Brookline Commission for Diversity, Inclusion and Community Relations Meeting
June 17, 2020 - 6:30-8:30pm

Commissioners present: Sandy Batchelder, Malcolm Cawthorne, Jessica Chicco, Malcolm Doldron, Joan Lancourt, Robert Lepson, Mariah Nobrega, Kelly Race, Eloise Lawrence, Kea van der Ziel.

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

Not present: Irving Allen, Casey Hatchett (Police)

Meeting called to order at 6:32pm.

Rolcall 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
Kelly made non-substantive corrections and minutes from the May meeting and the June 4 emergency meeting were approved.

May meeting: Bob-aye; Eloise-aye; Jessica-aye; Kelly-aye; Malcolm C-aye; Malcolm D-aye; Mariah-aye; Sandy-aye; Joan-aye; Kea-aye.

Emergency June meeting: Bob-aye; Eloise-aye; Jessica-aye; Kea-aye; Kelly-aye; Malcolm C-abstain; Malcolm D-aye; Mariah-aye; Sandy-aye; Joan-aye.

Announcement: Steve Laduzinski has resigned from the Commission.

Public Comment
Teena Bos: watched Select Board meeting last night and was disappointed in decisions made and interested in what the Commission is doing.

Review of Community Engagement Plan
Committee drafted plan, starting with definitions and laying out 4 principles: (1) Commitment to actively seek broad-based input in decision-making deliberations, as demonstrated by active listening, dialogue and sharing of power; (2) Respect for the diverse perspectives and lived experience of all community members; (3) Commitment to leadership development and knowledge sharing at all levels; (4) Commitment to ongoing evaluation of community engagement activities. There are four parts of the plan: guidelines, indicators, evaluation, and process and timeline.
Guidelines were adapted from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council. There will be two levels of indicators: a set of basic indicators for Depts. which have little experience with community engagement; and a more advanced set of indicators for those which have some experience with community engagement. The plan is based on a continuous improvement process, with annual evaluation overseen by ODICR. Implementation of this plan will likely become a core piece of work of the Commission. This plan would apply to Commissions and Boards, including CDICR, and Town Departments, though it does not directly apply to task forces and subcommittees. Commissioners asked clarifying questions and provided feedback and suggested edits and additions, including providing more guidance on the scale of engagement that should be encouraged.

The Community Engagement Committee sent a letter to Select Board expressing concern with cuts in ODICR’s budget. Warrant articles are putting more responsibility on the Commission and ODICR without any increase in staffing. Various amendments to the budget are in the works for Town Meeting, some with increased funding for ODICR. Joan, as Chair, may sign up for public comment in favor of these amendments. Next steps for the Community Engagement Plan are to be finalized and presented to the Select Board for endorsement.

**Reimagining Public Safety / Police**

Discussion of policing and the police complaint process predates recent events. Last night, the Select Board had the opportunity to make investments in social services, including for ODICR, and divert funding from the PD and did not do it. Only a small amount was diverted towards supplies for a number of departments. There was a really strong push from the community on the need to reallocate resources from police to social services, schools and other critical areas of need and to start to make serious reforms to the current approach to policing.

Raul released a couple of memos detailing the need to reimagine policing and proposed a taskforce to focus on reforming and reimagining public safety (which could include police in some form, but with a dramatically reduced role and footprint that more accurately reflects the day-to-day role of police). The onus should be on proving that we need armed officers to do the work, not assuming a priori that we need armed officers. He will be working on civilian complaint policy recommendations, and the taskforce charge. Bernard Greene is working on reviewing the Use of Force Policy, and has indicated he wants a ban on chokeholds (which currently are not taught but also not banned). SB Chair also hosting a town hall on policing.

Several budget amendments are being proposed, including 10% cut from police budget since all departments have already had to outline what a 10% cut would look like. Pushback stemmed from the fact that we don’t know what impact this would have on public safety. A new group – Brookline Budget Justice – is advocating 15% cut ($2.65mil). Then funds could be reallocated to schools, ODICR, domestic violence advocate, and more. Other ideas include creating a safe community space for people of color, or adding funds to REAF.

Discussion followed on the call to defund the police department, and the role and location of School Resource Officers.
Citizen Complaint Process
Sandy and Eloise looked at human resources complaint process for employees of the town and the Police Citizen Complaint process which is under revision. They are also looking at citizen complaint processes in other towns. A lot of towns have Human Rights Commissions with full investigatory power so we should think about what’s possible rather than just what we’re comfortable with, and what will produce the best results. One consideration is making sure that the Commission subcommittee has people with relevant expertise or perspectives.

Review of CDICR 2019-20 Goals
Reviewed Commission goals approved on October 23, 2019.
- Housing affordability: ToDrinks, series of forums (first has taken place), built constituency across interest groups. Second and third forums will be increasingly interactive.
- Employment diversity – compare diversity of students with teachers and employees of the schools. Would like to get the report out to a wider audience including town meeting members. Will renew efforts to meet with town departments to review data.
  - Concern that we’ll see reductions in POC teachers and staff because of increase of POC hires in recent years, and layoffs of recent hires and “bumping” for licensed staff.
- The review was not completed as we ran short of time.

Other Updates
Emre is working with his student group to build curriculum for Asian and non-Asian students on how best to understand and respond to incidents of Anti-Asian racism. The expectation is that when school starts up again in the fall, we need to make sure that Asian students won’t be targeted as responsible for COVID19.

It was noted that as there is no age requirement for boards and commissions, we should encourage young people to apply!

The commissioners agreed that we would use either our July or August meeting for another DEI training session.

Meeting adjourned at 8:44pm.