

DEI Committee Meeting Minutes - March 11th, 2024 Meeting

Status

1. Called to order at 5:32 PM.

Present: Sarai Manyiel, Andrew Lovley, Breese Reagle, Shelly Gibson, Maura Oakes, Anne Morrissey, Flo Leighton, Danica Lamontagne, Scott Whiting, Syed Zafar, Bistra Nikiforova

2. Discussion Items

- 2.1 Introductions

Group members introduced themselves.

- 2.2 Officer Appointments and Term Limits

Shelly shared information about how term limits were decided and reminded members that they will be able to reapply at the end of their term. Member term limits are the following:

1 year: Andrew, Sarai, Syed

2 years: Scott, Breese, Anne

3 years: Flo, Bistra, Maura

Danica will send the link to all for the DEI committee page so folks can review if needed.

Bistra nominated Flo as Chair. Bistra spoke to her devotion to the topic and experience with DEI work both inside and outside of the Committee. Anne seconded the nomination. Flo accepted the nomination.

Flo nominated Andrew as Chair. Andrew declined the nomination.

Scott nominated himself as Vice Chair. Anne seconded the nomination.

Breese, seconded by Bistra, motioned to accept the nominations for Chair and Vice Chair. The motion was unanimously approved.

- 2.3 Committee Participation Guide Q&A

Shelly shared the Committee Participation Guide with the group and explained how and why it was created. She also highlighted the appendix that the DEI Committee created last year that is intended to serve as a guide for community engagement efforts by all City Committees.

- Flo and Shelly will work ahead of time to build the agenda for future meetings. If members have items that they would like to be on the agenda, they should submit them to Shelly and Flo. We generally can't change the agenda right before the meeting or in the meeting, particularly if the item to be added is something that would be of interest to the public. Generally, meeting agendas are made available about a week to five days before the meeting.

- Syed asked if Flo will make a call for agenda items or if members should reach out to Flo if they have an idea. Either option is encouraged.
- Not all meetings have to have public comment. The Committee can decide whether or not to open public comment for specific items, create a public comment period, or close all meetings to public comment. The committee discussed concerns about possible hateful comments at meetings.
- All Committee business should be conducted using your City email address.
- There is a Maine law about under what circumstances allow a Committee member to participate remotely in public meetings. A copy of the policy is included in the packet.
- Committee members were reminded about the Freedom of Access Act.
- Committee members asked about where they can store files and how they can collaborate on editing documents. Danica will ask for further guidance from staff on this item.
- Anne asked if the Committee will set attendance and/or communication expectations. Shelly suggested that we add that item to a future agenda.
- Bistra requested that we share the Committee's mission, vision and values with the full Committee and Shelly agreed to do this.

Bistra asked the Committee members what their areas of interest are. She shared that the previous Committee had a Policy subcommittee and an Education/Outreach subcommittee. Breese and Sarai are both former educators and interested in education work. Flo is interested in outreach and events and building partnerships with other groups. Maura has advocacy experience through Out Maine. Syed shared that he was driven to join the Committee partly to offer representation for the Iraqi youth in the community. Anne wanted to join the Committee as a response to gentrification she saw happening in the City. Flo shared that she is interested in supporting the unhoused population. Bistra is interested in topics related to poverty and how that can amplify other social inequalities.

Shelly shared that there is a staff Diversity, Equity and Inclusion committee in the City as well. That group has been discussing how to talk about diversity, equity, and inclusion work, and the local/national rhetoric around those terms.

2.4 Select Monthly Meeting Time(s)

Typical meetings are held 5:30 PM – 7 PM, with the ability for the Committee to extend the meeting with a majority vote of the present members. The group decided to keep the meeting date of the second Monday of the month. The next meeting will be Monday, April 8th.

2.5 Monthly Events (updates)

During the first 2 years of the Committee, a Diversity calendar of events was created. This list and celebrations/events have been used in the following ways: preparing proclamations for the Mayor to read at Council meetings, submitting articles to the

Biddeford Beat (the City's email newsletter), and collaborating with other organizations on events.

McArthur Library has been an enthusiastic and helpful partner on recent DEI Committee events. In February, they hosted a collaborative event about the forced removal of biracial residents on Malaga Island, with the support of Maine Coast Heritage Trust and the Biddeford High School Multicultural Student Union. There were about 50 people present and very engaged. In November, for Indigenous Peoples Day, they collaborated with the Committee on a screening of Fighting Indians, a documentary about the last remaining racist mascot in Skowhegan, Maine.

Bistra suggested that we collect email addresses at events of people who are interested in engaging with the Committee at future events.

Sarai shared information about the upcoming Community Iftar. Breese suggested adding the Cambodian New Year to the calendar. Shelly shared that she has drafted an updated calendar for 2024 and will share it with the Committee. Flo suggested that we review the calendar at the next meeting.

Anne shared an update about Pride Month and the Heart of Biddeford Pride Committee. On June 1st, there will be a flag raising at City Hall. The group is coordinating with Saco, the Kennebunks, and Arundel on collaborative events. Shelly will find out the date of the Pride Committee's next meeting and share it with the Committee.

Syed will share a write-up with Danica about Ramadan to put in an upcoming Biddeford Beat.

Flo suggested a proclamation for Ramadan. This may not be possible this year due to timing. Anne also suggested including weekly information about Ramadan in the Biddeford Beat.

Syed asked why a proclamation is beneficial. Flo explained that the Mayor reads them out loud at City Council meetings so it brings further awareness to the topic. Shelly also shared that she hopes that they make people feel seen and like a part of the community when the proclamation is read and submitted into public record. Proclamations can also be made specific to the community to recognize local groups or upcoming events.

Bistra asked that we gather the list of past proclamations that we have completed when we discuss the calendar.

Anne motioned to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Scott. Vote: unanimous.

3. Meeting Adjourned at 7:02 PM.