

Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
September 30, 2021

Meeting opened at 7pm by John Coelho (Chair) inviting the Committee to stand, as able, for the Pledge of Allegiance

Present: John Coelho (Chair), Sofia Fernandez, Patrice Whitehouse, Goutham Puppala, Deborah Ablordepey, Nancy Cook, (Joan Bannan attended later via telephone)

Absent: Jane Conklin, Ana Duarte-McCarthy, Stacey Irvine, Sophia Chadda

Action Items Discussed:

Diversity & Inclusion Somerset County Event in Somerville - October 9th.

Committee has a designated space at the event - no furniture or tent provided by organizers. Set up at 11:30am and the event runs from 12:00-4.00pm. From submissions, the Committee had prepared posters with images of different events thus far, which showcased Basking Ridge Indian Community (BRIC) events and the Asian Rally.

Joan Bannan proposed having a suggestion box for the public to contribute ideas.

Nancy Cook proposed Committee members talk to D & I Committees/Organizations from other towns to discuss their best practices, forums and to build relationships. She coordinated a schedule for this event.

One Community Database:

Nancy observed the database could be more prominent than currently shown on Bernards.org website. (Example: new group listing should take priority over State Congress/ Senator representatives for ease of access)

Deborah and Goutham described different formats to express the listing in a more user-friendly format style.

John recommended a graphical mockup sketch to show Bernards Township IT staff. Sofia and Nancy will provide the drawing Goutham could discuss with Chris Kyriacou/ IT to implement.

Meet the Diversity Committee Event on October 28, 2021:

John reported that both save-the-date and invitations had already been sent out via email and was being promoted on the Township site and further via digital banner. Per a prior recommendation from Goutham, each member should make a call to the organizations and the Committee would split the responsibility per a grid to be circulated.

Jane had completed a site visit of the space at the library and determined it to be accessible and suitable. Proposed format and flow of meeting:

Nancy envisioned that John would overview the Committee scope and then each member would introduce themselves. The Committee would then enlist attendees in a discussion and have a brief agenda with some prepared questions to prompt the discussion.

John recommended all attendees wear a name tag and include time to mingle for about 30 minutes before the more formal forum setting with light refreshments (required outside the building if weather permitted).

Patrice, Deborah and Goutham agreed with an informal interaction approach to break the ice.

Joan recommended the Committee invite individuals not part of an organized group and volunteered to send an advisory press release to Basking Ridge Patch, Bernardsville News and post on social media.

Deborah emphasized that the attendees perceive the Committee's engagement and support, work towards building a common platform and foster a sense of belonging.

Patrice noted that over the early stages of the pandemic, many of these organizations worked together to help the community.

Goutham proposed a cultural event that all could participate in.

Joan suggested a picnic in lieu of it as not everyone belonged to a cultural organization.

Sofia concluded the open discussion that the Committee seeks input from the participants for their suggestions and that individuals and organizations.

Related to questions on room capacity, John would confirm with the library.

Public Comments were invited:

Mr. T. Edelstein noted that during virtual meetings, chats should be considered throughout the meeting. He also voiced useful opinion/suggestions regarding the upcoming D & I Committee event on October 28, 2021.

Closing Comments by Committee Members:

Nancy cautioned that one needed to be realistic about attendance numbers as a new Committee.

The meeting ended, with no unfinished business and with motion for adjournment.

**Submitted by: Patrice Whitehouse
on behalf of the Diversity & Inclusion Committee**