

MINUTES of the Committee on Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (CDEI) 10/25/22 MEETING

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: October 25, 7:00 pm

Where: Hadley Senior Center

Who: Chair Mark Dunn (MD), E. Wayne Abercrombie (WA), Joanne Goding (JG), Clerk Pat Rissmeyer (PR), Sarah Strong (SS) and guest presenters, Alexis Breiteneicher and Laura Baker (via Zoom)

Absent: Randy Izer, (RI)*, Non-voting member

1. Welcome and call to order

MD called the meeting to order at 7:07 pm. MD made a motion to reorder the agenda to accommodate our Valley CDC guest presenters, Alexis Breiteneicher, Executive Director and Laura Baker, Real Estate Development Director, (via Zoom). Motion was seconded by PR, motion passed 5-0

2. New Business

a. Overview of the proposed affordable housing plan in Hadley- Laura Baker, Real Estate Development Director, Valley CDC

Alexis Breiteneicher, Executive Director and Laura Baker, Real Estate Development Director, (via Zoom) delivered a comprehensive PowerPoint presentation (as attached) on the proposed development of the Econo Lodge at 329 Russell Street in Hadley into affordable housing.

The presentation included comprehensive statistics and analysis of how lower income households (disproportionally people of color) are more likely to be housing insecure due to the high cost of home rentals. The proposed redevelopment of the Econo Lodge is designed to address this issue by creating 51 permanent supportive apartments (50 for tenants, 1 for a resident manager). Alexis provided information about the scope of work. The motel room structure of the Econo Lodge lends itself to a comparatively easy conversion of the space into one-bedroom and studio apartments. The Econo Lodge is also located in the retail corridor of Hadley and on a bus route therefore providing residents easy access to employment. For these reasons, it is ideal.

Alexis shared the ‘best case’ scenario project time in which the property would be acquired in January 2023 and ready to lease by July 2024. The Valley CDC has already received financing and signed a purchase and sale agreement.

The redeveloped property will be home to a manager and primarily single adults with some two-person households. One apartment will be designated for a manager. 25 apartments will house very low-income tenants (including currently unhoused persons) who pay 30% of their income towards rent. 25 apartments will house moderate income tenants who pay below market rent. Income caps (% of Area Median Income) are defined as **very low** (\$19,800 – single person, \$22,600 two people) or **moderate** (\$39,540 – single person; \$45,180 – two people). Valley CDC will partner with clinical and support professionals to offer optional comprehensive supportive services.

The group engaged in a discussion about how municipalities can request Local Preference from the State during zoning approval for Chapter 40B affordable housing development. Local preference allows communities to designate up to 70% of units to those with local ties (residency, employment, children in schools). Alexis shared that recent studies show that Local Preference in predominantly white communities like Hadley, reinforce patterns of housing discrimination. The Valley CDC promotes racial equity by creating affordable housing in communities where people of color have historically priced out and it prefers that communities not request Local Preference but instead support an open lottery.

Alexis suggested that given the CDEI responsibility for issues of diversity, equity and inclusion, the topic of Local Preference may be worth our consideration.

3. Clerk's report

The group reviewed the minutes of the meeting of September 15, 2022. SS moved to approve the minutes, and JG seconded the motion. Minutes were approved 5-0 with one modification to add the word 'speak' to the second sentence in item 3 b to read "MD offered to speak directly to RI . . . "

4. Old business

a. Follow-up to CDEI response to Select Board Member comments – MD

MD reported that he and Town Administrator, Carolyn Brennan (CB) met to discuss his letter of October 24, 2022, expressing CDEI concern over Select Board member Joyce Chunglo's Facebook post in May 2022 characterizing affordable housing as bringing more 'crime crap' to Hadley. MD reported that Carolyn was very open to hearing the CDEI perspective and affirmed the CDEI commitment to ensuring that Hadley is a civil and welcoming town. MD and CB discussed resources within the Commonwealth to guide the development of Town Codes of Conduct; CB expressed interest in working with Town leaders to establish a Code. MD informed the CDEI that he extended an invitation to CB to attend a CDEI meeting, and she accepted.

The group expressed appreciation to MD for bringing forth our concerns to CB but also disappointment that the CDEI has not had the opportunity to speak with the Select Board member directly for clarification.

b. Viewing of the film *Gather* on 10/14 in honor of Indigenous Peoples Day - PR

PR reported that 12 people attended the Midday Matinee showing of the film *Gather* at the Hadley Senior Center. PR distributed the two handouts she prepared on Native American Food Sovereignty including one specifically related to the film *Gather*.

PR expressed appreciation to Violet Suska, Program Coordinator, Hadley Council on Aging for securing and setting up the film/space and to WA and SS for attending. WA and SS characterized the event as well received and PR reported that the participants shared interest in future DEI films including a movie in January/February to honor Dr. King. PR will follow-up with Violet to discuss options.

5. Open Agenda

- MD shared that he recently purchased the 1619 Project audiobook describing how systematic racism continues to be codified in a dozen or more states.
- WA shared his personal experience as a child born in segregated Atlanta and that his godmother made him aware.
- SS urged that the CDEI identify the deadline for submitting a Committee report to the Town of Hadley for the Annual Report 2022.
- MD shared that working off KW website design he created CDEI letterhead for his letter to CB

Next Meeting

MD announced that the next meeting will be November 17, at 7 pm in the Senior Center. MD thanked everyone for their participation and PR made a motion for adjournment and SS seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 pm by a vote of 4-0.

Minutes submitted by Pat Rissmeyer, Clerk, Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion