

DEI Committee Meeting Minutes – November 4th, 2024 Meeting

Status

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

Present (in person): Breese Reagle, Flo Leighton, Shelly Gibson, Danica Lamontagne, Anne Morrissey, Councilor Scott Whiting, Sarai Manyiel, Bistra Nikiforova

Via Zoom: Maura Oakes

Absent: Syed Zafar, Ariane Meno Kobo

2. Public Comment (3 minute limit per speaker)

Marcee Winthrop spoke to the committee expressing interest in participating in the committee in the future and spoke about the experience of living in a vehicle after moving here from Virginia Beach. Marcee shared struggles of gathering enough money to pay first/last month's rent/security deposit as well as the competition between the amount of people all trying to look at the same units.

3. Approval of Minutes

- 3.a October 7 2024 DEI Committee Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve the minutes was made by Scott, Breese seconded the motion; the motion passes unanimously.

4. Discussion Items

- 4.a Updated Proclamation Flow Chart / Decision Tree

Flo described the order of operations in the proclamation decision tree.

Scott asked how the committee will decide if the proposed proclamation meets the criteria and suggested that the committee define what those criteria are.

Anne said that keeping the criteria vague, so that the committee has more flexibility to respond to things that come up, would be ideal.

Bistra suggested that instead of referencing specific criteria, the committee use the language "does this warrant a proclamation?" instead.

Flo reminded the group that the goal of the document is to help the group plan ahead and prioritize what they are working on.

A motion was made by Bistra to amend the language in the document to say "Does this warrant a proclamation?" Breese seconded the motion; the motion passes unanimously.

A motion was made by Bistra to approved the document as amended and Breese seconded the motion; the motion passes unanimously.

Shelly reminded the committee that the original discussion about this document was to present it to the Mayor to get feedback and ensure that he is on the same page about the committee's priorities. Flo, Shelly, and Danica will set up a meeting with the Mayor before the next meeting.

4.b Upcoming Events & Opportunities

- November 10th: Seeds of Hope annual fundraiser
- November 11th: Veterans Day Parade (10am)
- November 13th – 19th: Transgender Awareness Week
- November 20th: Transgender Day of Remembrance
 - Anne is working on writeup with Maura for both of these observances and will be sharing the OutMaine podcast as a resource. The City also received an application to fly the Trans flag during that week, and it has been approved, so it will fly outside City Hall.
- December 6th: Merry and Bright Night (HOB Downtown Holiday Event)
- December 9th: The United Way of Southern Maine will join the next committee meeting and will share their slideshow ahead of time.
- December 10th: International Human Rights Day
- December 21st: Winter Solstice/Yule
- December 25th: Christmas
- December 25th – January 3rd: Hannukah (Heart of Biddeford's downtown Menorah Lighting event is on the first night)
- December 26th – January 1st: Kwanzaa

Biddeford High School is looking for support and/or facilitation of the Black Student Union. Flo was the community advisor for the BSU last year and said that the staff advisors are fantastic and dedicated to the students. If you or someone you know are interested, reach out to her.

4.c Reflections and Foreshadowing (Preparation for Council Presentation - June 2025)

Flo suggests that the committee write up accomplishments for the year. The Committee will be doing a presentation to the Council in June 2025 where those accomplishments will be able to be shared with Councilors and the public. Bistra suggested that the committee use the March or April meeting as a "year in review" discussion.

Anne suggested highlighting the mission statement and communicate the collaborative process that went into developing it; representation of voices matters.

Flo would like to include the committees' community partners and the events attended.

Shelly suggested highlighting the best practices documents and flag policy from the first iteration of the committee.

Flo will draft up categories of things to talk about and we can narrow down topics at a future meeting.

Bistra suggested focusing on accomplishments vs education to show that we are working on items of substance and legitimizes why we should be here.

4.d Long-Term Projects

Engaging the Recreation Department to offer more inclusive activities and making recommendations for increasing access to public bathrooms around the City received the most votes in the goal-setting activity we did a few months ago.

Anne suggested connecting with the Recreation Commission to see what they are working on.

Breese contacted the Recreation Director and Deputy Recreation Director and they are interested in this work once they get up to fill staffing capacity.

Danica shared that the Recreation Department is launching a Recreation Assessment Survey to get community feedback about their programming. They will be tabling at Election Day to launch the survey. Shelly said she would share the Best Practices document with them and inquire about collaboration.

Bistra suggested breaking down what we can do in the public bathroom conversation since there are a lot of different people who would be involved in this kind of project. Anne suggested starting with an inventory of what already exists and advocating to keep those open.

Public comment: reminder that there are many diverse categories of homeless people, including veterans.

Shelly said that there is no 24/hour free bathroom access in Biddeford and that we can look to other towns that are putting in public toilets for an example.

Flo listed other concerns that the committee could offer decision makers to think about: Are they well lit, accessible, signage in multiple languages?

The committee will revisit both of these topics in future meetings.

5. Meeting Adjourned at 6:48 PM.