



City of Biddeford
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee
November 10, 2025 at 5:30 PM
City Hall Second Floor Conference Room & Zoom

[Join Zoom Meeting Online](#)

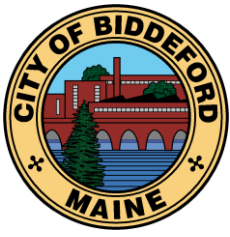
Or call in by phone: +1 312 626 6799

Meeting ID: 956 3026 7812

Passcode: 958187

1. Call to Order
2. Public Comment
3 Minute Limit Per Speaker
3. Approval of Minutes
3.a October 6 2025 Meeting Minutes
4. Presentation
4.a Presentation from Britt LaShier; the Opiate Outreach staff member for the City (part of the People Recover Program)
5. Discussion Items
5.a December Holidays Proclamation
5.b Survey for the Public re: Bathrooms
 - Review Best Practices in Community Engagement
 - Determine language and messaging for survey distribution
5.c Plans for 2026
 - Committee vacancies and Vice Chair opportunity
 - Volunteers for 2026 proclamations
6. Other Business
7. Second Public Comment
3 Minute Limit Per Speaker

8. Adjourn



CITY OF BIDDEFORD

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

DEI COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES October 6, 2025

Status

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

Present: Shelly Gibson, Flo Leighton, Bistra Nikiforova, Scott Whiting, Anne Morrissey, Danica Lamontagne, Syed Zafar, Maura Oakes

Via zoom: Ariane Meno Kobo

Absent: Breese Reagle

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

A member of the public was present and introduced themselves without comment.

3. Approval of Minutes

- 3.a September 8 2025 DEI Committee Meeting Minutes

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

4. Discussion Items

- 4.a Homelessness Awareness Month Proclamation 2025

Bistra made a motion to amend the proclamation, so it reads ‘we come together to support organizations ~~such as Seeds of Hope~~, agencies, and individuals who work tirelessly...’; this is so the proclamation doesn’t reinforce that only one organization that is working towards these efforts. The committee asked that we encourage the Mayor, in his approval and reading of the proclamation, to share who is part of the weekly circle up, and that over 70 neighbors have been housed in the last year. Scott seconded the motion; the motion passes unanimously.

Maura made the motion to approve the amended proclamation; Syed seconded the motion; the motion passes unanimously.

- 4.b Committee Plans for 2026

- Member volunteer expectations (for events)
 - Maura suggested sign-ups at the next meeting for the following:
 - Drafting proclamations in 2026
 - Volunteering to show up to the reading of drafted/approved proclamations in 2026
 - Volunteering to attend events in 2026 (Juneteenth, Pride, maybe music in the park?)

- Shelly suggested the group consider a button or nametag that would identify a person is on a City committee and is interested in answering questions about their work; this gives the committee exposure and presence in the City but in a less formal way.
- 2026 proclamations
 - The committee agreed to all of the proclamations written previously (in or before 2025) and to any new ones based on capacity.

4.c Public Bathrooms

- Survey feedback from River Jam
 - 7-10 total survey responses
 - About 3/4 said yes, they needed a bathroom but couldn't find one
 - It was a mixture of what respondents said they'd like to see available in a public bathroom: drinking water, trash receptacle, handwashing station, accessibility toilets/space, menstrual products, changing tables, sharps container, privacy
 - All respondents live/work in Biddeford (most are residents)
- Potential survey questions for the business owners (it's important to involve them so they know we value their opinion, they are heavily involved in the downtown, and they might have feedback about what could work, drawbacks, etc.):
 - Flo will connect with Delilah about how to best present a survey/questions to downtown businesses; and also maybe connect with the Women in Business group.
 - What questions do we want to ask business owners?
 - Does your business have public bathrooms?
 - If so, what are the conditions of use?
 - If no, why not?
 - How do you think additional public bathroom access would impact or influence downtown businesses?
 - What challenges, if any, do you currently have with the use of a public bathroom, or would you anticipate if you wanted to offer a public bathroom? Drop box:
 - Cleaning
 - Vandalism
 - Safety
 - Also to consider: talking with PD about time/resources devoted to dealing with issues that may be a result of bathroom use (or lack thereof), the committee needs to make the case for WHY this is so important, perhaps make an inventory list for other towns/cities (how often are they being used), determine messaging around an online survey (on the City website) and check the best practices for community engagement document to cover all of our bases.
 - Anne shared info about 'I can't wait cards' which can be used legally for some people as is emergent, regarding bathroom use.

