

MINUTES of the Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (CDEI) Meeting 30 March 2023

Items highlighted indicate CDEI member action needed.

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

What: Town of Hadley - Committee for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (CDEI)

When: 30 March 2023 at 7:00pm.

Where: Hadley Senior Center

Who: Chair Mark Dunn (MD), Joanne Goding (JG), Megan Reling (MR), Sarah Strong (SS)

Absent: Clerk Pat Rissmeyer (PR), E. Wayne Abercrombie (WA), Randy Izer (RI)(SB liason, non-voting member)

1 Welcome and call to order

MD called the meeting to order at 7:15, after some technical difficulties with the OWL camera. Thanks to Abby of Hadley Media for sorting that out for us.

2 Opening Reflections

3 Clerk's report

3a Minutes of February meeting accepted unanimously.

3b Annual report was submitted and should appear in the Town Report book distributed at spring town meeting.

3c Letter in support of Valley CDC's Econolodge project was sent to the ZBA and read at their meeting on 27 February 2023.

4 Old Business

4a We reviewed the ZBA decision to reject the Valley CDC Econolodge project. MD attended the 20 March meeting in person, and SS attended both the February and March meetings via Zoom. Laura Baker presented the VCDC project at the first, and answered many questions and concerns at the second. Chiefs Mason and Spanknabel also answered questions at the second meeting. Public comment was taken at the first but not at the second meeting. There was strong turnout at both meetings, and a mix of public support and opposition. The ZBA expressed discomfort as an appointed group of only three people [note: there are a total of five members of the ZBA] accepting an apartment building in Hadley when the town has for many years largely excluded them via zoning, even though that would have been within their authority. The conversation with VCDC could have continued, with the town being allowed to add conditions to the project (like Local Preference) but instead it was rejected.

Our understanding of what happens next: Town Counsel has 40 days to submit the rejection in writing. After that, VCDC has 20 days to appeal the decision, if they choose to do so. We don't

know what their plan is.

We are aware of a lot of “parking lot discussion” taking place since the ZBA meeting. The ZBA mentioned Town Meeting, but it would be too late to put anything on the spring warrant once the above 40 days plus 20 days process took place. Without knowing what VCDC plans, what would we even propose for a warrant article?

As a group, we are disappointed with the ZBA’s decision, although not without some sympathy for their position as a small appointed board, not used to handling such issues. JG reminded us that in Haley Wood’s letter of support for the project, on behalf of the Senior Center, the most common consultation at the center is the need for help with housing. This project could have been much needed senior housing.

4b Hadley Housing Production Plan

The HPP working group presented their report on 8 March 2023, and it is available as a PDF on the town web site, on the Planning Board’s page. The Plan has been approved by the Planning Board and the Select Board. MD has read it and heard kudos for the research done by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission to evaluate what the current situation is, and what the needs are. This plan is a link the town needs in the chain that protects us from an unfriendly 40B. We have to show we are making progress. Again we are disappointed that the Econolodge project was not given approval, since it would have addressed the high need for elder housing, and put no additional burden on the sewer line or the school.

JG proposes we all **read this document so we can discuss it next month.**

https://www.hadley.ma.org/sites/g/files/vyhlif651/f/uploads/hadley_housing_production_plan_-_jan_9_2023.pdf

5 New Business

5a Ideas for honoring Pride Month in June 2023.

--**could we cosponsor a movie at the senior center or library?** Suggestions off the tops of our heads:

SS suggests “Pride”, a 2014 British film about the unlikely alliance between Welsh coal miners and the London queer community, who helped raise funds for the miners during their strike. MD suggests “Hidden Brain” NPR podcast, episode about unconscious bias, which we all begin to soak up as early as 3 years of age.

MR suggests something in support of trans kids and their families? She has a PBS documentary in mind.

JG suggests a collaboration with the Diversity Club at Hopkins. (MR is our contact) We revisited the idea of a resource list on our web page, as well as seeing what Hadley Learns has on theirs.

JG asked about local Pride events. Northampton’s is 6 May, and Greenfield’s is 10 June.

6 Open Agenda

6a Hadley Learns is doing their World’s Fair event again, 15 June, which coincides with our

June meeting and is the Thursday preceding Juneteenth.

6b MR contacted Sara Jaber, the School Safety and DEI specialist at the school. We'd like to invite her to a future CDEI meeting. She is currently surveying 6th-12th grade students and staff to learn what to offer next.

6c SS wonders if there is a way to follow up on the "six questions" project from our first year, to foster connections between the various respondents. Could our network also include other groups, schools, or faith communities housed in other towns, that Hadley residents belong to? These groups can become insular, but might benefit from shared connections. This is more of a future wish-list idea. MD could contact the Western Mass Mosque.

7 Closing reflections

8 Next Meeting Date: 20 April 2023 at 7:00 pm.

9 Adjournment. JG moved, MR seconded, all in favor.

Minutes taken by Sarah Strong (SS)