



CITY OF BIDDEFORD

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

DEI COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES January 12, 2026

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

Present: Anne Morrissey, Flo Leighton (Zoom), Ariane Meno-Kobo, Breese Reagle, Syed Zafar (Zoom), Bistra Nikiforova, David Kurtz, Danica Lamontagne.

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

Four members of the public and prospective committee members introduced themselves.

3. Approval of Minutes

- 3.a November 10, 2025 DEI Committee Meeting Minutes

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

4. Discussion Items

- 4.a Welcome and Introductions

David introduced himself as the new City Council Liaison, and members of the Committee introduced themselves.

- 4.b Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Anne nominated herself as Vice Chair; Breese seconded the motion; the motion passes unanimously.

Bistra nominated Flo as Chair; Breese seconded the motion; the motion passes unanimously.

- 4.c Volunteers for 2026 Proclamations

Syed, Ariane, and David will attend the reading of the MLK Day proclamation at the January 20 City Council meeting.

The Chair explains the process of distributing and drafting Proclamations. The Chair requests clarification of the City Manager's preferred process for receiving proclamations. The Staff Liaison explains that they are requested approximately 2 weeks in advance. Upon question from the Ward 5 Councilor, the Chair explains the proclamation selection process and the "decision tree" that was created by the Committee.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH: Anne.

Anne will reach out to the Black Student Union to coordinate.

EID AL FITR: Syed.

Anne notes that discussions are in progress with Eisha Khan regarding community engagement with the annual Iftar.

Volunteers for other proclamations will be identified at a later meeting.

4.d Public Restroom Project Updates and Survey

Bistra is in the process of compiling a pitch to business owners regarding a survey about interest and needs, mainly for downtown businesses.

Flo provides overview of outreach efforts to Heart Of Biddeford.

The Councilor Liaison expressed his willingness to discuss this matter with the Citizen's Advisory Committee (who is also potentially discussing this matter as a priority for CBG block grants).

Anne notes that this information will be voluntarily given & reflective of daily reality, and therefore there is no jeopardy to downtown businesses in disclosing it.

Flo notes that, anecdotally, some downtown businesses have been forced to install locking doors on their restrooms. Public restrooms would hopefully relieve this pressure.

5. Other Business

Maura has resigned from the Committee due to family responsibilities. This leaves 2 vacancies to be filled by the Mayor.

The Chair will be meeting with the Heart Of Biddeford Director and the Maine Black Chamber of Commerce on January 20 to discuss Juneteenth preparations. The DEI Committee generally takes point on this celebration. A grant to support the Juneteenth event has been applied for and we are waiting to hear whether the application was successful. Several community partners have reached out to the Chair with interest in supporting the event. David, Breese and Anne volunteered to support the planning process.

Heart Of Biddeford generally takes point on Pride festivities. This Committee generally supports it by attendance, offering support, and coordinating youth outreach (flag-raising etc).

The Councilor from Ward 5 volunteers to email the Council and City Manager regarding the existence and availability of the DEI Committee to City and Council staff.

The Chair gave advanced notice that she will not be in attendance at the February 9 meeting or the July and August meetings due to personal conflicts.

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

A member of the public is a social worker who has worked with communities of color & worked on restorative justice programs. She noted the climate is *not good* for feelings of equality and respect. We have a wonderful city and she wants it to be wonderful for everybody.

A member of the public self-identifies as a trans person, an employee of a local teen center, and wishes to extend their assistance to the community during these divisive times.

A member of the public states their experience working in the queer community & wishes to expand their activity through the equality spectrum.

A member of the public states their passion for anti-racist action, and their strong commitment to the locality.

7. Meeting Adjourned at 6:41 PM.