

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION TASK FORCE

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TOWN OF SHREWSBURY

REMOTE MEETING

Google Meet Dial: [+1 929-287-3884]; Pin #: [510 122 601#]

Richard D. Carney Municipal Office Building

100 Maple Avenue

Shrewsbury, Massachusetts 01545-5398

MINUTES

Monday, August 9, 2021 at 7:00 PM

Important Notice: Pursuant to Senate Bill 2475 signed into law by Governor Baker on June 16, 2021 Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, this meeting of the **Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Task Force** will be conducted via remote participation to the greatest extent possible. All meetings and hearings listed in the agenda will also be done so through remote participation. Specific information and the general guidelines for remote participation by members of the public and/or parties with a right and/or requirement to attend this meeting can be found on the town's website, at www.shrewsburyma.gov/coronavirus. No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings in real time, via technological means. In the event that we are unable to do so, despite best efforts, we will post on the town's website an audio or video recording, transcript, or other comprehensive record of proceedings as soon as possible after the meeting. To listen to this meeting, dial [+1 929-287-3884] and enter the following pin: [510 122 601#]. Please mute your device.

Minutes of DEI Task Force 23Aug2021

1. Meeting called to order and recording initiated by Ruth F. at 7:02 PM
 - a. Absent: K. Joseph, A. Mbaneme, N. Singh, and H. Winn.
2. Minutes of previous meetings.
 - a. Jennie F. moved to approve minutes of the 12Jul2021 Meeting. M. Egan seconded the motion. No task force member objected, and the minutes were approved.
 - b. Zoya M. moved to approve minutes of the 09Aug2021 meeting. Gene Buddenhagen seconded the motion. No task force member objected, and the minutes were approved.
3. Rich P. presented major components of the Employment SC contribution to the final report.
 - a. This SC's critical examination of Employment through a DEI lens started from the four problem statements paraphrased below:
 - i. Employment practices which encourage diverse and inclusive hiring, and to ensure that all town residents are treated equitably, vary across the multiplicity of Municipal Departments, Commissions and Boards and a municipally affiliated system of public business entities (such as SELCO, the Shrewsbury Housing Authority, and the Shrewsbury Public Schools).

- ii. The subcommittee observed inadequate evidence of intentional effort to recruit for diversity, equity, and inclusiveness.
 - iii. Current staffing of the public and private entities identified above does not reflect the diversity of this community.
 - iv. Training with respect to diversity, equity and inclusion is not consistent across Municipal Departments and the municipally affiliated system of business entities.
- b. The Employment SC action plan has four parts:
- i. Trigger a systematic review of organization employment policies for DEI deficiencies, and follow up with productive revisions of policy revision, including those related to unionized employees.
 - ii. Recommend changes to recruitment practice that can reduce the hiring pool lack of diversity
 - iii. Set targets for hiring, interview, and succession plan policy revisions that will lead to a more diverse managerial workforce
 - iv. Implement appropriate training in DEI for all Municipal, or municipal affiliated company, employees and consider making such training a key performance indicator (KPI) which is monitored, factored into BOS planning, and factored into individual employment reviews.

Question or Comment	Talking Points	Resolution (if Applicable)
Should each SC prioritize the recommendations in their report?	The task force charge is to study DEI issues at the local level, identify problems or opportunities for improvement, and recommend changes to the BOS. Moreover, it is unlikely that all recommendations are equally amenable to action. In addition, it is the BOS's job to deliberate, prioritize, negotiate, and schedule appropriate changes for Town Meeting to authorize.	SC reports will be structured so the flow of recommendations represents the logic of the work.
Language in the draft report fails to report that self-identification is voluntary under federal law.	Wording will be corrected. The number of applicants choosing not to self-identify will be monitored and reported.	N/A
Does the employment SC support transparency around the demographics of candidates applying for Municipal and municipal affiliated jobs?	Yes. The Employment SC intends to propose that these demographics not only be monitored and tracked by every entity hiring to fill paid or voluntary positions, but that the candidate pool demographics also be publicly reported.	N/A
Recommend using language other than "waiver" of "waive" to describe conscious decisions to change policy or practices that involve alternative pathways.	Rewrite is already under way consequent to direct feedback received by email.	N/A
Which term is more appropriate terminology when this task force	Beth C. proposed "should" because 'shall' is used to express ideas and laws. 'Should' is used to express personal opinions and desires, and primarily to give advice.	We will all use "should".

