

Commission for Diversity, Inclusion and Community Relations

Monthly Meeting Minutes February 10, 2021

Commissioners and liaisons present: Bob Lepson, Jessica Chicco, Malcolm Cawthorne, Malcolm Doldron, Rezaul Haque, Kea van der Ziel, Grace Watson, Bishnu Tamang, Ihssane Leckey, Jonathan Lau, Eloise Lawrence, Kazi Stafford, Irving Allen, Lloyd Gellineau, Homa Sarabi, Joan Lancourt, Mariah Nobrega (Sandy, Raul, Casey absent)

Other attendees: Betsy Pollock, Yolanda Rodriguez, Ruthann Dobek, John Van Scoyoc, Caitlin Starr

1. January 20 minutes

Jessica moved approval of minutes, second by Malcolm C. Y – Bob, Joan, Irving, Malcolm C, Jessica, Malcolm D., Rezaul, Mariah, Kea, Grace, Bishnu. Jonathan, Eloise, Ihssane abstain.

2. Discussion of WA and why

Discussion of why the extension to the complaint process work is needed, explanation of the structure of the proposed WA.

Kea moved submission of WA, second Bob. Unanimous approval 14-0-0.

3. Presentation of ageism

Betsy Pollock was chair of Human Relations Youth Resources Commission (HRYRC) back in the 1970s. She left HRYRC, and joined Brookline Senior Center, and is now president of Brookline Senior Center (BSC). She has been addressing ageism for 30 years. Lots of people think that seniors in Brookline are all well off. 18% of the 65+ population have incomes under \$20K/year. COVID has highlighted elder vulnerability to income/housing/food insecurity, marginalization/being ignored. Scramble to get them to vaccines even as they are the most vulnerable. Reflection of fear of aging perhaps. Looking for CDICR to continue to identify seniors as a vulnerable population.

Yolanda Rodriguez co-petitioned a TM WA about the senior deferral tax program, CDICR was very welcoming whereas others weren't necessarily. Grateful for the understanding.

Question about what the biggest needs are: need for senior affordable housing. Next area is transportation issues especially given the reduction in MBTA. Third need around isolation. Fourth around technology – seniors are willing but need support just like students to acquire and learn.

Question about intersectional issues relating to senior programs. LGBTQ, multilingual populations (mandarin/Cantonese, Russian and Spanish speaking are 3 biggest).

Question about relationship between the BSC, BSC board, Council On Aging. COA is the town agency, the Senior Center is the building, and the board oversees the parallel non-profit.

Although the building is closed, many special programs are ongoing and so are the social services (social workers) who are doing home visits.

4. What do we do about all of these connections with Steps 2 Success, Women Thriving, COA, Brookline Improvement Coalition.

Joan gave example of how the housing committee is doing focus groups with seniors. How can we work with the other groups? Census information – will it be helpful? Challenging each of the committees to think about how its work can engage with these groups? For example, housing affordability also needs to engage young people who often can't live in Brookline after college. Mariah reflected on Women Thriving and the anger and upset they expressed about not being engaged appropriately. Bishnu responded that people don't feel they understand how things work, and it feels too long in-between engagements. Malcolm talked about working with BIG to try and get information out on who to go to for what.

5. Public Comment

Neil Gordon complained about item 6 on the agenda, the moderator not being informed.

John Van Scoyoc complaining about item 6 on the agenda.

Scott Murphy encouraging complaint process committee to go as quickly as possible because it is important.

Ryan Black said that the Select Board has not publicly supported Raul.

6. Discussion of the possible statement about public attacks on SB member Dr. Raul Fernandez

Discussion of difficulty around the statement without the background information referenced in the statement. CDICR will reconvene separately to discuss once everyone can review source materials.

Source materials discussion:

- 01/12 meeting please watch right in the beginning. Watch Bernard Greene and then Raul. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MK7MglfObj8>
- 01/19 meeting please fast forward to about 47 mins <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gBgSMgguTvo>
- Blog post <https://turtleboysports.com/oppressed-brookline-activist-and-selectmen-says-that-brookline-cops-who-voted-for-trump-are-a-clear-and-present-danger-and-cant-be-cops-anymore/>
- BPD statement from Acting Chief, February 1 www.facebook.com/brooklinemapd/posts/3921409021214450

Late last week, a local media outlet reported that a Brookline Town Official had received malicious, racist and threatening messages, and that the senders voiced support for the Police. I wholeheartedly repudiate this behavior and disavow support of the police by any individuals who engage in racist, threatening and criminal behavior. The Brookline Police Department has reached out to the victim and offered our investigative services in an attempt to hold the senders of such threatening messages accountable. I have the utmost respect for my officers and feel that I can speak for all of us when I say that we reject support from individuals who demonstrate threats or hateful speech. Our entire Department has completed the Anti-Defamation League's Hate Crimes Training and our officers are well aware of the adverse impacts of hateful messaging and conduct.

- News links

- <https://www.wickedlocal.com/story/brookline-tab/2021/01/28/brookline-official-threatened-after-comments-trump-police/4301102001/>
- <https://patch.com/massachusetts/brookline/police-chief-condemns-racist-threats-against-brookline-official>