelin: Aye
Mr. Soriano: Aye	Ms. Simms George: Aye	
Ms. Meekins: Aye	Ms. Bailey-Jones: Abstain	
Ms. Wrighting: Aye	Ms Leach: Aye	

**CHAIR KAELIN:** Thanks everyone for a very productive meeting.

Meeting is adjourned at 8:31 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

by Mary Leach  
Clerk, Northborough Diversity & Inclusion Committee