



ANDOVER

TOWN OF

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Commission on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Meeting Minutes March 23, 2021

Meeting called to order: 5:04 PM. All Commission on DEI members participated remotely via WebEx and able to see and hear each other. The meeting was recorded and uploaded to Andover TV on March 25th and will be broadcast via Andover TV schedule.

Roll Call

In attendance:

Wael Kamal, Bassenal Dessin, Kavita Goyal (joined late), Sandis Wright, Shihan Wang, Lisa Cascio, Peyton Levental, Olivia Lu-Alba, Howard Mandell, Jorge Allen, Monica Reum, Lt. Frank Fitzpatrick, George Nugent, Rajiv Chopra, Laura Gregory, Jemma Lambert

Absent:

Jack Glavin, Rev. Dana Allen Walsh, School Committee Liaison

Introductions

Brief introductions by all in attendance. All have been sworn in except: Shihan Wang, (scheduled for Friday, March 26th), Jorge Allen (Scheduled for Thursday, March 25th), George Nugent (scheduled for Thursday, March 25th)

Brief history of Town's work to date

Jemma Lambert, Jorge Allen and Laura Gregory provided the Commission with an overview of Andover's work to date on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion:

- Town Manager Andrew Flanagan created a new Division; Andover DIVERSE and placed that Division in the Department of Community Services.
- The Town hired consulting firm Visions, Inc. last summer to assist us with completing a Diversity Audit to gain an appreciation of the lived experiences of Andover residents and business owners. Audit includes a community-wide survey and 24 focus groups. All have been completed and we await a final report on the findings and set of recommendations based on feedback from participants. All data has not yet been aggregated. That report will be presented to the Select Board at an upcoming meeting, followed by a second community forum led by Visions, Inc. We anticipate receiving that report in April.

- Andover DIVERSE Working group assembled to serve as thinking partners and sounding board through the audit project. This working group, which includes two members of this Commission (Jorge Allen and Reverend Dana Allen Walsh) will complete their work once the final report is completed. The working group discussed what, in context, “diversity” means and were explicit in recognizing that at this time we must focus on race/racism. As a result, the focus groups were assembled by race/ethnicity.
- Community Forum conducted by Visions, Inc. and Town staff in the summer of 2020
- Town Manager/Select Board added a new and detailed goal this past year focused on matters of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, reflecting the commitment of Town leadership to make meaningful, tangible change. Jemma will send Commission a copy of these goals.
- Town-wide strategic planning commenced this year with Departments establishing short term priorities and a working group developing the Town’s three-year plan. All Departments are applying the DEI lens with really great conversations, goals and synergies resulting.
- Town Manager has included funding for staff and expenses for the new Division of Andover DIVERSE in the FY22 budget which goes before Town Meeting on June 5th.

Role of the Commission

Jemma Lambert described role of the Commission to be advocates for and trustees of the work to come where matters of DEI are concerned. Envisioned as an active Commission who will work with staff and the community. We specifically articulated a charge for the Commission but left the development of mission, vision, etc. to the group to determine.

Concurrence among members that the Commission should develop a set of guiding principles/code of conduct/code of ethics to guide the work and model these values for the community. Sandis, Lisa and George agreed to forward Jemma various models they have encountered to Jemma who will disseminate to all for use and review. Laura suggested the Commission may want to research other communities to see what they have developed. Jemma agreed to send links to communities we had researched over this past year.

There was agreement that the Commission has a central role in communicating with the public, both to raise awareness and engage the community. The members acknowledged that there is a need for a small team to be empowered to craft timely statements in response to national or local events such as the recent murders in Georgia. Lisa volunteered, as did George and Wael. All have experience in PR/Communications.

There was discussion of the impact of the Open Meeting Law. The Town Clerk or other appropriate person will be invited to an upcoming meeting to provide guidance. Jemma will pursue.

There was discussion of the use of social media and how to reach those that do not use social media. The Commission decided to request permission from the Town Manager to communicate via these channels.

Diversity Audit Final Report

The final report will likely trigger another set of questions this Commission will want to pursue.

The members acknowledgement there will likely need to be much involvement of youth going forward. Youth voices were under-represented in the survey.

Next Steps for Commission

- Request that the School Committee Liaison be appointed.
- First task to craft a code of conduct/ethics

Meeting Schedule

Commission will meet on Tuesday, April 6th, and Tuesday, April 27th, 5:00-6:30 PM

Adjourn 6:32 PM