5. Other Business

- 5.a Roles in 2026 (Vice Chair): Flo asked that committee members please consider taking on a leadership role in 2026; there will be a vacancy after Scott steps away from the Council on the committee and as Vice Chair.

December Holidays Proclamation (Syed volunteered draft)

Volunteers to attend the reading of Homelessness awareness on Thursday, 11/6, 6pm (Shelly will call for volunteers in follow up meeting email – Ariane and Anne will try to attend, and it was suggested to invite community members and organizations, too).

The next committee meeting is the day before Veterans' day (11/10); no one appeared to have any conflicts.

Council meeting tomorrow – Indigenous Peoples' Day reading

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

A question was asked from a member of the public about volunteering, both for a committee vacancy and events that are upcoming. The committee expressed interest in both!

7. Meeting adjourned at 7:01PM.

Recognizing December 2025 Holidays and Traditions

WHEREAS, the City of Biddeford continues to celebrate the rich cultural diversity and shared traditions that make our community strong, vibrant, and united;

WHEREAS, Hanukkah, beginning on the evening of December 14 and lasting eight nights, reminds us of the enduring values of faith, perseverance, and light in times of darkness;

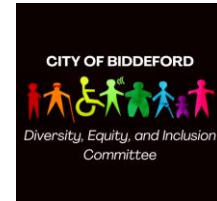
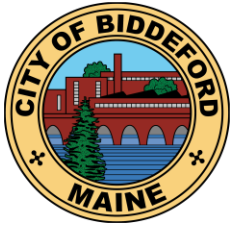
WHEREAS, the Winter Solstice or Yule, observed on December 21, marks the turning of the seasons and heralds the promise of longer days;

WHEREAS, Christmas, celebrated on December 25, embodies the spirit of generosity, compassion, and faith that strengthens families and communities alike;

WHEREAS, Kwanzaa, a week-long celebration starting December 26, honors the principles of unity, creativity, and faith;

WHEREAS, the City of Biddeford recognizes that these diverse celebrations share a common purpose: to inspire gratitude, kindness, and connection among neighbors;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that I, Martin Grohman, Mayor of the City of Biddeford, do hereby proclaim the month of December as a time of mutual respect and appreciation for the holidays and traditions observed in our City. Let us embrace this season, recognizing the celebrations that enrich our shared community, fostering unity, understanding, and camaraderie.



Best Practices for Promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Community Engagement

The City of Biddeford aims to create an atmosphere of inclusion and belonging across all areas of our municipal work. While this is an ambitious endeavor indeed, it is also one that can be exemplified by the ways in which we engage with the community. Whether we are hosting events, publishing various communications, soliciting input and feedback, and/or building partnerships across the city, each has the capacity to be designed, implemented, and evaluated through a DEI lens. Thus, we hold this truth at the core of our work: that each resident, business owner, student, and/or visitor of Biddeford, particularly those who have been the most marginalized, does not have to question whether or not they were thought of during the planning process; it will simply be true.

While this document is intended to be a guide (and potentially a checklist) for the planning and execution of varied forms of community engagement, we also recognize that language, context, and best practices are constantly evolving and will need updating. We hope that committees and City Government will use the following steps and strategies to plan for and navigate circumstances they may not have considered, or those in need of further investigation.

If you have questions or would like to discuss this document in more detail, please contact the Deputy Director of Human Resources (shelly.gibson@biddefordmaine.org) and/or the Assistant to the City Manager (danica.lamontagne@biddefordmaine.org).

Active Engagement

Do members of the community have meaningful opportunities to be informed and involved in the design, delivery, and evaluation of public programs that affect them?

