

Minutes: Brookline Commission for Diversity, Inclusion and Community Relations Meeting
May 13, 2020 - 6:30-8:30pm

Commissioners present: Sandy Batchelder, Malcolm Cawthorne, Jessica Chicco, Malcolm Doldron, Joan Lancourt, Robert Lepson, Mariah Nobrega, Kelly Race, Kea van der Ziel, Eloise Lawrence, Irving Allen. **Not present:** Steven Laduzinski

Liaisons present: Lloyd Gellineau, Emre Muftu (BHS), Raul Fernandez (Select Board), Casey Hatchett (Police), Sharon Abramowitz (School Committee)

Meeting called to order at 6:32pm.

Rollcall at beginning of meeting: Irving: not present; Sandy: present; Malcolm C: present; Jessica: present; Malcolm D: present; Joan: present; Eloise: not present; Bob: present; Mariah: present; Kelly: present; Kea: present; Lloyd: present; Raul: present; Sharon: present; Casey: present; Emre: present.

Meeting Minutes

Kea corrected a typo. Roll call: Sandy – aye; Malcolm C – aye; Jessica – aye; Malcolm D – aye; Joan – aye; Bob – aye; Mariah – aye; Kelly -aye; Kea – aye. Unanimously approved.

Public Comment by MutualAid Brookline

Bonnie Bastien with Liz Neill presented on MutualAid, a form of political participation in which community members take care of each other and build new social relations. Grocery and medication delivery is just one aspect, they also pay when necessary, connect people with childcare and subsidize if necessary. Three weeks ago, they started a Direct Financial Aid Initiative and have distributed more than \$10,000. It's also a source of funding for those excluded from government resources. They are working to tie all essential services together into a town-wide safety net. They are not a 501(c)(3). One of biggest challenges is finding volunteers for leadership positions. They are in the process of writing an email to send directly to those who have received services, inviting them to provide feedback on the services received, identify gaps in services, and asking how they might participate if they had time - without creating a sense of obligation if they are unable to volunteer. Contact information: www.tiny.cc/mutualaidbrookline, hotline 617-651-1468, mutualaidbrookline@gmail.com.

Public Comment by Deborah Brown

Deborah proposed representation on School-Town Partnership, especially when the budget is being discussed. She estimates it will cost \$11 million to provide assistance to marginalized groups. Seventy eight town employees have been laid off, but we don't know whether alternatives were considered. Some of those laid off were crossing guards, and parks and recreation employees. We need someone in the room asking the question about alternatives. Also, the Advisory Committee meeting this Thursday will look at the Newbury College parcel deal. Part of the issue under discussion is whether the project will include 18 1 bedroom units the price of which is questionable in terms true affordability, or whether Welltower will

contribute a sum of money to be used to rehab 60 Col. Floyd units and build 40 additional units. She urged us to mobilize and call for the spending to be aimed at supporting the Col. Floyd project which would increase equity .

What is CDICR's Responsibility During COVID19 to Brookline's Marginalized Residents?

Commissioners discussed the role of the Commission, including being an advocate for equity, attending meetings, but also acting in our individual capacities. We discussed the possibility of drafting a letter to the Select Board as individuals. Attending the upcoming Town-School partnership meeting which will be a first presentation of proposed budget cuts will give us more information and enable us to frame a future letter. A discussion of the town budget and priorities followed, and it was pointed out that the current need for services has grown and that we are operating in an environment of scarcity. Raul mentioned there was some discussion of the mitigation funds meant for REAF being reallocated, and that it was important to protect this funding. He also suggested that the Commission would benefit from greater understanding of the budgeting process.

We reviewed the suggestions for actions:

1. Brief statement
2. Longer letter
3. Demanding a seat at the table
4. Attending the finance subcommittee meeting of School Committee and requesting time on their agenda

The commissioners then decided to collaboratively draft the following statement to be sent to Select Board and others.

COVID is exposing the systemic racism that exists in our society. Any actions that are taken by the Town moving forward should try to remedy and not exacerbate existing disparities. We call on all Town Commissions, Boards and decision-makers to keep these concerns at the forefront of any discussions regarding the Town's response to the COVID crisis, including the Town's budget. Please do not make the mistake that we have seen elsewhere, even in our own state, of excluding those from the discussion who are bearing the brunt of the devastation caused by this pandemic. The Office and Commission for Diversity, Inclusion and Community Relations look forward to active participation in budgetary and other decisions related to the response to the COVID crisis.

Vote: Irving – aye; Sandy- aye; Malcolm C – aye; Jessica – aye; Malcolm D – aye; Joan – aye; Eloise – aye; Bob – aye; Mariah – aye; Kelly – aye; Kea – aye. Unanimously approved.

Community Engagement Committee

The CE Committee has spearheaded the organization of 3 precinct virtual community meetings for the coming weekend, and one precinct will host a meeting in a month. That's 4 out of 8! The meetings are posted on town social media and will go out on town blog. This is part of a

Committee goal of finding ways to engage more town residents, and to begin to create community forums to hold TMMs accountable to their precinct constituents.

New Business

Emre has mobilized a petition on behalf of students to address the budget cuts at the schools. It was also pointed out that Emre could be a voting member, and it was agreed that this would be added to the next meeting's agenda.

Joan reminded everyone of the Housing Affordability Forum to be held on June 14, Sunday 1-3pm on Zoom.

Meeting adjourned at 8:42pm.