

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee - April 13, 2026 at 5:30 PM

Present: Flo, Jamie, Syed, Lauren, Anne, Danica, Breese (remote), Jake Hammer (Guest, General Assistance Administrator), Leah Schaffer (member of Citizens' Advisory Committee), Aiden (arrived at 5:37 PM)

Excused: David

Absent: Ariane

1. Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 5:34 PM.

2. Public Comment

No members of the public shared comments.

3. Approval of Minutes

Syed, seconded by Anne, motioned to approve the March 9 meeting minutes.

Vote: unanimous.

4. Current Events

There were no events discussed this week.

5. Discussion Items

5.a Public Restroom Project

Leah Schaffer from the Citizens' Advisory Committee shared that she was invited by Council Liaison Kurtz to participate in the discussion, as the CAC is also interested in the topic of public restrooms.

Jake Hammer, General Assistance Supervisor, explained how the General Assistance program works. The program is required by all Maine municipalities. It is technically a State program but administered by the towns. Biddeford's office has

three full-time staff that work to prevent or address emergencies around housing loss, whether it is assistance with gaining housing, getting rent and utilities met, etc. as well as food support. Per State law, the City can't cap the budget and has to address the need. The State reimburses 70% of expenditures that meet State standards. Jake is a licensed social worker and Biddeford runs the program through a social service lens.

Jake noted that public urination cannot be addressed without offering restrooms that are available after hours and for people that aren't buying things at private businesses. The Council just put out a list of priorities for their two-year session and one of the items on the list was public restrooms.

Leah asked if there is any location that is or is not on the table. She has worked on some design plans for Shevenell Park and does not think it is the highest and best use to put restrooms there. She mentioned that public restrooms for the proposed Pearl Point Park could be the responsibility of the developer. She also suggested an idea to purchase the former Bangor Savings Bank drive thru building and convert it into a public restroom/shower facility.

Jake mentioned that most of Main Street is privately owned. One of the key issues in Shevenell Park is that there is an ordinance that keeps people out of parks after dark. Jake is looking into any public property availability in the parking lots that are City owned but currently managed by Premium Parking.

Flo shared that we prepared a survey that we did at River Jam last year but did not get a lot of responses. The DEI Committee had previously identified that many people don't know where the public restrooms are or what their hours of operation are, so we made a map of restrooms that is now available on the City website. The Committee has also connected with Heart of Biddeford to potentially set up focus groups with local businesses to hear more about what currently prohibits them from opening their restrooms to the public. Though funding may not be available for restrooms now, the Committee had wanted to start work early to be able to make policy recommendations to the City Council.

Leah suggested talking to the library about restrooms. They currently have three single-user bathrooms and the ones on the first floor are frequently used by the unhoused community.

Leah asked if Jake had any thoughts about how the restrooms would be monitored. The "Portland Loo" is designed to be vandalism proof, allow for privacy while also ensuring that health and safety needs can be addressed.

Jake said there is currently no Police Department foot patrol downtown. The City of Portland has an ambassador program for public spaces and Delilah at Heart of Biddeford is exploring funding options to see if we can replicate this program in Biddeford.

Danica shared the Recreation Bond survey results with the Committee. Of 716 responses, 404 people indicated that more public restrooms were needed. Only 15 said there should be less public restrooms. She explained that while the Recreation Bond funding could be used for public restrooms, they would have to be located within the specific facilities that were listed in the bond question.

Leah talked about CDBG funding and the CAC's 5-year work plan that defines broad categories that projects should fall into. They are trying to create a more equitable way that organizations can submit rolling applications, including a scoring process.

Jamie asked who would handle the maintenance of the restrooms and the provision of supplies. Jake said that it would somewhat depend on the location of the stalls but may be the Recreation Department.

Jake wants to get input from the people that really need to use these facilities before we get something in the ground. He suggested an additional or extended survey that asks more specific questions about what kind of restrooms people would be comfortable using.

Flo said that the next course of action could be to review the original survey and share it with Jake and the CAC.

Anne suggested speaking to potential sponsors about using advertising revenue.

Lauren volunteered for data analysis and posting/developing survey flyers.

Leah offered to share concepts of what restrooms could look like. The CAC is having similar conversations and meetings on the fourth Wednesday of the month. Flo said she would be interested in attending a meeting.

5.b Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month Proclamation

Motion by Syed, seconded by Jamie, to approve the AANHPI Heritage Month Proclamation.

Vote: Unanimous.

Flo reached out to see if any students from the multicultural group at the high school can attend the reading of this proclamation at the City Council meeting on May 5. Breese and his family will make it a priority to attend.

5.c 2026 Proclamation Schedule

Flo called for volunteers to prepare Pride Month and Juneteenth proclamations for review at the next meeting. She explained how there are templates available for all proclamations that are updated each year to keep events and data current.

Lauren volunteered to prepare the Juneteenth proclamation.

Aiden volunteered to prepare the Pride proclamation.

The proclamations will be due to Danica on April 30.

5.d Pride Flag Raising Planning

A June 1 date for the raising of the Intersex-Inclusive Progress Pride Flag was confirmed at the last Pride planning meeting. The application for the flag raising was submitted and approved. No special event permits are needed because of the small size of the event.

Anne is going to confirm with high school teachers that the 3 PM start time for the event will work for students. She has previously connected with the Alternative Pathways Center, who will be informing their students about the event.

Danica will invite Mayor LaFountain to attend the flag raising.

Flo will ask Delilah about AV equipment.

5.e Juneteenth Event

The Juneteenth event will take place from 3-5 PM on Friday, June 19. The planned location is Rotary Park, but the Juneteenth Special Events application has not yet been approved so the location cannot yet be advertised. Danica will speak with Codes about the status of the application so we can begin advertising the event.

The Juneteenth planning committee is meeting every other Monday at 10 AM at Elements. The next meeting is on April 20.

Heart of Biddeford will be hiring private security for the event. We still need a DJ. Go See Tyce will be involved. Flo has sent out an email inviting back BIPOC Makers Market vendors from last year.

6. Other Business

6.a Shared Drive

Flo explained how to use Outlook to access files such as proclamation templates from the Committee's shared drive. Danica will also share a link via email that people can use to directly access the shared drive.

7. Second Public Comment

Leah explained more information about Community Development Block Grant funding. Because it is federal funding, there are very specific processes that must be followed if these funds are to be used, including a required competitive bid process and a demonstration the project will impact people that are LMI. It doesn't have to be City departments or committees who apply, though most have been in the past.

8. Adjourn

Meeting adjourned by the Chair at 6:43 PM.