

DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION COMMISSION MINUTES
7:00 p.m. THURSDAY February 8, 2024

Present:

X	David Martin, liaison	X	Lingya Zhou
	Makena Muindi	X	Sandra Hinds, clerk
X	Melissa Kaplan Morse, co-chair		Suravi Bhatia, student
	Sunanda Pepalla		Wanjiku Gachugi, liaison
X	Zayd Dhasthageer, student		
X	Diane Randolph Jones, co-chair		

Meeting called to order at 7:05 p.m.

I. Special Business

Lauren West from the Sustainability Office made a presentation on what her office is doing in terms of municipal programs, climate risks/resilience and recruiting core committee members. The following information was taken from one of Lauren's slides:

Acton: Greening the Red House: A Living Example of Community and Climate Resilience

Partners: Acton Water District

Grant Amount: \$37,600

Project Description: The grant would allow the Town to transform what currently looks like a house on a private property into a welcoming, wildlife certified, educational space complete with rain gardens, a rehabilitated meadow filled with perennials for pollinators and a water-wise element. The property would function as a pocket park and serve as a location for outreach, education, and public engagement (e.g. accessible "Little Climate Resilient Library" with books selected by the community and available in multiple language spoken in Acton).

Project Duration: One year

Acton residents are invited to take the survey https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSe_Zz4-Ix89nORehM8G1sWGLL-6i8nFW7cCD1bHVFBVAvtsSQ/viewform

II. Regular Business

2. Notes from the Co-chairs

Melissa – Starting on March 15, 2024 there will be an exhibit called "Auschwitz. Not Long Ago Not Far Away" at The Castle at Park Plaza.

Makena Muindi resigned from the DEIC. She was an original member of the Commission and she assisted in developing the reporting system. We are **thankful** to Makena for her years of service to the DEIC and the town.

There are three open positions on the DEIC.

Diane reported that she is a Commissioner of the Upper Middlesex Region Commission on the Status of Women which is one of the MA Commissions on the Status of Women. Her appointment was effective 01/01/2024. There are eleven unfunded regional Massachusetts Commissions on the Status of Women (MCSW). These were legislatively created to study and report on the status of women in their geographical areas, and to provide permanent and effective voices for women. Each county and regional commission reports its findings annually to MCSW. There is an upcoming event that the Commission is hosting which will be taking place at Simmons University in Boston, MA. The website lists the event using the following language: Welcome to the MCSW Girls Empowerment Leadership Initiative! We are excited to host girls and gender expansive youth ages 14-22 on Saturday, April 20, 2024 at Simmons University: 300 Fenway, Boston, MA 02115. Check-in and registration will take place from 9-10am. Programming will take place from 10am-3pm. Lunch, snacks and transportation will be provided! Participants will explore their leadership styles, gain confidence to advocate for issues within their communities and expand their legislative advocacy skills by attending the full day of in-person activities. We will also host a youth forum to learn more about issues impacting young people across the state. Are you 20+ and interested in volunteering as a youth leader? Email MCSWgeli@mass.gov!

3. Updates from the DEI Director

-I held the first employee town-wide Commitment Day on Jan 30th. The day was marked with information sharing on definitions of DEI including Accessibility and Justice (DEIAJ). We had about 100 employees who showed up for two separate identical sessions (one at 11 a.m. and the other at 3 p.m.); -each was about two hours long.

-I am having four DEI Strategic Leadership workshops over the next four months. The themes will be Historical Legacies of Oppression, Cycle of Socialization, Unconscious Bias Foundations, and Foundations of Conversations. Division and Department heads will participate in these workshops where we plan to deeply explore lived experiences, unconscious biases, and knowledge gaps. The sessions aim to delve into individual roles, fostering self-awareness and uncovering effective strategies crucial for cultivating a sustainably inclusive community in the Town of Acton.

-The Town will also participate in the Massachusetts Racial Equity Advancement and Collaborative HUB (REACH) program. We have two main goals: creating DEI goals in each department (6 main departments-Police, Planning, HR, Economic Development, Sustainability, and Health) and assisting the Volunteer Coordinating Committee in creating an outreach strategy that is reflective of the Acton community specifically reaching traditionally marginalized communities and first-generation communities that have not yet experienced positive civic engagement opportunities.

-I am looking for a volunteer for the DEI office. The volunteer would ideally work about 10 hours a week. The majority of the work can be done remotely.

III. Commissioners' Update and Discussion

Commissioners' Update

David—

- There will be a survey about car dealerships in town.
- During the Pride Fair this year, some other towns may join in the event.
- Our town has a severe budget deficit that will have an impact on our school system. There will be two options that residents will decide on at the upcoming town meeting on May 8. There is a grassroots group called Together For Acton (<https://togetherforacton.org>) that is providing information about the situation. Another website to get information is <https://www.actonexchange.org>

Townwide Community Event Discussion

Diane, Melissa and Wanjiku met to discuss the possibility of inviting community members to watch the movie “Who We Are: A Chronicle of Racism in America.” They are looking for potential dates and venue (maybe the high school). It will be a free, three hour event. The moderator will be the DEI Director from the Lowell based non-profit organization called Community Teamwork. More information to come.

Town Report: Diane and Melissa will be working on the DEIC summary report for the town meeting. The report is due at the end of February.

IV. Closing Items

Approve Minutes from Previous Meeting:

Diane moved and Zayd seconded to approve the minutes of January 2024.
Unanimously approved.

Confirm upcoming meeting – Thursday, March 14, 2024.

Adjourn

Sandra moved and Diane seconded to adjourn.

Unanimously approved

Adjourned at 8:27 p.m.