

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, September 13, 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.

Present: Ruth Febo – Co-Chair, Adeola Mbaneme – Co-Chair, Maura Egan - Clerk, Gene Buddenhagen, Beth Casavant, Lynsey Heffernan, Jennie Fishman, Zoya Mehta, Deb DelDotto, Janine Sands, Leonora Ryan, Louise Garone, Richard Petrucci, Juan Acosta, Kelly Joseph, Donna Jarrell, Navjeet Singh, Paula Collins, Priya Rathnam, and Rajesh Velagapudi

Absent: Noor Ali, Elizabeth Hylton, Roop Jyot Kaur, Milind Kantikar, Helene Winn

7:00 PM Call to Order- Ruth

Deb DelDotto made a motion to approve minutes from 8/23/2021 meeting. Zoya Mehta seconded the motion.

Ruth shared that Public Safety and Education will present their recommendations/final report

Public Safety Presentation

Juan Acosta reviewed the major points of the proposal

Louise Garrone asked about the comments she made on the recommendations. Juan said that they plan to leaving the report as is.

Juan reviewed the problem statement and shared all nine recommendations

- a. End Civil Service
- b. Race Equity Policy Review

- c. End In-School resource officer program
- d. Create a civilian review board
- e. Create a permanent DEI Committee
- f. Training
- g. Community Engagement
- h. Collection and Tracking of Data
- i. Remove thin blue line symbol
 - Paula Collins shared she thinks the wording of the Problem Statement might be received by the police dept. as a bit aggressive. Beth Cassavant confirmed that this committee has reached out to the police department and will share their findings with the police department prior to release of this document.
 - Jenni Fishman asked if the police department has social workers in the department. At this time there are not, but there is a need. Beth C. reported that Chief Anderson is very much on board with this. It is part of his strategic plan. Donna said there is a desire to do this with transparency and with the community is engaged.

SRO Discussion

- Lynsey Heffernan raised the point of looking at the SRO program from the perspective of the schools. It has been an important piece of school safety. Both SPS administrators and building leaders think this is important. Concern that there is a need that's being filled with the SRO program. It's not a "School to Prison" pipeline situation in Shrewsbury. There are changes at the state level regarding SRO. Contemplate the idea of rather than "abolish" then review the needs
- Permanent DEI committee would look at all issues, not just Public Safety.
- Juan said they had a conversation with Chief of Police. His main objective is that the SRO is more of a mentoring role. The school safety aspect was not front and center. We are recommending that the SRO program is ended, but the Board of Selectmen has the final say. At a minimum we would like them to review the program to see if they are meeting their objectives.
- Kelly Joseph shared that the research overwhelmingly suggests that an SRO has no impact on school safety. Rather we should have more input on getting more social workers in the schools. Take the pulse of the student body with attention to the students of color
- Lousie asked the subcommittee to make the report more directly about what you want
- Gene feels it is very important to maintain the resource officer. Cited an example from Worcester.
- Kelly J. said that Worcester is eliminating the SRO program.
- Richard said the employment committee has civil service as a small bullet point, but keep it here in Public Safety. His committee added something about the permanent DEI committee in his subcommittee report, but he'd like it to be an overall recommendation. SRO - do they really have any say over suspensions? Jennie cited that in the research they found, they did.
- Kelly shared that Black and brown students are seen as criminals more frequently - We are all prone to racial bias and implicit bias. These are very real things that we are having conversations about. These beliefs about who is "good" and who is "bad" is deeply racialized. Having an SRO on site is a form of institutionalized racism. Outcomes that are inequitable for different groups.

Civilian Review Board Discussion

- Donna will have another meeting so they can flesh out their wording.
- Beth has questions about the subpoena power.
- Kelly said this(Civilian Review Board) is worth further discussion in the subcommittee. Possibly it is just for them to look into it. Table for a subcommittee meeting.
- Leonora asked for an explanation of the "Thin Blue Line"
- Kelly explained that it has been co-opted by white supremacist groups. Came to fruition in 2014 in response to BLM. Seen as threatening to POC.
- Chief explained that it is actually a part of their uniforms. -

5. Ruth talked about recommending a permanent DEI committee- it should be overarching, not Public Safety specific. Kelly agreed that it belongs there. Final report is due in four weeks.

Ruth reviewed the timeline:

Submit to board of Selectmen by October 13th. Meet with Board on October 19th.

Timeline for Task Force:

27-Sep-21 ***Final Report will be emailed to Entire Task Force***

Review and be prepared to discuss on 10/4/21

4-Oct-21 DEI Meeting (Monday) Meet to discuss and give last thoughts.

If no updates to be made to report we can VOTE on the final report on this date!

12-Oct-21 Tentative: DEI Meeting (Tuesday) Meet to finalize and VOTE on final report

13-Oct-21 Submit to BoS October 13th!

19-Oct-21 Board of Selectman Presentation

Education Subcommittee Presentation - Maura Egan presented the updated findings findings

- Recommendation #1: Increase diversity in all staff across Shrewsbury Public Schools
- Recommendation #2: Focus on all families in Shrewsbury Public Schools
- Recommendation #3: Focus on all students in Shrewsbury Public Schools
- Recommendation #4: Work in partnership with and parallel to Shrewsbury Public Schools Senior Leadership Team
- Maura shared the proposed plan for each recommendation and the proposed success criteria. A full explanation of the report can be found in the DEI Task Force Folder.

- Navjeet Singh- Asked about why there was not a specific recommendation ensuring Curriculum and instructional represents the various cultures and religions
- Lynsey posed a question to consider - What are the ways that we can make leadership in the town as a whole to look at diversity
- Navjeet - Improving the diversity of the leadership is important. The leadership itself needs to embrace diversity. Not just “who is there” but the actions that are taken on a regular basis.
- Paula - Challenges with that recommendation. Because diverse people are not showing up. Diversity committee can really push to have diverse people show up and volunteer.
- Jeannie- agreed, but people do not feel supported

6. Opportunity for members to ask questions/comments on presentations

- Ruth made a call for at least one member of the subcommittees to be with us on October 19th. Adeola asked that at least one member of each subcommittee be at the meeting

7. Discuss format of Final Report

- Final discussion will be on October 4th

8. General questions

- Navjeet suggested that we look at diversity in our procurement contracts. Also other services are provided to residents. Make a recommendation to look at the current status of contracts.
- Ruth said we will have to put it out to a vote
- Gene shared that the town has control of contracts under \$50,000. The state has to approve contracts above \$50,000

9. Adjourn - Paula Collins made a motion to adjourn at 8:59pm. Deb DelDotto seconded.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Maura Egan