

City of Biddeford
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee
November 13, 2023 5:30 PM City Hall Conference Room

And via Zoom

You are invited to a Zoom webinar.

When: Nov 13, 2023 05:30 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Topic: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee Meeting

Please click the link below to join the webinar:

<https://biddeford.zoom.us/j/93030936118?pwd=VWhKTTcrdDhMM1FaSEZYNzU2NzBxZz09>

Passcode: 547942

Or One tap mobile :

+13092053325,,93030936118# US

+13126266799,,93030936118# US (Chicago)

Or Telephone:

Dial(for higher quality, dial a number based on your current location):

+1 309 205 3325 US

+1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)

+1 646 558 8656 US (New York)

+1 646 931 3860 US

Status:

1. Call to Order

2. Discussion Items:

2.1. Approval of Minutes

[October 16 2023 DEI Committee Meeting.pdf](#)

2.2. Public Comment

2.3. Subcommittee Reports

[_Best Practices for Promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Community Engagement v0.2.pdf](#)

[Recognizing December Holidays and Traditions_.pdf](#)

3. Adjourn:

DEI Committee Meeting Minutes – October 16th, 2023 Meeting

1. Called to Order at 5:35 PM

Present (via zoom): Martha Jacques (until 6:40pm), Shelly Gibson, Kayla Lewis

Present (in person): Liam LaFountain, Danica Lamontagne, Flo Leighton, Anne Morrissey, Irene Brackett, Bistra Nikiforova

2. Approval of the Minutes

In regards to the minutes from September 11th, Shelly mentioned the need to adjust the date to 2023 and a few folks mentioned that Andrew and Martha's last names were misspelled.

- Irene made a motion to amend the minutes with the suggested grammar edits.
- Liam seconded the motion.
- The motion is approved unanimously.

- Once the amendments were made, Bistra made a motion to approve the amended minutes.
- Flo seconded the motion.
- The motion is approved unanimously.

3. Public Comment

No one from the public was present.

4. Discussion

a. Flag Update

Danica shared the changes required by the Policy Committee that lists the Council as the final governing/elected body to handle any appeals. The new/amended order of approval will be 1) the DEI Coordinator; if appealed 2) the City Manager; and if appealed again 3) the City Council (who will make the final decision).

b. Remaining Meetings in 2023 (Timing & Content)

Monday, November 13th, next full DEI Committee Meeting.

Monday, December 11th falls on one of the Hanukkah lighting evenings so perhaps that could be built into some of the meeting.

Danica shared that Sydney has officially resigned from the committee given a number of other conflicting responsibilities.

c. Sub-Committee Updates

- i. Policy: Liam shared that the group is finalizing a document that will help other committees work through events and the community's engagement with them through the lens of DEI. Andrew is re-formulating the list of guidelines and the

group hopes to bring the document to the full committee for the November meeting. This will ideally go well with an additional document a few City staff are working on that supports folks joining any board/committee/commission (in regards to expectations, general guidelines, etc.).

- ii. Education: Flo updated the group on upcoming events and the role the sub-committee would like to take to support those things (via Biddeford Beat, community celebrations, facts and write-ups, etc.).

Anne submitted a request to fly the Trans flag for Trans Awareness Week and Trans Remembrance Day (in November). There is no conflict with those dates and Danica is also waiting for the new flag policy to be approved before officially approving this request. Danica asked if the committee was making the request or if it was being submitted by Anne. There was discussion about initiating requests as a committee or reaching out to community partners to empower them to submit requests.

Irene suggested that the Education sub-committee discuss this further in their next committee meeting.

Shelly mentioned talking with Maura from OUT Maine about sharing testimonials from their Youth Advisory Council regarding Trans Remembrance/Trans Awareness that could be shared out more broadly (and given those folks are paid and have already agreed to share stories like this).

The group talked through the events for the rest of 2023 and where there is desired representation from the full committee.

In mentioning Hannukah, a suggestion was made to reach out to the synagogue about which evening they would like the most support. Bistra asked the group about why a connection would be made with a religious institution if this isn't happening consistently with other events/days of the year. Given this event is organized by the Heart of Biddeford, it was agreed that Flo will reach out to their admin about any support. Liam will also write a proclamation inclusive of all December holidays to share at the November meeting.

Homelessness Awareness Week is taking place in November and the group will be offering details, statistics, and myth vs. facts about homelessness to share in the Biddeford Beat and within an existing Proclamation.

- Given the need to adjust some language, Liam made a motion that the Proclamation be amended with updated content and submitted for the Mayor to read in November.
- Irene seconded the motion.
- The motion passes unanimously.

d. Committee Positions/Transitions

All positions within the DEI committee end at the end of the 2023 (and all committee terms end in December on any given year), but some committees are on a different cycle so not every committee is turning over right now. It has also been an institutional practice to have every position finish at the same time regardless of when a person joined any committee. Shelly and Danica are looking for language to support this latter point and this clarifying piece will hopefully be part of the guidelines that they are building/revamping.

In terms of a timeline, letters from the Mayor's office will go out to current committee members in November (next month) and folks can decide if they want to re-apply. If there aren't enough committee members remaining (and new ones haven't been reappointed yet), then the group won't have a quorum in January. Ideally folks will apply and be appointed and a quorum of 5 people is needed for a meeting. Appointments could happen the second Council meeting in December and/or the first Council meeting in January depending on when the new Mayor decides to appoint community members.

