

June 23, 2021

Re: Q2 status update from Shrewsbury Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Task Force

To the Shrewsbury Board of Selectmen,

Since our last update submitted April 8, 2021, the Shrewsbury Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Task Force has met on April 12, May 3, May 10 and June 7.

The Task Force co-chairs, Ruth Febo and Adeola Mbaneme, had the pleasure of presenting at the Board of Selectmen Meeting on April 13, where they gave a brief update on the work being performed by the Task Force and its Subcommittees as well discuss challenges arising from the nature of the Task Force's charge and meeting during a pandemic.

Another subcommittee was formed, Survey Subcommittee, after the Shrewsbury DEI voted to send a survey to the residents of Shrewsbury. The survey launched June 21 and will be used to obtain a general sense within the community as to how residents are feeling with regards to matters of diversity, equity and inclusion in town. The survey can be filled out electronically, <https://forms.gle/y4kt9LLENbk9F6zC6>, and for those who do not have access to computers, copies of the survey will be made available at locations like Town Hall, Library and Senior Center at a date yet to be determined.

Each subcommittee continues to meet regularly and engage in areas particular to its domain. They also continue to work on gathering recommendations for the final proposal to the Shrewsbury Board of Selectmen. Once the survey is completed and tallied, the Task Force will meet to discuss the results and next steps.

Please see the updates from each subcommittee on the following pages.

Subcommittees

- **Education Subcommittee** Chair Maura Egan, Vice-Chair Adeola Mbaneme, Clerk Lynsey Heffernan, Clerk Deborah DelDotto
- **Employment Subcommittee** Chair Allen Jarrell, Vice Chair Richard Petrucci, Clerk Navjeet Singh
- **Healthcare Subcommittee** Chair Leonora Ryan, Clerk Zoya Mehta
- **Housing Subcommittee** Chair Jennie Fishman Clerk Ruth Febo
- **Public Safety Subcommittee** Chair Donna Jarrell, Co-Chair Elizabeth Hylton, Clerk Juan Acosta
- **Story Telling Subcommittee** Paula Collins, Roop Jyot Kaur, Noor Ali
- **Survey Subcommittee** Chair Milind Kanitkar, Maura Egan, Paula Collins, Jennie Fishman, Deb DelDotto

Sincerely,

Ruth Febo and Adeola Mbaneme

Co-Chairs of the Shrewsbury Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Task Force

Contents

Education Subcommittee Report.....	3
Problem Statement	3
Update	3
Employment Subcommittee Report	4
Healthcare Subcommittee Report	5
Food Insecurity	5
Dental Health.....	5
SEALS (Program available to all schools in all communities in Massachusetts).....	5
Housing Subcommittee Report.....	6
Appendix 1 - Mandatory Signage	8
Appendix 2 - Massachusetts DHCD Fair Housing Mission Statement and Principles.....	9
Public Safety Subcommittee Report	10
Recommendations Being Vetted.....	11
Storyteller Subcommittee Report.....	12
Survey Subcommittee Report.....	13
Update	13
Slides Presented to DEI Task Force.....	14

Education Subcommittee Report

Members: Deb DeDotto, Maura Egan, Lynsey Heffernan, Adeola Mbaneme, Priya Rathnam, Rajesh Velagapudi, Helene Winn

Problem Statement

Ensure that all children and families feel include in all places and spaces in public schools and other Shrewsbury departments

We met with Amy Clouter, Asst. Superintendent of Teaching and Learning and were part of the meeting with Barb Malone, Human Resources Director for Shrewsbury Public Schools. They both shared the vision of DEI for students, families, new hires, and staff.

Update

At our May 17th meeting we discussed the idea of meeting with Superintendent Joe Sawyer, Asst. Superintendent of Curriculum Amy Clouter and Executive Director of Human Resources Barb Malone. The purpose of the meeting would be to share our recommendations from the April 2021 report with the Shrewsbury Senior District Leadership Team. The goal of the meeting would be to discuss how we can work in partnership with the Shrewsbury Public Schools Senior District Leadership Team to continue to move equity forward across the district.

Maura Egan communicated with Dr. Sawyer and proposed several dates to meet in June. Dr. Sawyer asked that the Education Subcommittee share our recommendations with him, Ms. Clouter and Ms. Malone. Maura Egan shared the recommendations with all three members. To date, Dr. Sawyer has not been able to find a date when all three members of the Shrewsbury Senior District Leadership Team can meet with the Education Subcommittee. We will continue to work to find a mutually convenient date.

In addition to discussing the recommendations, the Education Subcommittee will ask about ideas for ways to incorporate the Storytelling group with students in schools, students in clubs and sports, and families. Also, the Education Subcommittee will ask about ways we can ask faculty to share their stories with the Storytelling group. Finally, the Education Subcommittee will ask about plans for students to receive anti-bias training and implicit bias training and we will request that DEI be added to harassment and bullying policies. Our goal is that we work in partnership with the Shrewsbury Senior District Leadership Team.

