

DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION COMMISSION MINUTES
7:00 p.m. THURSDAY Feb 27th, 2025

Present:

X	David Martin, liaison	X	Suravi Bhatia, student
X	Melissa Kaplan Morse, co-chair		Wanjiku Gachugi, liaison
X	Sunanda Pepalla, clerk	X	Zayd Dhasthageer, student
X	Diane Randolph Jones, co-chair		
X	Sandra Hinds		

Meeting called to order at 7:05 p.m.

Regular Business

1. Updates from the Co-Chairs

- **Upcoming event: What can we do? March 9th Fair @ Congregation Beth Elohim**
 - Feeling overwhelmed with events in the world and US
 - Take action, build community, advocate issues, short panel discussion and tables for signing up if interested!
- **New Commissioner Search**
 - Posted commissioner search flyer on the school and community page, at town library, and with the Middlesex commission on the status of women.
 - Melissa shared at the CBE author event.
 - David Martin: Potential DEIC candidate Jack Dirstine brought up at the Select Board
- **Authors on Inclusion @ Congregation Beth Elohim**
 - Speakers: Colette Phillips and David DeLong
 - Focus on the “I” in DEI, shared books, and articles!
 - Well attended (~35 in person and many online)

2. Updates from the DEI Office Director

- **Update shared by Diane for Wanjiku.**
 - No new incident bias reported since last month.
 - Continues to meet with Acton community members and organizations regarding racial equity.
 - DEIC Office and Commission on Disabilities organization had a successful documentary event “Crip Camp.”

- Bias incident report found at the Acton Town website, DEI Office; report is highlighted “bias incident report” at <https://actonma.gov/780/Diversity-Equity-and-Inclusion>

3. **Juneteenth Planning**

- Steering group confirmed: Bettina Abe, Bert Ware, Wanjiku, Suravi and David
- **Zayd** got a list of six students from ABSEJ who were interested; preferably have one candidate that would represent ABSEJ.
- **Sunanda** to share the project draft
- **Suravi** will check with Black Student Union, Muslim Student Union and Desi Equity Students Alliance if we need more student volunteers; consider joining DEIC as a commissioner.
- **Timeline for kickoff: Mid-March to vision out the event and frequency of meetings, scope, desired outcomes.**
- **Melissa** to send a doodle poll for the kickoff date.

4. **Review Mission, Vision and Values Discussion**

- Continue: Education, Awareness
- Start: Action in the community and with the community
- Reviewed vision and charge of the DEIC commission for feedback
 - Urgent near-term needs when we started have been successfully completed; now need more action that interacts with the community in a meaningful way.
 - There are more opportunities as we move forward; what do we assess now and how do we measure any actions for goals set.
 - Are town committees diverse and represent the diversity of Acton?
 - Select Board can review/approve any edits to the charge, however, vision and mission do not need to be reviewed and approved by Select Board.
 - Bring Town and School DEI officer topic highlights to understand broader issues.
 - Training – town DEI training has evolved and become more relatable to the jobs of town employees, but further improvement is possible.
 - Further collaboration with community members and organizations is happening currently.
 - Listening sessions with the community – review how we can be in close touch with community members.
 - Better communication when an incident happens in the community to avoid misinformation -**Discussion with Wanjiku at the next meeting and recommended communication with the school even if it is a town event. What actions can DEIC take in a timely manner?**
 - **How can we be more inclusive about new immigrants and families in town?**

5. **Volunteer form**

- Nearly completed review of the application with a DEI lens.

- Reviewed the demographic data language that Diane recommended (veterans, disability, ethnicity [race as a sub item], etc.). Also included the option of picking multiple races. Will discuss gender choices and finalize the DEIC comments at the next meeting.

6. Federal DEI Letter and Enforcement

- The federal Department of Education has written to all schools and higher education systems that they need to remove offices to treat everyone the same and some members of the community have supported that and reached out to the Select Board and School Committee.
- Acton is a welcoming town, and we have had policies for a decade:
 - Town staff will not request immigration status, and the town has no records.
 - Local town officials do not help with federal enforcement.
 - **Communication to be prominently shared with community members, to be discussed with the school and town DEI.**

Closing Items

- Confirm upcoming meetings and events – March 13, 2025
- Meeting adjourned (Motion Diane, Seconded Zayd)