

Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
August 26, 2021

Meeting Opened at 7 PM by John Coelho (Chair) inviting the Committee to stand as able for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present: Joan Bannan, John Coelho (Chair), Sofia Fernandez, Patrice Whitehouse, Stacey Irvine, Jane Conklin, Goutham Puppala and Sophia Chadda.

Absent: Debbie Ablordeppey, Nancy Cook, Ana Duarte-McCarthy.

Opening Comments:

Were made by John after requesting a minute of silence as a mark of respect for those who died and injured in Afghanistan on this day.

Motion for approval of Minutes from prior meeting was moved and seconded.

Chair invited Committee to reflect on Township Committee feedback to Recommendations.

- Sofia F. noted that the D&I Committee represented the greater community and was tasked with recommending concrete action items and determining specific priorities to accomplish.
- Jane noted they had spent a lot of time on the survey and it would be useful to have a baseline with means for comparison. She added she preferred a dedicated “Meet the Diversity Committee” event reaching out to people in charge of the various groups from the Database.
- Patrice reported that some good things had emerged from the feedback. Specifically, an updated Database with points of contact could be used as outreach. This forum could then be used to ask the public for ideas.
- Sophia C recommended to invite the communities in Database to the dedicated “Meet the Diversity Committee” event and also have the survey questions which could then be answered.
- Goutham suggested that the D&I Committee split into groups to reach out personally to the Database contacts and visit them at their venues as developing personal relationships were key.
- Stacey raised the recent editorial in B’Ville News and that all the recommendations should have been considered.
- Joan noted that while it was the D&I Committee decision to respond to the Township Committee, to make up time, she advised to move forward on key next steps.
- John-read Ana’s statement. While Nancy’s recommendation to the Township Committee was appropriate, she personally preferred a dedicated D&I Committee event. Her point was that as a new Committee, it was preferable not be too hard on accomplishments to date. John observed that while the

Editorial presented its view of the session with the Township and D&I Committee members, including actual statements from members of the Public, notably, it never once quoted or reached out to the Committee Chair for comment. He questioned the objectivity of editorial and felt it was slanted.

- Joan observed that the Editorial's view was consistent with the D&I Committee's recommendation to the Township Committee that they should approve the community survey. She also voiced agreement with the views expressed by Cody Smith and the Editorial that the survey should have been made available to the public prior to the Township Committee meeting to be open and transparent. As the D&I Committee had approved the survey in its final form, she asked John how his view could have possibly differed from that expressed by the Editorial which indeed supported the recommendation of the D&I Committee. She remarked Editorials are not news articles, they are intended to present a point of view.

Workstreams:

One Community Database:

Patrice overviewed the implementation of the One Community Database working closely with Municipal staff and was already live on the website (Community Quicklinks) She reported that there would not be a contact name, email on the website due to the frequency of personnel changes and inability to keep up to date. A hyperlink adjacent to each group enabled access to current contact information. Finally, a letter drafted by Patrice would be sent to the Municipal Clerk as outreach to the various groups introducing the D&I Committee and its "Duties" derived from the Resolution.

Stories

- Stacey recommended the stories of residents required a standard template that she would prepare, and it would include those from the broader community and not the D&I Committee only.
- Sofia F agreed on the need for a standardized template with a story, a photograph and points citing the uniqueness of their story.
- John requested the Committee to reach out to 3-5 people each and would require a release form.
- Jane-suggested a YouTube link could be considered if hosting actual videos was not feasible Dedicated D&I Community Event/Forum. Jane is the designated lead and would call on other Committee members to support her in tasks ranging from invite flier design to session facilitation.
- Joan-suggested scheduling the event on the next D & I meeting on Thursday 10/28 at the Community Center.

Somerset County Event:

- John-reminded the Committee of the large D & I County event on Saturday, 10/9, 11:30am-4 pm in Somerville spanning all towns the County. Bernard Township application was approved on the merits of its Mission, facilitating events to date and engagement with the community. This would be announced on the D&I landing page
- Jane, Sofia F, Patrice, Goutham, Jane, Joan confirmed participation and Sophia indicated she would advise after checking her schedule.

- Planned exhibits included 3 easels with enlarged photos of the Asian Rally, BRIC event and representation at other events. A laptop could also display the D&I landing page, work plan, and stories. Joan recommended a suggestion box to increase input from the township residents as well as other attendees.

- Ideas to consider for giveaways included magnets citing the D&I Committee homepage or a simple QR code and confectionery for children.

Public Comment:

Mr. T. Edelstein offered his suggestion foregoing the forum as there would be significant learning from the County event engagement. He also noted that stated that the committee tended to focus more on various minority groups without mentioning the broader population and inquired as to where the Church groups were included.

Chairman John Coelho clarified that a broad range of communities were represented ranging from Italian descent focused on service to Community in Crises that dealt with supporting those affected by addiction.

New Business:

Joan and John raised the potential to add a segment to a future D&I event on addiction including the recovery community. Joan suggested we reach out to the recovery community and invite them to the October event.

Final summary comments by Committee Members:

With no further business, the Committee adjourned with the next meeting scheduled for October 28, 2021, at 7pm with members of the public invited to attend in person or on Zoom.

**Submitted by: Joan Bannan
on behalf of the Diversity & Inclusion Committee**