

Town of Boxborough & Inclusion Committee
Regular Session Meeting Minutes
Diversity Equity
Conducted on Zoom
February 1, 2021

PRESENT: Peishan Bartley, Member; John Fallon, Member; Wes Fowlks, Member; Lovingsky Jasmin, Chair; Lakshmi Kaja, Member; Nora Michnovetz, Member; Amy Osenar, Member; Mary Sullivan, Member

ALSO PRESENT: Francie Nolde, Sustainability committee

ABSENT: Song Issah, Member; Olivia Jones, member

At 7:05 PM, Jasmin called the meeting to order.

Agenda:

- DEI committee meeting process: Formal or Informal (collaboration/relaxing)?
- Response to racist incident in community (AB School Committee).
- Updates from work groups.
- Does the DEIC want to put an article on the warrant for the next town meeting? If yes, what can it be?
- Set next meeting(s)

Jasmin informed the committee that the selectboard approved the DEI Committee charge, which had been amended at the December 15th, 2020 meeting.

The committee began by deciding the meeting method they should use. Osenar referenced "Robert's rules of Order," a method of collaborative meetings. The committee agreed a more informal culture would breed more creative problem solving. Bartley asked how informal are meetings allowed to be, and Fallon responded that excluding following Open Meeting Law and writing minutes, the committee can decide formality for themselves.

The committee then discussed the racist attacks at the Acton-Boxborough school committee meetings. Fowlks briefly explained the incidents and that the perpetrator had been located as a juvenile in Arizona with no connection to Acton-Boxborough. They agreed that supporting the victims is the biggest priority, and that even if the perpetrator is outside of the Acton-Boxborough area, there is still racism in Boxborough.

Nolde questioned whether the town has a system of reporting hateful attacks, which is currently the police non-emergency line. The committee believes creating a more accessible way to report incidents is needed, and considered adding one to the DEI Committee page on the Boxborough website, but recognized the security challenges require waiting until the town of Boxborough has hired a social worker to move forward.

Jasmin asked if the DEIC can assist in hiring a social worker, and Fallon responded that the committee would have had to advocate for the position before the committee was even formed, however, the committee may be able to put input into future positions.

Approved on

The committee then considered adding an article on the warrant for the next town meeting. They agreed to add a placeholder and appoint a subcommittee to edit the placeholder. Osenar suggested an article requesting the selectboard to address racism in Boxborough, then drafted the following:

‘DEIC would like the town to acknowledge that: Racism exists in Boxborough and is a public health crisis, and the town needs to work to combat racism and support people who were targeted by racism and acts of hate.’

At 8:10, Fowlks moved to submit to the Boxborough selectboard that the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee would like to add the above sentence as an article to the town warrant. Seconded by Fallon.

**Roll call vote: Fallon – Aye, Bartley – Aye, Sullivan – Aye, Jasmin – Aye, Michnovetz – Aye, Kaja – Aye, Osenar – Aye, Fowlks -- Aye,
Approved 8-0**

Bartley, Fowlks, Jasmin and Osenar volunteered to be part of the sub committee. Fallon advised that the shorter the article is, the more likely it will pass, and that having people of color discuss their experience with racism at the town meeting could enlighten residents and make the motion more likely to pass.

The group began to give updates from the work groups, which were decided upon at the December 15th meeting. Sullivan, who worked on surveying the work of DEI committees in other towns surrounding Boxborough, was reached out to by Leela Ramachandran, an Acton DEI committee member who described the work the commission has begun to do, including a creating a questionnaire aimed to identify the experience of underrepresented racial, ethnic and religious groups in Acton. The student as well as the teacher groups at Acton-Boxborough Regional High School addressing DEI issues was also mentioned. Sullivan also described Chelmsford's anti-racism pledge and diversity calendar as interesting approaches to gaining community involvement.

Jasmin expressed the importance of publicly observing celebrations from other cultures besides American, and his interest in an anti-racism pledge. The committee reviewed Chelmsford's anti-racism pledge, and briefly considered what implementing it may look like in Boxborough and the challenges that may arise.

Bartley discussed programs the Sargent Memorial Library hosts that are made by families to help educate others on different cultures. She stated that more of these programs are possible with the help of more families from different cultures. She also discussed Libraries Transforming Communities, an American Library Association program made to help encourage more conversations about issues in small communities.

Fowlks reached out to the housing committee, which is focused on low income housing currently. If the DEI Committee is interested in ever getting involved, the housing committee can collaborate.

Osenar updated the outreach and identifying group. She reached out to victims of the racist school committee meeting incident, who could not find time to talk with Osenar. She also reached out to the Acton DEI commission, who have begun creating a survey to identify the experience of underrepresented racial, ethnic and religious groups in Acton and offered to share the survey for the Boxborough DEI Committee's use.

The committee then decided on next meeting dates of February 17th at 7pm and February 24th at 7pm via Zoom.

At 9:21, Fowlks moved to adjourn. Seconded by Sullivan.

Approved on

**Roll Call Vote: Fallon – Aye, Bartley – Aye, Sullivan – Aye, Jasmin – Aye, Michnovez – Aye, Kaja – Aye, Bowman
Osenar – Aye, Fowlks -- Aye
Approved or Rejected 8-0 approved**

Approved on