



CITY OF BIDDEFORD

205 Main St.
P.O. Box 586
Biddeford, Maine 04005

DEI COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES September 8, 2025

Status

1. Called to order by the Chair at 5:37 PM.

Present: Shelly Gibson, Flo Leighton, Bistra Nikiforova, Scott Whiting, Anne Morrissey, Breese Reagle

Absent: Danica Lamontagne, Syed Zafar, Maura Oakes, Ariane Meno Kobo

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

No one from the public was present to comment.

3. Approval of Minutes

- 3.a August 11 2025 DEI Committee Meeting Minutes

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

4. Discussion Items

- 4.a Strategic Planning 2026

- River Jam reflections: Maura shared prior to the meeting that while it's an amazing event, the committee may not have capacity to staff a table. Handing out pamphlets, walking around, being present, all are great options instead of a table. Danica and Bistra both shared that the layout was a challenge for non-profits and organizations, based on their distance from the vendors (and that seemed to draw the most interest and engagement from attendees). They did receive a couple of survey responses about public bathrooms.

The lack of coverage has happened in previous years, so the committee discussed options for incentivizing volunteering for members, showing up and mingling with community members instead of being stationed in one spot at an event, and being mindful of how public-facing events may not be suitable for all committee members based on their own comfort/safety. The question was posed to think about: what events are essential for the committee to take part in?

Shelly & Danica will try to get the survey results from River Jam (from Maura).

- Volunteering expectations for 2026: Should there be a requirement for volunteer hours? Can the committee decide based on their need and

availability and what feels accessible to the public and people's capacity? Trunk or Treat, for example, could be a fun way to engage and be present. It is also worth reviewing the attendance policy for the committee at the next meeting, to be sure everyone is on the same page for showing up to monthly meetings.

- Full 2026 proclamation list: the timeline for submitting items for Council agendas is going to be 13-14 days prior to the meeting, which will likely impact some of the committees' drafts and approvals they submit to the Mayor. Shelly M. has asked that the group create a list of proclamations they want to submit for 2026 and share it with her, so she can have a comprehensive list for City leadership. Shelly G. will start to work on this with her, and then the committee will revisit the 2026 Diversity calendar at the October meeting to ensure it aligns with their expectations.

The committee agreed that Pride, Juneteenth, Black History Month, and Eid are all ones they'd like to invest time in (to attend and write about).

4.b Approval for Hispanic Heritage Month proclamation

Breese made a motion to approve the proclamation; Anne seconded the motion; the motion passes unanimously.

4.c New committee members in 2026

At the end of 2025, there will be 2 open seats on the committee (unless either current member renews), in addition to the current vacancy. Please share this info with your networks and encourage them to apply online!

4.d What's next with public bathrooms?

Flo shared an inquiry/request she received from the Mayor about the committee's current and future work with public bathrooms. The Mayor seemed very interested in moving the public bathroom discussion and initiative forward and encouraged Flo and the committee to consider bringing any recommendations/proposals to the Council soon.

The committee discussed this request and agreed they were very glad to have the Mayors support, and that data collection from local businesses, community members, non-profits (in addition to any other stakeholders) has not really been collected yet. The committee also agreed that they would be interested to see any research the Mayor already had about how this has worked elsewhere, what barriers exist, etc., to add to the information they are planning to put together in this long-term process and project.

5. Other Business

Flo will do a write up for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur to submit to Danica for the Biddeford Beat.

Shelly G. and Shelly M. will work on an Indigenous Peoples' Day proclamation given the committee's next meeting will not allow enough time to review, vote, and submit to Council with the amended timeline, before the holiday.

Bistra will work on a proclamation for Homelessness Awareness Week, to be reviewed and approved in the October meeting (and read at Council in November).

6. 2nd Public Comment (3-minute limit per speaker)

No one from the public was present to comment.

7. Meeting Adjourned at 6:42PM.