- Consider how the community can be engaged across the *Spectrum of Public Participation* (Appendix B):
 - *Inform* the public of the issues and initiatives going on in their community
 - Social media campaign; City website; newsletter; press release; presentation; Public Access programming; paid advertising in newspaper
 - *Consult* with the public to identify needs, preferences, or provide feedback on actions taken in the community

- *Our Biddeford* (Appendix C), the City of Biddeford’s online community engagement platform (e.g., surveys, polls); e-mail requests for comment; public hearings; surveys by mail; focus groups; guest speakers
 - *Involve* the public in the planning and implementation of the policies, programs, and decisions that affect them
 - *Our Biddeford*, the City of Biddeford’s online community engagement platform (e.g., option analysis, Q&A, mapping); advisory boards
 - *Collaborate* with the public on projects and *empower* them to decide on actions taken in the community
 - *Our Biddeford*, the City of Biddeford’s online community engagement platform (e.g., ideas wall, participatory budgeting); partnerships with local organizations; committees; task forces; ballot measures
- *Please refer to the appendix for more information about the *Our Biddeford* platform.

Accessibility

Do members of the community have access to programs and the ability to participate?

- Strive to identify which of the following circumstances might be preventing members of the community from participating, and address/accommodate for each as follows:
 - *Dis/Ability*¹: Choose locations for events that are accessible to everyone, particularly people with wheelchairs or limited mobility. Include subtitles on recordings, and/or provide for the needs of blind/low vision participants and those who are deaf/hard of hearing.
 - *Language*: Provide translation materials and/or translators for members of the community who are English Language Learners.
 - *Literacy*: Use plain language and concise communication, free of jargon and unexplained abbreviations.
 - *Time*: Host events and programs at different times to accommodate varied life/work schedules, and provide recordings/materials for those who are unable to attend.
 - *Location*: Host events and programs at locations that can be easily accessed by community members on their own or via public transportation.
 - *Technology*: Provide materials or channels for communication that are easy to find and review online. Include assistive technology² (Appendix A), as well as

¹ Dis/Ability: The word disability, when spelled without the slash, means that the person is identified by their disability, by what they cannot do. When slashed, this reminds people that people are identified by what they can do. (<https://students.wustl.edu/disability-education-self-study-guide>)

² Assistive technology (AT) is any item, piece of equipment, software program, or product system that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of persons with disabilities. (www.atia.org)

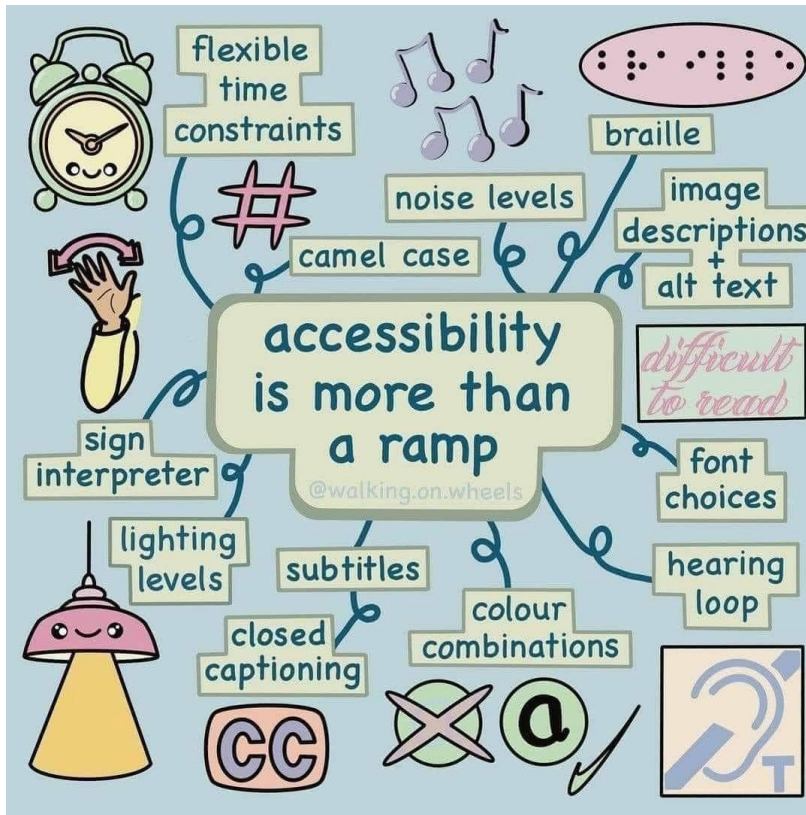
offline options for those who are less familiar with technology or do not have internet capabilities.

