

Brookline Commission for Diversity, Inclusion and Community Relations Meeting
January 16, 2019 6:30-8:30pm Public Health Building – Denny Room (Lower Level)

Commissioners present: Sandy Batchelder, Malcolm Cawthorne, Jessica Chicco, Joan Lancourt, Robert Lepson, Kelly Race, Kea van der Ziel

Liaisons present: Suzanne Federspiel (School Committee), Michael Gropman (Police), Lloyd Gellineau (Office of Diversity Inclusion and Community Relations & CDO), Bernard Greene (Select Board), Vishni Samaraweera (BHS)

Not present: Sean Jaynes, Yvette Johnson, Dwaigh Tyndal

Meeting called to order by Kelly at 6:30pm. Meeting being video recorded for BIG.

Meeting Minutes

Minutes from the December 12, 2018 meeting approved.

Follow up on discussion with Police Chief, Andrew Lipson

Commissioners debriefed on meeting with Police Chief. Commissioners expressed concerns about the presence of ICE at the courthouse and implications for immigrant victims and witnesses. Jessica will circulate resources on this issue. We were reminded that the court is under Norfolk County and not under direct Town authority. Commissioners asked about the timeline for assessing use of body cameras. Bernard said that a committee is being formed to explore issues of surveillance, including body cameras and military style equipment. Volunteers will be recruited soon. Commissioners expressed wanting more information on whether there is a process to address locker room racism in a systemic way. It was also suggested that we reach out to Chief of the Fire Department with regard to treatment of women in the force. Overall, Commissioners agreed that it was a helpful and informative conversation and should happen on a regular basis so we have an opportunity to revisit these issues.

Recent and Upcoming Events and Meetings

- John Wilson sculpture unveiling 1/27/19 at 3 pm at Town Hall
- Job fairs at Northeastern and UMass Boston (minority recruiting)
- GARE Community Group meeting 1/31/19 at 7 pm at Anne Greenwald's house.
- Summit to Eliminate Racism in Brookline 2/10/19 from 11:30 am-4 pm.
- Annual MLK celebration 1/21/19 at 3 pm at Coolidge Corner Theater.
- Inspo/Expo on 1/21/19 from noon to 3pm with 70 different Town groups

Reports from Liaisons and CDO

Lloyd is continuing to work on the GARE process and town-wide goals are being prepared. Lloyd and Kelly are both on the screening committee for new HR director.

Suzanne provided an update on the renaming of Coolidge Corner school. Name suggestions are being received until 1/23. Students are meeting regularly with administration to understand process. Public forum dates have not yet been set.

Vishni updated the Commission on the MSAN conference. Vishni also shared that a new detention reporting tool has been put in place at the high school which includes reporting on race and gender, and that a presentation to School Committee on disciplinary gap was taking place. Students are also working on organizing implicit bias trainings for teachers.

Kea updated group on the forming of Indigenous People's Day Committee and the fact that two more slots are available for Town residents, plus would like to have participation by non-residents who are interested.

Committee Updates

Fair Housing update from Sandy – video shooting to begin soon. On 1/28, committee will meet with an expert on affordable housing. Consultant is being hired by the Town to research fees in lieu of building affordable housing in new developments. Concerns on segregating affordable housing are part of what we are considering. Suggestion was made to invite Director of Housing Authority to come talk to us.

Employment Diversity update from Kelly – Sara Slymon from Library department will attend next committee meeting. In March, will be meeting with Human Resources for the School Department.

Discussion with Larry Onie on the culture of bullying in our town government

Larry Onie spoke about the experience having been subject to two subpoenas by the Town and talked about what was described as a serious imbalance of power involving threats, intimidation and harassment by Town employees towards residents who spoke out against systemic racism, which has a chilling effect. Commissioners asked some follow up questions with regards to the timeline and substance of the subpoenas and workplace complaint and shared their own experiences with related issues. Larry requested Town Counsel spend one hour per month talking with citizens. A question was asked about oversight and management of Town Counsel. It was clarified that the Town Administrator oversees Town Counsel.

Brief public comments followed including by a resident who also received a subpoena and considered it retaliatory and a form of intimidation. The process of appointment to the Advisory Committee, including the need for more transparency, were also discussed. Other residents described incidents of bullying behavior at Town Meeting (by the Town Moderator), at Advisory Committee meetings, and at Select Board meetings.

It was suggested that the February CDICR meeting include a discussion on checks and balances in Town government.

Meeting adjourned at 8:28pm