

MINUTES of the Committee on Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (CDEI) Meeting 1/18/24

Items highlighted indicate CDEI member action needed.

Pursuant to notice duly filed with the Town Clerk, a meeting of the Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion was scheduled at 7:00 pm

What: Town of Hadley – Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI)

When: January 18, 2024 @7:00 pm

Where: Hadley Senior Center

Who: Mark Dunn (MD), E. Wayne Abercrombie (WA), Joanne Goding (JG), Megan Relin (MR), Crystal Jackson (CJ), Pat Rissmeyer (PR) and Sarah Strong (SS).

Absent: Crystal Jackson (CJ), C Randy Izer, (RI)*

*Non-voting member/SB liaison

1. **Welcome, call to order, technical support for meeting** – MD called the meeting to order @ 7:04 pm.
2. **Opening reflection** – Given our guests, WA suggested we delay the opening reflection to the closing.
3. **Clerk's report** The group reviewed the 12/14/23 minutes. WA moved to approve the minutes and JG seconded. The minutes were approved 6-0.
4. **Old Business**
 - a. **Hopkins Cultural Celebration – Kelly Lamberto & Ruthann Fitzgibbons, Hopkins Academy**
 - At the invitation of the CDEI, Ms. Lamberto and Ms. Fitzgibbons shared their collaborative project-based cultural programming plan for Spring 2024 including a Trustee funded program, led by Jean Appolon Expressions (JAE), a Boston-based contemporary dance company rooted in Haitian-folkloric culture. The JAE program will be offered on May 3, 2024 during the school day and will include Haitian folkloric dance workshops, discussions drawing connections between personal, local, and global experiences, a walk of world language student projects, and a JAE company performance of Traka. The Hopkins community will be invited to view a documentary about 'Traka,' the trauma impacting the Haitian people and to enjoy a culturally themed lunch organized by the Hopkins International Club.
 - In addition to the JAE program, Kelly, and Ruthann hope to offer a program celebrating the cultures of the Hopkins/larger Hadley community. CDEI members mentioned the annual Hadley World Fair, co-sponsored by Hadley Learns, the CDEI and the Senior Center in June 2023. Hadley Learns has historically taken the lead on this event. PR suggested this may offer a potential partnership for Hopkins.
 - WA informed Kelly and Ruthann that his brother-in-law works in Haiti and is coming to Hadley this year. He may be available to give a talk about his work. In response to a question about the Haitian students living in temporary housing at the Knights Inn in Hadley, Ruthann suggested most of the Haitian students are enrolled in the elementary school.
 - b. **Update on meeting with Hadley HR Director** – MD will reach out to Troy Brin to invite him to our February 15, 2024 meeting.
 - c. **Movie Matinee with the Senior Center** – The group confirmed that the CDEI will co-sponsor a Movie Matinee with the Senior Center on 6/14/24, showing the documentary *High on the Hog: How African American Cuisine Transformed America* (season 1, episode 4, Freedom). Members will provide light refreshments, similar to those featured in the Freedom episode, like red velvet cupcakes and lemonade
 - d. **Confirmation of Senior Center classroom for CDEI meetings through 5/16/24** – PR reported that she confirmed the classroom reservation with Violet Suska, the Program Director of Senior Center.
 - e. **Review of Clerk Responsibilities**– PR distributed a handout detailing the process for creating the CDEI agenda, securing a meeting Zoom link, and requesting approval and posting of the meeting.
JG will assume these responsibilities and SS will take minutes for the months of February/March 2024.

5. New Business

- a. **Proposed Additional Meeting Dates** – JG provided the dates for June-December 2024 meetings as follows: 6/20, 7/18, 8/15, 9/19, 10/17, 11/14, 12/12 at 7 pm in the Senior Center pending room availability. PR will reserve the space at the Senior Center.
 - b. **Haitian students enrolled in Hadley Schools and the need for family support** – MD reported that he communicated with Town Administrator Carolyn Brennan who referred him to School Superintendent Dr. Annie McKenzie regarding the families who are being housed at the Knights Inn in Hadley. Dr. McKenzie shared that 11 families (16 adults and 16 individuals under 21) are temporarily living at the Knights Inn with the goal is to find permanent housing. If the CDEI was interested in donating items, families need the following: shampoo, conditioner, bar soap, baby wipes, diapers, and feminine hygiene products. There is limited storage in the Knights Inn so donations should be coordinated with the member of the National Guard living on the premises.
 - c. **EconoLodge Update** Laura Baker, Real Estate Development Director, Valley CDC (Valley) reported that the MA Housing Appeals Committee granted Valley’s request to overturn the decision of the Hadley Zoning Board to deny a zoning permit to convert the EconoLodge (329 Russell near Whole Foods) into Affordable Housing. Valley is moving forward with the plan and the next step is to raise money needed to convert the former hotel into 50 affordable apartments. Laura shared that currently folks with varying circumstances need Affordable Housing as evidenced by the recent applications for the project in Amherst. 501 applications were received for 28 apartments. A number of applicants indicate working full time but at a wage that makes renting an apartment or home cost prohibitive. People are living in cars and crashing on couches of family and friends and are desperate for a place to live. MD asked if the permit delay negatively impacted Valley’s funding and Laura affirmed that Valley lost the opportunity to secure American Rescue Plan Act Funds (ARPA) for the upcoming redevelopment phase. The CDEI thanked Laura for her update and continued leadership.
 - d. **Open Agenda** JG shared an idea about the CDEI sponsoring opportunities for people in Hadley to get to know each other. JG referenced an interactive experience in which she participated using a game developed by the Center for Race Amity. The group affirmed this idea and suggested further discussion.
7. **Closing Reflection** – MD shared that recently people in Hadley have recognized him as serving on the CDEI. Hadley Media Director Alex LaMarche did a quick review of the number of on-line views of our recent recorded meetings and counted 30+ viewers.
 8. **Dates upcoming meetings** – MD reviewed the CDEI future meeting dates 2/15, 3/21, 4/18, 5/16.
 9. **Adjournment** JG moved to adjourn. SS seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 pm by a 5-0 vote.