directly recommends an action, “should” or “shall”?		
It is common courtesy for every SC to provide a “heads up” on actions or changes they are recommending to all entities’ managerial staff members with whom the SC has held one or more meetings.	Suggestion from Lynsey H.	Agreement by consensus.

4. Jennie F. presented the Housing SC recommendations in context of previous reports from the Housing SC and comparison of the 2010 census with newly released 2020 census redistricting information shown below.

2020 U.S. Census Bureau Redistricting Data (P.L. 94-171) for Shrewsbury MA (STUSAB= MA, LOGRECNO = 355) Compared to 2010 Decennial Census Results							
Label	2010 ^{a,b}		2020 ^{c,d}		Δ Group %	Change ^{e,f,g} in Group, per 10y	di/dP
	Count	Group %	Count	Group %			
Per Capita by Race and Hispanic or Latino Origin							
Total population	35,608	100.00%	38,325	100.00%	0.00%	7.63%	1.0
One race--							
White	28,187	79.16%	24,559	64.08%	-15.08%	-14.77%	-1.9
Black or African American	752	2.11%	942	2.46%	0.35%	20.17%	2.6
American Indian and Alaska Native	33	0.09%	53	0.14%	0.05%	37.74%	4.9
Asian	5,451	15.31%	9,434	24.62%	9.31%	42.22%	5.5
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	5	0.01%	6	0.02%	0.00%	16.67%	2.2
Some other race	539	1.51%	831	2.17%	0.65%	35.14%	4.6
Two or more races	641	1.80%	2,500	6.52%	4.72%	74.36%	9.7
Total	35,608	100.00%	38,325	100.00%			
Total Population age ≥ 18	26,385	74.10%	29,609	77.26%	3.16%	10.89%	1.4
Hispanic or Latino language identity (any race) and age ≥ 18	641	1.80%	1,048	2.73%	0.93%	1.37%	0.2
All other single and multiple race and age ≥ 18,	25,744	72.30%	28,561	74.52%	2.22%	9.51%	1.2
Total Population age < 18	9,223	25.90%	8,716	22.74%	-3.16%	-1.71%	-0.2
a 2010 Decennial Census, Table P1, (Count ₂₀₁₀ /Total ₂₀₁₀) x 100%							
b 2010 Decennial Census, Table P11, (Count ₂₀₁₀ /Total ₂₀₁₀) x 100%							
c 2020 U.S. Decennial Census Dataset P.L. 94-171 Segment 1, (Count ₂₀₂₀ /Total ₂₀₂₀) x 100%							
d 2020 U.S. Decennial Census Dataset P.L. 94-171 Segment 2, (Count ₂₀₂₀ /Total ₂₀₂₀) x 100%							
e Δ% = ((Count ₂₀₂₀ /Total ₂₀₂₀)x100%) - ((Count ₂₀₁₀ /Total ₂₀₁₀)x100%)							
f %Change = ((Count ₂₀₂₀ - Count ₂₀₁₀)/Count ₂₀₁₀) x 100%							
g Relative change rate of identity group (di) to change rate of total population (dP) = di/dP = %Change _{Group Identification} / %Change _{Total Population}							
The di/dP is shown for all identity groups; notice that for some groups the change in number was less than 25 individuals							

