

DEI Committee Meeting Minutes – April 14th, 2025 Meeting

Status

1. Called to order by the Chair at 5:32 PM.

Present: Scott Whiting, Shelly Gibson, Danica Lamontagne, Flo Leighton, Syed Zafar, Bistra Nikiforova, Breese Reagle

Absent: Maura Oakes, Ariane Meno Kobo, Anne Morrissey

2. Public Comment (3-minute limit per speaker)

A member of the public from Ward 6 expressed concerns around any name changes to the committee. They said they don't want the committee to proactively change any language based on what is going on elsewhere in the country. They also commented on the skate park and encouraged the committee to be up-to-date and involved with that work, too, and felt it was within the scope of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

3. Approval of Minutes

3.a March 10 2025 DEI Committee Meeting Minutes

Syed made a motion to approve the minutes, Scott seconded the motion; the motion passes unanimously.

4. Discussion Items

4.a Upcoming Events (updates)

A Juneteenth celebration will take place on Thursday, June 19th, from around 2pm – 6pm, and potentially into the evening. This work is being done in partnership with the Heart of Biddeford and a few other volunteers. The organizing volunteers are still looking into funding opportunities to support Black artists, musicians, restaurants, etc. with an honorarium, so please reach out to Flo if you have any ideas or suggestions for this.

At the May 12th committee meeting, Coastal Healthy Communities Coalition (CHCC) will be joining everyone to discuss projects and programs offered in and around the City of Biddeford.

Potential events and dates for Pride were discussed, though no one on the committee has been able to attend planning meetings. The proposed date and time for the flag raising (with the committee and City staff) is for Monday, June 1st, around lunchtime.

4.b Strategic Project Updates (Public Bathrooms)

Flo shared an update from Saco and the Kennebunks, reporting that most bathrooms can be found on Google Maps, and a few include accessible parking.

Shelly shared that Westbrook doesn't currently have any year-round public bathrooms maintained by the City but was guided towards some folks that might be able to talk more about planning. Portland organizers created a strategic plan for public bathrooms, work that was done in earnest across the community in 2024. This approach, largely initiated by the tourism/downtown sector, highlighted public bathrooms as both a basic human right, and one that impacts a variety of people (elderly, children, unhoused, etc.). She didn't hear back from her contact in Lewiston.

Flo suggested a community survey/poll to engage members of the Biddeford community in this discussion. It was recommended to review the committee's previous work, the 'Best Practices for Promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Community Engagement; document for ideas and guidance. It was discussed broadly to consider offering a proposal or recommendations to the City for public bathrooms, with collaboration and support from key stakeholders, community members and businesses.

Danica shared that the committee's resource list, created a couple of months ago, has clearance to be added to the committee's website by the Acting City Manager. If the committee is trying to prepare a larger statement to advertise the website, the Acting City Manager would like to read through and approve the language.

It was suggested to add public bathrooms as a line item on the Biddeford Resource List (Google doc) and consider cross checking it with additional items on the committee's resource list. Shelly agreed to share that list with the committee and make some suggested additions. Danica will also upload the resource list the committee created to the committee's website, and everyone can re-visit in May to see if any changes need to be made.

4.c Asian American Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander Month Proclamation (draft to be written)

Syed volunteered to draft it and Bistra offered to write something for Older Americans Month, to be added to the Biddeford Beat in May. Students from the multicultural student union (MSU) are interested in joining the Mayor's reading of the AANHPI proclamation in May. Shelly reminded folks that the Mayor often likes to invite and include members of the committee to join a picture, so it felt important for folks to know that ahead of time, and that it's okay to say if you don't want to be in the picture.

4.d June Presentation (planning)

On Tuesday, June 17th, the committee will be presenting to the Council; hopefully all committee members can attend! The committee brainstormed some ideas for what to share:

- Finalized Proclamation Tree
- Flag Policy (re-revised, updated, and approved)
- Best Practices for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Community Engagement (document)
- Personal stories about group members feeling included, represented, and valued

- What plans and projects the committee has (past, present, and future)
- Number of proclamations?
- Number of Biddeford Beat submissions
- Events where the committee was present

Shelly will create a PowerPoint to be shared on One Drive/Teams, and members can add pertinent info, as well as volunteer to join Flo in presenting.

Bistra let the group know she tried twice to attend Rec Commission meetings but both meetings got rescheduled. The committee agreed that it would be best to wait until the Commission had a quorum and some projects underway before potentially building a broader partnership on anything.

5. Meeting Adjourned at 7:00PM.