Accountability

Are we responding to feedback and maintaining reciprocal and sustainable relationships within the community, even after an event or project has concluded?

- Build trust and credibility by actively listening to those most often excluded or overlooked (i.e. BIPoC, LGBTQ+ folks, people with disabilities, the unhoused community, etc.).
- When soliciting feedback, acknowledge and validate the concerns, and be transparent about existing (and potential) limitations.
- Continuously review data and meet with constituents to remain familiar with who lives and works in the community.
- Ensure that groups who have been historically marginalized were invited, engaged, felt included, and want to continue to participate in the future.
- Report results once a project is complete so people can understand how their feedback was incorporated when making decisions.
- Following community engagement efforts, debrief and evaluate if participation levels met your expectations and consider what can be done to be more inclusive and equitable.

Appendix A



Appendix B (www.organizingengagement.org)

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation



IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation was designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public's role in any public participation process. The Spectrum is used internationally, and it is found in public participation plans around the world.

		INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION				
		INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL		To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
	PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

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Appendix C - Tools Available on *Our Biddeford*

The City's online community engagement platform, *Our Biddeford*, provides a range of tools to gather feedback and involve residents in the decision-making process for local government. If you would like to use *Our Biddeford* for community engagement, you would set up a "project page" related to the item you are working on. Then, you can select from available tools based on what level of [public participation](#) you are looking to promote – whether you would like to *inform, consult, involve, or collaborate with* the public.

An overview of the available tools is included below. Please contact the Communications Department for more information.

- *Inform* – A project can be set up with the goal of simply informing the community about the work you are doing. You can add images, text and attachments to explain what is happening with the project and outline the timeline for the project to be completed. This method is designed for one-way communication needs, so community members can read and learn but they cannot actively participate in making decisions.
- *Consult*
 - Surveys – This platform can integrate traditional surveys from the City's survey tool, Typeform. These surveys are anonymous and the results are not public. Typeform supports most common survey question formats, including multiple choice questions, short answer questions, rankings, and rating tools such as opinion scales.
 - Quick Polling – A quick poll consists of a single yes/no question, (dis)agree statement, or any other multiple-choice question (e.g., "Would you rather spend all funds on the new park, allocate it to the renovation of older parks, or do a mix of both?"). The identity of the respondents is anonymous but the results of the vote are public.
- *Involve*
 - Option Analysis – With option analysis, admins can provide a limited number of options, ideas, or scenarios on which citizens can vote and/or comment (for example, "Which of these park designs is your favorite?"). With this method, the community cannot add their own ideas, scenarios or options, but they can vote for options they like, leave comments on the proposed ideas, and have conversations with other users.
 - Q&A – Residents can submit questions for the project team to respond to. You can also use this tool to provide answers to anticipated "FAQs".
 - Mapping – Residents can share location-specific feedback on a map of the city. This method is particularly useful for planning and mobility projects. For

example, users could be asked to show on a map where they think new crosswalks should be added.

- *Collaborate*

- Ideation / Ideas Wall – The City provides a prompt, and users are able to freely submit their own ideas or answers. Other participants can vote and comment on the ideas.
- Participatory Budgeting – Using the participatory budgeting tool, community members can provide input on how a certain pool of money will be spent. There are two ways to do this:
 - With “Cumulative Voting”, project organizers set a maximum budget and identify several categories of spending. Participants can say how many dollars they would like to spend on each of those categories.
 - With the “Basket Exercise”, project organizers would identify several specific options for participants to select between that have a known cost. The participants can ‘shop’ for the combination of items/projects that they would like to fund and cannot exceed the maximum budget that you set.