

## DEI Committee Meeting Minutes – September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2024 Meeting

### Status

1. Called to order at 5:31 PM

Present (in person): Danica Lamontagne, Shelly Gibson, Flo Leighton, Scott Whiting, Breese Reagle, Anne Morrissey, Maura Oakes, Bistra Nikiforova

Via Zoom: Syed Zafar

Absent: Sarai Manyiel

2. Public Comment (3 minute limit per speaker)

No one present

3. Approval of Minutes

- 3.a August 12 2024 DEI Committee Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve the minutes was made by Maura, Scott seconded the motion, the motion passes unanimously.

4. Discussion Items

- 4.a Review/debrief meeting on 8/12

How can the committee build relationships and repair harm when it happens?

Syed shared that this conversation is much larger; how the committee is going to manage this moving forward feels really important and there might be places where things like this are already happening.

How does everyone feel about the suggestions made by the Mayor about future proclamations?

Anne pointed out that this did not happen in a vacuum; there are a number of proclamations that are read, so some questions to think about are: how can proclamations be tied into bigger picture concepts, ideas, and events, and have some action that includes language *and* words, without tokenizing people.

Flo shared that convening committee chairs was a concept discussed with the Mayor; this suggestion could involve a process that outlines/establishes how the City manages proclamations. She also asked, if the committee puts forth something and it doesn't end up on the agenda to be read/discussed, how does the group want that to handle that?

Syed mentioned that proclamations can give a voice to people, and/or education and invite others in the community to learn about something. It's important to be mindful about using it as a photo opp or if it's just about the people in the picture, that could take away from the process.

Shelly asked more broadly, why does the City have proclamations? It was determined that there is a national platform and explanation for why these happen (to commemorate and/or honor an event/time).

Flo suggested the group define its own reasons as a committee and build some standard operating procedures around that

4.b Committee goals and strategic projects (short and long term)

Language in Code regarding the DEI Committee:

- *Examine existing City policies, programs and practices through a community lens to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion;*
- *Make recommendations to the Council on public engagement strategies and methods by which all Biddeford residents have the opportunity to better participate in the decision-making process;*
- *Provide feedback, guidance, strategies and recommendations to increase community engagement specifically by underrepresented groups;*
- *Identify local community leaders and building more leadership capacity in Biddeford's diverse communities;*
- *Perform such other functions as may be required or delegated by the Mayor or City Council.*

Shelly led the group in an activity to narrow down short and long term projects the committee are interested in pursuing.

Short term:

- Standardize internal DEI procedures and a stepwise approach
- Define/present harm repair, why's and how's
- Blue Envelope program at City Hall
- Finalize and fine tune the brochure and our procedures
- Determine an event, publication, or forum that prioritizes the needs of the community
- Lead an initiative for public art by underrepresented communities
- Write a standard operating procedure/process/policy for proclamations

The most votes were cast to pursue the Blue Envelope program and an SOP/process for proclamations. The former will be championed by Anne and in partnership with Shelly, Danica, and pertinent folks at City Hall. For the latter, the committee needs to determine if the proclamation process will be for all committees, or just the DEI committee? Shelly and Danica will talk with the Mayor and see if he is willing and open to receiving a proposal to use for proclamations (how they are designed and/or chosen). In the meantime, Flo will put together a first draft of an SOP. Bistra agreed to look into previous proclamations and events that take place in the City, to see where intentional overlap has or could take place.

Long Term:

- Engagement with community partners and members
- Increasing food security by creating more easily accessible spaces for growing food
- New policy review with a lens on inclusion and DEI principles
- Annual calendar and community leadership awards
- Committing to sourcing materials from diverse suppliers and divesting from apartheid regime
- Diversity / Inclusion ambassador program with community partners
- Take on each piece of our charge in the code (i.e. examine a City policy, make a recommendation, provide feedback, connect with local leaders)
- Make a case/recommendation to the City Council for public bathrooms in Biddeford
- Engage the Recreation Commission and department to offer culturally diverse programs (language, dance, etc.)

The most votes were cast to pursue public bathrooms and work with Recreation. There wasn't additional time to choose between those two but this will be re-visited at the next meeting to determine next steps.

4.c Other Business

- October Meeting – conflict with Indigenous People's Day (October 7<sup>th</sup> reschedule)
- November Meeting – conflict with Veterans Day
  - Motion to change the meetings to October 7<sup>th</sup> and November 4<sup>th</sup> was made by Scott, Breese seconded the motion, the motion passes unanimously
- United Way of Southern Maine
  - 2 people from this organization have met with Flo & Shelly and are interested in offering more information about their work in southern Maine, Biddeford specifically, including the ALICE framework (asset limited, income constrained, employed).
  - The group agreed having them join the next meeting would be really helpful so Shelly will get the PowerPoint they previously prepared and share it with the group prior to the 10/7 meeting.

5. Meeting Adjourned at 7:01 PM.