- a. As shown above, the total population of Shrewsbury increased 7.6% between 2010 and 2020 and the distribution of residents among demographic groups changed, dramatically in some cases, from that reported 2010. Specifically, the fraction of Shrewsbury residents self-identifying as white was 15.08% lower in 2020 than it had been in 2010, while three identities (Asian, two or more races. and Hispanic language identity plus age ≥18y) increased dramatically (42.2%, 74.36%, and 38.84%, respectively) as indexed by di/dP. The ratio, di/dP, shows relative rate of change in an identity group as compared to the rate of population. The relative growth rate of Black identity, for example, was 2.6 times the rate of population growth; similarly, the growth in mixed race identity was 9.7 times the rate of population growth. For the other two dramatically increased demographic identities (Asian, Adult Hispanic) the relative growth rates were 5.5 and 5.1 times higher, respectively, than the rate of population growth. Interestingly, the total fraction of residents under age 18 decreased between 2010 and 2020 leading to di/dP for the ‘identity’ <18y old of -0.2 (507 individuals below 18 y old). These data justify the Housing Subcommittee assertion that population demographics in Shrewsbury reflect a significant increase in the diversity of town residents.

- b. The Housing SC recommendations represent a conjoined pair of experiences: coming to understand Shrewsbury residents’ diversity and learning about housing here. The subcommittee recommendations are directed toward building a population informed about housing and empowered to make well informed future decisions about housing in Shrewsbury.
- i. The first recommendation is to ask the BOS to facilitate access to information about housing for current or prospective residents of Shrewsbury. We submit this can be achieved by sharing links about housing support, about local planning, zoning and land use, and about civil rights law. We suggest placing those links on a page to be accessed from the town website (<https://shrewsburyma.gov>). The DEIT Housing SC accumulated this collection of links and developed the proposed order over the course of a year. We think providing the links organized as indicated will add value to the town website. No similarly organized collection of links currently exists, and its availability increases the transparency of access to a large body of information. The complete collection of links provided in the SC final report was arranged to meet three categories of utility:
 - resources of use to renters and homebuyers seeking accessible housing
 - Shrewsbury-specific background information about housing
 - pathways that the victim(s) of a discriminatory housing practice should take to get justice
 - ii. The second SC recommendation is that the BOS ask Town Meeting to support adult education about housing, at the Shrewsbury Public Library. These learning opportunities would fill a current gap because today residents interested in learning more about housing must travel to another community to take such classes, as well as overcome potential cost and transportation barriers. RCAP Solutions (Worcester) would be the suggested training provider for seminar topics like:
 - Renters’ Rights
 - Housing Rights for Landlords and Building Managers

Question or Comment	Talking Points	Resolution (if Applicable)
<p>Paula C. mentioned it would be wise for the Housing SC to, at least, add links to the Lake Quinsigamond Commission and the Lake Quinsigamond Watershed Association if not to reach out to those organizations for input.</p>	<p>Homeowners and renters of property on the lake alike will be interested in learning special aspects of residing in the housing units with proximity to this natural resource. The Lake Quinsigamond Commission oversees environmental quality and public safety issues concerning Lake Quinsigamond with statutory authority granted under Chapter 294 of the Special Acts of 1916. The Lake Quinsigamond Watershed Association (LQWA) is a volunteer-based organization of nearly 100 members committed to enhancing the quality of life in and around Lake Quinsigamond for all its natural and human residents. It was incorporated for the purpose of restoring, preserving, and maintaining the environmental water quality</p>	<p>J. Fishman accepted the task of following up on this great idea.</p>

	and recreational quality of the watershed area.	
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5. Break 7:55 to 8:05 PM

6. Leonora R. presented two Healthcare SC recommendations.

- a. Building on a desire to improve Dental healthcare for children who may be from the least prosperous of Shrewsbury resident families the Healthcare SC recommended that Coolidge School, where roughly a third of students (before and after redistricting) are eligible for reduced price or free lunch, participate in the MDPH SEALs program. Under this program dental hygienists using portable dental equipment provide screenings, education, and dental sealants to children in the school during the school day. The hygienists also perform fluoride treatments and refer children in need of restorative services to dentists.
- b. Building on a desire to improve the food security of Shrewsbury residents the Healthcare subcommittee recommends providing town support, to increase the resources of St. Anne’s Food Pantry or open an additional food pantry in town.

