

MINUTES of the Committee on Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (CDEI) Meeting 2/16/23

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: February 16, 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

1. Welcome and call to order

MD called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm.

2. Clerk's Report

PR distributed for review the updated CDEI minutes of January 19, 2023. JG moved to approve the minutes. SS seconded the motion, and the motion passed 5-0.

3. Old Business

a. Continued discussion on Local Preference, Affordable Housing Project, Econo Lodge/Hadley located at 329 Russell Street

The group engaged in a follow-up discussion on Local Preference, the opportunity for municipalities to request 'lottery prioritization' for those with local community ties (residency, employment, children in school). This request is made during zoning approval for Chapter 40B affordable housing developments. Municipalities can request up to 70 % Local Preference. This meeting with the Hadley Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) is scheduled for Monday, February 27, 2023 @ 7 pm in the Hadley Senior Center.

PR distributed a compilation of written statements by individual members describing their thoughts on the proposed affordable housing and the opportunity for the Town to request Local Preference. This was 'homework' assigned from the prior meeting and sent to PR who compiled them verbatim into a single document, without member names.

The group read and discussed the written statements, expressing appreciation for each thoughtfully considered perspective. The group acknowledged that from a DEI perspective, an open lottery, without any Local Preference, is the most equitable. An open lottery offers 'the luck of the draw' and provides an equal opportunity for all. On the other hand, giving someone 'a leg up' because they have a local tie (residence, employment and/or child in school) adds to their 'privilege' and potentially perpetuates a larger system of housing inequity. That being said, a member suggested that in Hadley there may be long- time residents, a grandmother, for example whose economic circumstances may force her to leave her lifetime community without the opportunity for affordable housing. The group agreed that although theoretically we support a Zero-level Local Preference, we feel comfortable building into our recommendation a percentage for flexibility. A member suggested she did not want to 'die on the hill' with a 0% Local Preference. Another member suggested that we are not necessarily the guiding voice and ultimately, this is not our decision. The group came to consensus that we would prepare and send a formal letter to the Zoning Board of Appeals in advance of their meeting outlining our reflections and recommendations and proposing that the Town consider requesting a 0-30% Local Preference. PR, SS and MD agreed to work as a subcommittee to write and send the letter before the ZBA meeting on 2/27/23.

4. New Business

a. Review of draft CDEI Annual Report 2022 – PR

PR distributed a draft of the CDEI Annual Report 2022. SS moved to accept the report and JG seconded. MD offered an amendment requesting that in the cover letter to the Town, we request that if the report needs to be shorter to accommodate the full Hadley Annual Report document, that the CDEI be the ones to edit it. PR agreed to take on that responsibility on behalf of the CDEI.

b. Overview of the work of the local DEI committees – MR

Megan Relin (MR) delivered a comprehensive overview of the Deerfield, MA Inclusion Group, a grassroots organization founded by parents, educators and other concerned residents of Deerfield. MR was a member of the group when she and her family resided in Deerfield. The murder of George Floyd and hate crimes in Deerfield (slurs, swastikas, and the destruction of Black Lives Matter signs) galvanized residents to organize.

MR described the Deerfield Inclusion Group as very responsive to issues in the community, providing critical care to people impacted by acts of discrimination and hate, creating safe and welcoming spaces, and initiating community conversations around race, racism, identity, bias, privilege and equity. The group spearheaded a number of initiatives:

- **Educational programs** on race and racism including a parent program offering strategies for talking with children about race.
- **Cultural celebrations** including a cultural dance party and potluck, with arts and crafts and educational activities.
- **Vigils and written statements** acknowledging harm, expressing outrage, and communicating public support for those victimized.
- **Teacher education advocacy** to heighten educator awareness of discrimination and to support curriculum review and faculty training on issues of race and implicit bias. Alumni of Deerfield schools shared in writing their experiences of discrimination which further motivated concerned Deerfield residents to support positive changes at the district level.
- **Community safety** – Deerfield formed a subcommittee to conduct a community safety review. MR served on this group that addressed issues like substance abuse, mental health crises, and the impacts of the pandemic. Deerfield then endorsed the hiring of a community health worker to help residents access needed services and resources.

The Deerfield Inclusion Group grew larger over time, subcommittees were formed, and various change efforts were supported by group members. The Frontier School District wrote and published an anti-racism commitment, and the district is making an ongoing effort to address issues of race and racism in the school community.

5. Open Agenda

PR informed the group that 10 people (including MD, SS and herself) attended the Movie Matinee showing of *Summer of Soul* directed by Ahmir “Questlove” Thompson (2021 co-sponsored by and held at the Senior Center on February 10, 2023 @ 12:15 pm. Several people in attendance commented that the story of the 1969 six-week Harlem Cultural Festival in Mount Morris Park (now Marcus Garvey Park) is a good example of ‘untold history’ as compared to Woodstock Festival which garnered so much attention.

PR shared that she would be on vacation for the March meeting and asked for a volunteer to finalize the agenda and take minutes. SS agreed to take the minutes. PR reported that finalizing and posting the agenda involves connecting with Jennifer James Sanders (info@hadleyma.org) to secure the Zoom link and then Jessica Spanknebel (clerk@hadleyma.org) at least 72 business day hours in advance of the meeting, for her review,

approval, and post. The agenda needs to be sent as a word (not a PDF document). PR reported that she typically begins the process 8 days before the meeting date, in this case Wednesday, March 8. The group suggested that MD take on the agenda development, approval and posting duties.

PR reminded the group of the dates of two important upcoming meetings:

February 27, 2023 the Town will review the affordable housing project and discuss local preference.

March 8, 2023, the Town will present the Hadley Housing Production Plan prepared by the Town with assistance from Pioneer Valley Planning Commission.

MD shared some thoughts about making the CDEI more accessible and meaningful. MD suggested that we create and display 'name tags' for our Zoom viewers. MD suggested that recognizing the atrocities domestically and abroad, driven by hatred and mother nature, we begin the meeting each week recognizing those tragedies and acknowledging those affected with a moment of silence. Further, he suggested we conclude the meeting with a moment of hope.

6. Next Meeting

MD announced that the next meeting will be March 16, at 7 pm in the Senior Center.

Adjournment

MD thanked everyone for their participation and JG made a motion for adjournment and SS seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 pm by a vote of 5-0.

Minutes submitted by Pat Rissmeyer, Clerk, CDEI