

DEI Committee Meeting Minutes – October 7th, 2024 Meeting

Status

1. Called to order by the Vice Chair at 5:34 PM.

Present (in person): Danica Lamontagne, Shelly Gibson, Scott Whiting, Breese Reagle, Anne Morrissey, Maura Oakes, Bistra Nikiforova, Sarai Manyiel, Ariane Meno Kobo

Via Zoom: Flo Leighton, Syed Zafar

2. Public Comment (3 minute limit per speaker)

No one present

3. Approval of Minutes

- 3.a September 9 2024 DEI Committee Meeting Minutes

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

4. Discussion Items

- 4.a Ariane - Welcome & Introductions

Ariane's professional journey is a testament to her adaptability and broad skill set. Born in Kinshasa, DRC, and raised in France, she obtained her master's degree in teaching, Education and Training Professions, Training Practices, and Engineering in 2017 at Jean Jaures University in Toulouse, South France. Her diverse roles include serving as a translator, teaching assistant, and English teacher. Upon her arrival in the USA, she dedicated her time to Child Protective Services and worked with the Maine Crisis Line, earning the recognition of educational qualifications certificate as a Mental Health Rehabilitation Technician Crisis Provider.

Ariane's linguistic expertise and deep passion for education and supporting families are evident in her commitment to community service. She also serves as the influential women's ministry leader at her church in Scarborough, providing spiritual counseling. Ariane's concern for the environment and ecology is demonstrated through her active involvement in her city's recycling and waste management committee.

Her dedication to multilingual students was not just a role, but a testament to her empathy and understanding. As an ESOL teacher at Brown School last academic year, she went above and beyond. She serves as a Multilingual Specialist in French/Lingala and a BIPOC coordinator at the South Portland School District, demonstrating her commitment and empathy.

- 4.b Tech support – Q&A about 365 Migration

Reach out to Jerry Gerlach by phone directly with any issues; he will make himself available to answer any questions. Ultimately, we want each person to have access to their email (and all previous parts of their email), at all times.

4.c Short Term Project - Proclamation Best Practices

Flo gave an overview of the chart she created. The previous process included the committee choosing something that is already a part of the Diversity Calendar, someone would volunteer to draft it, and then the committee votes to approve it. Staff Liaisons then submit the proclamation to the Mayor, with the hopes that it will be returned with edits and/or shared in an upcoming Council meeting.

What questions should the committee ask (in general, or of the Mayor) in order to develop this process?

- Is this a process the Mayor wants to apply to all of the proclamation submissions or just ones for the DEI Committee?
 - If/when they aren't from the DEI committee, where are they coming from?
- The committee may want to agree to a certain number of proclamations each year, with the ability to also include something that may come up and/or be time sensitive.
- As suggested by the Mayor, having an event of some kind tied to it also could also build out the annual calendar that they committee works on and plans for (especially when determining which proclamations to focus on each year).
- Does the criteria for one proclamation submission exist for all?
 - The committee is willing to draft these criteria, and also share concerns about specific groups of people being asked to come to the Council meeting when the proclamation is read (i.e. there are several folks worried about the tokenizing nature of having people in the audience just because they are part of the population impacted by said proclamation). These concerns could be shared with the Mayor for consideration.
 - The group agreed that having an event tied to the proclamation can strengthen its effectiveness.

What might be added to this chart?

- A section that includes asking committee members (prior to submitting the proclamation) who might be able to attend in support of the document when it's being read.
- When the committee is notified if the proclamation isn't read, the notification should include some sort of rationale from the Mayor.
 - Additionally, what comes after the 'No', even with an explanation?
- Add a section that indicates some acknowledgement that an event is connected to the proclamation.

- Should there be a timeline for the Biddeford Beat submissions? Danica says the Wednesday before the issue will be published is ideal.

4.d Blue Envelope Update

Anne reached out to the PD; they agreed with an access point in City Hall. Jake Hammer in GA said he was happy to help facilitate having the envelopes in City Hall. Anne also checked in with HR in terms of work load and where this might cause additional work/be most appropriate to station.

Anyone can get an envelope (they don't need to be kept behind a counter, for example) but it's a matter of where they are posted and if people know where to access them. Shelly will follow up with Jake and Anne to get them posted in GA in the coming weeks, potentially along with posting informational flyers about what the program is and where envelopes can be picked up.

4.e Upcoming Events & Projects

Biddeford Saco WHERE Walk – Sunday, October 27th, 1pm – 4pm (Mechanics Park) – Shelly will send out the details if folks would like to volunteer and/or attend.

November:

- Homelessness Awareness Month – Flo will work on a proclamation based on existing language from 2022 and consider offering the Nov 10th annual event with Seeds in partnership with the proclamation. Given the time crunch between now and the November event/Council meeting, Bistra made a motion have Flo write a proclamation for Homelessness Awareness Month, Maura seconded the motion, the motion passes unanimously.
- National Native American Heritage Month (Shelly & Danica will write something for the Beat.)
- Diwali (November 1st) – Bistra will reach out to Shelly with a draft prior to 10/23, for submission in the Beat.
- Transgender Day of Remembrance (November 20th) – We may have a flag application coming in for the week of Trans Remembrance, and Anne offered to additionally write something for the Beat about this day/week.

5. Meeting Adjourned at 6:47 PM.