Sub committees can discuss and share in their small groups if they are planning to stay on for a 2nd term so the full group has a sense of timing and group composition.

5. Adjourn

- Bistra made a motion to adjourn.
- Liam seconded the motion.
- The motion passes unanimously at 6:51pm.

Best Practices for Promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Community Engagement

The City of Biddeford, through both internal and external Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) committees, and with the support of the DEI Coordinator, aims to create an atmosphere of inclusion and belonging across all aspects of our municipal work. While this is an ambitious endeavor indeed, it is also one that can be exemplified by the ways in which we engage with the community. Whether we are hosting events, publishing various communications, soliciting input and feedback, and/or building partnerships across the city, each has the capacity to be designed, implemented, and evaluated through a DEI lens. Thus, we hold this truth at the core of our work: that each resident, business owner, student, and/or visitor of Biddeford, particularly those who have been the most marginalized, don't have to question whether or not they were thought of during the planning process; it will simply be true.

While this document is intended to be a guide (and potentially a checklist) for the planning and execution of varied forms of community engagement, we also recognize that language, context, and best practices are constantly evolving and will need updating. We hope that committees and City government will use the following steps and strategies to plan for and navigate circumstances they may not have considered, or those in need of further investigation.

If you have questions or would like to discuss this document in more detail, please contact the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Coordinator (shelly.gibson@biddefordmaine.org).

Accessibility

Do members of the community have access to programs and the ability to participate?

- Strive to identify which of the following circumstances might be preventing members of the community from participating, and address/accommodate for each as follows:
 - Dis/Ability: Choose locations for events that are accessible to everyone, particularly people with wheelchairs or limited mobility. Include subtitles on recordings, and/or provide for the needs of blind/low vision participants and those who are deaf/hard of hearing.
 - Language: Provide translation materials and/or translators for members of the community who are English Language Learners.
 - Literacy: Use plain language and concise communication, free of jargon and unexplained abbreviations.
 - Time: Host events and programs at different times to accommodate varied life/work schedules, and provide recordings/materials for those who are unable to attend.
 - Location: Host events and programs at locations that can be easily accessed by community members on their own or via public transportation.
 - Technology: Provide materials or channels for communication that are easy to find and review online. Include assistive technology, as well as offline options for those who are less familiar with technology or do not have internet capabilities.

Active Engagement

Do members of the community have meaningful opportunities to be informed and involved in the design, delivery, and evaluation of public programs that affect them?

- Consider how the community can be engaged across the [*spectrum of public participation*](#):
 - *Inform* the public of the issues and initiatives going on in their community
 - Social media campaign; City website; newsletter; press release; presentation; Public Access programming; paid advertising in newspaper
 - *Consult* with the public to identify needs, preferences, or provide feedback on actions taken in the community
 - *Our Biddeford*, the City of Biddeford's online community engagement platform (e.g., surveys, polls); e-mail requests for comment; public hearings; surveys by mail; focus groups; guest speakers
 - *Involve* the public in the planning and implementation of the policies, programs, and decisions that affect them
 - *Our Biddeford*, the City of Biddeford's online community engagement platform (e.g., option analysis, Q&A, mapping); advisory boards
 - *Collaborate* with the public on projects and *empower* them to decide on actions taken in the community
 - *Our Biddeford*, the City of Biddeford's online community engagement platform (e.g., ideas wall, participatory budgeting); partnerships with local organizations; committees; task forces; ballot measures
- *Please refer to the appendix for more information about the *Our Biddeford* platform.

Accountability

Are we responding to feedback and maintaining reciprocal and sustainable relationships within the community, even after an event or project has concluded?

- Build trust and credibility by actively listening to those most often excluded or overlooked (i.e. BIPOC, LGBTQ+ folks, people with disabilities, the unhoused community, etc.).
- When soliciting feedback, acknowledge and validate the concerns, and be transparent about existing (and potential) limitations.
- Continuously review data and meet with constituents to remain familiar with who lives and works in the community.
- Ensure that groups who have been historically marginalized were invited, engaged, felt included, and want to continue to participate in the future.
- Report results once a project is complete so people can understand how their feedback was incorporated when making decisions.

Recognizing December Holidays and Traditions

WHEREAS, the City of Biddeford cherishes the rich diversity of cultures, traditions, and celebrations that our residents bring to our community;

WHEREAS, Hanukkah, starting on the 25th day of Kislev in the Hebrew calendar and lasting from December 7 to December 15, symbolizes hope, resilience, and determination;

WHEREAS, the Winter Solstice or Yule, observed on December 21, marks the changing of seasons and heralds the promise of longer days;

WHEREAS, Christmas, celebrated on December 25, is characterized by festivity, the spirit of giving, and moments of reflection;

WHEREAS, Kwanzaa, beginning on December 26 and spanning eight days, champions the principles of unity, self-determination, collective responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that I, Alan Casavant, Mayor of the City of Biddeford, hereby proclaim the month of December as a time of mutual respect and appreciation for the holidays and traditions observed in our city. Let us embrace this season, recognizing the myriad of celebrations that enrich our shared community, fostering unity, understanding, and camaraderie.