Question or Comment	Talking Points	Resolution (if Applicable)
Although the MDPH SEALs web page states “Our SEALs program is available to all schools in all communities in Massachusetts”, Lynsey H. noticed a claim on the SEALs program Fact Sheet that the program targets communities where the fraction of students eligible for free lunch $\geq 50\%$. Considering the potentially contradictory data, she wondered whether Coolidge School would be eligible.	While it would be helpful to have some data in the report about why dental sealants are a targeted DEIT initiative, Paula C. pointed out that poverty consequent to low income, regardless of race, would likely justify DEI outreach to a family. Roughly estimated reduced cost to free lunch is available to students with family income at and below 50% of the area median income (with family size factored into account). The DEI case is stronger where racism and/or language isolation, in addition to income increases the likelihood a child is uninsured and unlikely to receive dental care; MassHealth participation status of the children at Coolidge School is unknown.	Louise G. placed telephone call to the SEALs program to request clarification of two points <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is a school where $< 50\%$ of students receive free lunch SEALs program-eligible • Can one school within a multi-school district participate in SEALs?
Deb D. pointed out that dental hygienists, independent of SEALs may be available, if Coolidge is not eligible for SEALs	Perhaps the Municipal Board of Health would agree to pursue this work, either through MDPH SEALs or by using SEALs as a model for engaging local resources. B. Casavant pointed out it would be the job of town residents, not the BOS, to propose such work to the BOH.	Healthcare SC to follow up with BOS and BOH pending response from MDPH SEALs.
Promotion of volunteer work (adults and teens) at food pantries and a town-sponsored community garden were discussed as grass roots ways to	Widespread agreement and sharing of links and experiences occurred. For Example, a SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) office is opening on Sunderland Road in Worcester,	N/A

promote the food security of all Shrewsbury residents	adjacent to the Edgemere Section of Shrewsbury.	
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7. Roop J-K introduced the Storytellers’ SC final report. The goal of collecting narratives was “to capture residents’ voices” in conversation that would feed both positive and negative resident experiences of DEI to the other subcommittees from a town-approved space where new (and perhaps difficult) conversations might be initiated.
 - a. The twenty or so brave residents who participated are honor and are honored by the SC who noted, “The stories speak for themselves.”
 - b. The inability to provide complete anonymity for the participant in a face-to-face meeting was reported as the barrier to some residents’ participation in listening sessions with the Storyteller SC. Without total anonymity the risk of a leak resulting in backlash or retaliation was perceived as high and most stories were therefore received in written form.
 - c. Members of the Storyteller SC observed residents’ behavior on unofficial Shrewsbury Facebook pages that was racist, hurtful, showed age bias and lack of respect when a healthy dialogue was attempted around Critical Race Theory and The Colonial mascot. Their report notes that behavior such as this can easily hold people back from sharing in any forum that may be publicized and concluded, “Until the community responds in a way that shows we will not tolerate personal attacks due to difference of opinion or background, micro and macro aggressions will continue.”
 - d. The Storyteller SC will make the following recommendations to the BOS:
 - i. Encourage ways in which people educate one another other about our differences such as more public festivals that are rooted in a specific culture.
 - ii. Find ways to connect public employees with the community at large, in this way people come to see other persons vs other positions
 - iii. Encourage events, like the diversity fair, which afford the opportunity to share food, music and dress of homelands that may not be the United States.
 - iv. Create a public space in which meaningful interactions, such as storytelling, can occur independent of the risk of backlash or retaliation.
 - v. Hire a DEI director to mindfully lead forward the work of addressing truth which is uncomfortable to some or many participants.
 - vi. All other subcommittees can feel free to tap into the collected narratives.

Question or Comment	Talking Points	Resolution (if Applicable)
Paula C. reminded the Task Force that Mr. Mizikar, our Town Manager pointed out the illegality of creating public policy based on anonymous information.	N/A	N/A

8. At 9:04 PM Lynsey H. moved to adjourn. Gene B seconded. No Task Force member objected, and the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted 02September2021 by Louise Garone