



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.