

MINUTES of the Committee on Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (CDEI) Meeting 5/18/23

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: May 18, 2023 @7:00 pm

Where: Hadley Senior Center

Who: Chair Mark Dunn (MD), Joanne Goding (JG), Megan Relin (MR), Clerk Pat Rissmeyer (PR) and Sarah Strong (SS)

Absent: E. Wayne Abercrombie (WA), C Randy Izer, (RI)* *Non-voting member/SB liaison

Guests: Dr. Annie McKenzie, Hadley School Superintendent and Sara Jabar, Safe Schools, and DEI Specialist

1. **Welcome and call to order** MD called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

2. Opening Reflection

- MD opened the floor to a member reflection.
- JG shared that she really enjoyed participating in the Hadley community read *Mr. and Mrs. Prince* and author talk with Gretchen Gerzina. The book, supported by extensive research, pieces together the story of two former slaves Abijah Prince and Lucy Terry and their life in Western MA, VT and CT. As someone with deep roots in the community, the book and discussion were particularly meaningful to JG.

3. Clerk's Report

- PR distributed for review the updated CDEI minutes of March 30, 2023.
- JG moved to approve the minutes. MD seconded the motion, and the motion passed 5-0.

4. Conversation with Dr. Annie McKenzie, Hadley School Superintendent and Sara Jabar, Director, Safe Schools, and DEI Specialist

- MR welcomed Dr. Annie McKenzie (AM) and Sara Jabar (SJ) and shared that the CDEI is interested in what is going on in the school district. MG stated that the CDEI would like to offer our support/allyship.
- Dr. Anne McKenzie (AM) shared that she has served as the Hadley School Superintendent for 9-years and introduced Sara Jabar (SJ) who assumed her position at the end of February.
- Dr. AM shared that SJ's office is currently in Hopkins Academy. SJ's focus has been to intervene in situations of inequity through 1) information gathering, 2) analysis and 3) corrective action. Providing safe and supportive school environment is essential and SJ is doing an excellent job.
- Dr. AM stressed the importance of data collection, referencing the state and local surveys conducted annually as well as school specific instruments, for example the collection and analysis of school discipline statistics by gender/race. Teacher professional development is equally important, and Dr. AM referenced training in the areas of social network analysis, intergroup dialogue, implicit bias, and the facilitation of difficult conversations.
- Dr. AM spoke extensively about the importance of relationship building with students, parents, faculty, administrators, and school committee members. She considers it a privilege to support the efforts of all and is committed to open communication.
- Dr. AM welcomes conversations with parents whom she believes have the right to 'parent' in the way they believe is appropriate. It is Dr. AM's experience that through respectful dialogue and compromise ideological differences on curriculum choices can be amicably resolved.
- Dr. AM is proud of the teachers whom she characterized as culturally proficient educators who continuously revise the curriculum incorporating culturally responsive pedagogy, and who seek to teach tolerance and increase representation in the curriculum. Dr AM referenced that the diversity in the schools is 10% greater than the diversity in Town. School choice has been effective in drawing a more racially diverse population, and a more integrated school experience.

- The CDEI members engaged Dr. AM in conversation about some national leadership challenges in school districts. Dr. AM characterized the Hadley School Committee members as intelligent, rational, and respectful and she considers herself very fortunate to work with them. Unlike some other communities across the country, Hadley has not received any push back on issues like gender-neutral bathrooms. In general, when faced with a point of difference, Dr. AM will ask, “Can you help me understand what you object to?” and in most situations a mutually agreeable solution can be developed, for example, if a parent wants a child to opt out of a reading. Dr. AM doesn’t see the upside to demanding that a person violates their sincerely held belief; children love their parents and teachers, and it is important not to place students in a position to have to choose between them.
- The CDEI thanked Dr. AM and SJ and offered to collaborate with and support the Hadley School District in any other way that would be helpful. Dr. AM offered to return for further discussions.

5. Old Business

- a. **CDEI Movie Matinee: 6/16 @ 12:30 pm** PR agreed to work with Violet Suska, Program Coordinator at the Council on Aging/Senior Center, on the selection of GLBTQ film.
- b. **ZBA Affordable Housing/Local Preference MD** reported that the issue of increasing affordable housing remains under discussion.
- c. **Hadley Housing Production Plan** The group characterized the Plan as well-organized and comprehensive. The group appreciated that it acknowledged our farmlands and wetlands, and the Valley CDC.

6. New Business

- a. **Hadley World’s Fair – June 15 from 5-7:30 pm.** SS announced that all are welcome to participate. JG agreed to forward flyer.
 - b. **Celebrating Juneteenth** - PR proposed that the CDEI honor the holiday by providing two handouts at the Hadley World’s Fair at which Juneteenth will be recognized. PR suggested we distribute a statement including “*10 Things We Want White People to Do to Celebrate Juneteenth*” developed by Guimel Carvalho and Amy Hogarth, Wayside Equity Training Center, Framingham, MA, and a list of documentaries, films and television specials compiled by D’Shonda Brown, Essence Magazine (2021).
 - c. **LGBTQ pride month.** JG announced **Greenfield will be holding a parade on 6/10/23.**
 - d. **Annual Town Meeting Inclusivity** The group discussed how difficult it is for some residents (particularly newcomers) to find information on the Town Meeting date/time, location, and agenda. The group suggested that the CDEI recommend that Hadley strengthen communication about Town Meeting as this may result in a better-informed public as well as stronger meeting attendance.
7. **Open Agenda** – No new items
 8. **Closing reflection** – PR shared that she was moved by the openness, grace and respect Dr. McKenzie brings to conversations with parents with different views. PR stated that Hadley is lucky to have her as our School Superintendent.
 9. **Next meeting** MD announced that the next meeting will be on June 16, 2023, at 7 pm in the Senior Center.
 10. **Adjournment** MD thanked everyone for their participation and JG made a motion for adjournment; MR seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 pm by a vote of 5-0.

Minutes submitted by Pat Rissmeyer, Clerk, CDEI