Employment Subcommittee Report

Members: Gene Buddenhagen, Allen Jarrell, Milind Kanitkar, Richard Petrucci, Navjeet Singh

The Employment Subcommittee met on the Following Dates

- January 4, 2021
- January 18, 2021
- February 1, 2021
- February 17, 2021
- March 1, 2021
- March 11, 2021
- March 29, 2021
- April 13, 2021
- April 28, 2021
- May 10, 2021
- June 14, 2021
- Next Meeting – July 12, pending final planning.

The Employment Subcommittee continued its work based on its four problem statements

1. The town hiring does not reflect the diversity of the community.
2. Training efforts related to DEI are not consistent across all departments.
3. The town recruitment efforts do not result in a diverse pool of applicants.
4. The town lacks coordinated employment practices that encourages diverse and inclusive hiring and training practices that ensures residents are treated equitably.

Since the last report, the Employment Subcommittee has focused on refining the draft recommendations made in that report in the areas of Policy, Recruiting, Hiring and Training. The committee attempted to meet with Sanam Zaer of the 'A Better Shrewsbury' Facebook group. Scheduling conflicts prevented this, but we hope to meet with her on the July 12 meeting. The committee's report was reviewed by Jon Wortmann, and he gave us some good feedback that was discussed at a follow-on meeting and is being used to help refine the report.

Some further areas that the committee may consider if time allows are looking into how contracts are handled by the town to see if there are any DEI improvements that can be made. Also considering gathering more information on ability/disability groups and age discrimination.

Healthcare Subcommittee Report

Members: Leonora Ryan, Zoya Mehta, Janine Sands

Food Insecurity

1. Food insecurity affects your health by causing: anxiety, stress, depression, phobia and panic.
2. We need outreach to seniors and disabled residents.
3. 20% self-report food insecurity and 14% of the general population report food insecurity.
4. A letter was sent to Hannah Kane regarding this topic, and she sent a plethora of information. There are many committees on all levels that are dealing with this topic.
5. St. Ann's Church and the Senior Center are the only food pantries in Shrewsbury. At St. Ann's no one is turned away.
6. No demographics are collected, so we do not know how many Shrewsbury residents are receiving help. When they run out of food, they give gift cards.
7. St. Mary's Church gives gift cards to help out. Panera Bread and Trader Joe's supply some food. The pantry is available on Mondays only. On the third Monday of each month dairy products and meat are available.
8. The church has had a thrift store for many years. A decision was made to close the store and allocate that space for food.
9. The food pantry at the Senior Center was established to assist St. Ann's. However, it is relatively new.
10. Now that the Senior Center will be open, demand may outweigh supply.

Dental Health

1. Oral health is integral to general health. According to the CDC the most chronic childhood illness is cavities.
2. There is a school sealant program which applies sealants to school age children from 6-11 years of age. This would include children in grades 1 through 5.
3. Worcester and Springfield offer this program.
4. Low-income families are more likely to have untreated tooth decay and few or no sealants.
5. These sealants can last up to 9 years and prevents millions of cavities.
6. Fluoridated drinking water makes teeth stronger by protecting against cavities.
7. Sealants are a topical fluoride treatment that protect the teeth and prevent tooth decay.

SEALS (Program available to all schools in all communities in Massachusetts)

1. A registered dental hygienist applies the sealants. In Shrewsbury the water has been fluoridated since 1959.
2. In Massachusetts 65% of the population is receiving fluoridated water and 34% of high-need schools have a dental sealant program.
3. These school-based sealant programs reduce oral health disparities in children.

Our subcommittee is trying to ascertain what the need is for food and for dental sealants. We may have to ask the story telling subcommittee to incorporate these questions as part of their program.

Housing Subcommittee Report

Members: Ruth Febo, Jennie Fishman, Louise Garone

As noted in the first update, public records provided to this subcommittee by the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD), that over a 14-year period only .10% of the 4,949 housing complaints filed came from the town of Shrewsbury between 2007 and 2020. This is significantly lower based on uniform random distribution across the state. The observed rate could suggest either, systematic underreporting of such discrimination in Shrewsbury, or that this community outperformed the random model with respect to housing discrimination. Further information is needed before any conclusions can be made about the status housing discrimination in Shrewsbury. To refute or affirm low housing discrimination in Shrewsbury the Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Taskforce Housing Subcommittee determined the need for an anonymous community survey to assess if this is an issue in Shrewsbury. The housing subcommittee raised this need with the full DEI Taskforce to discussed. Other DEI subcommittees identified the same need for community feedback and the taskforce voted to a community-wide survey.

Realtors and Rental Agencies

According to Find Realtors & Real Estate Agents, Teams & Agencies in Your Area | realtor.com® there are 634 Real Estate Agents and Brokers doing business in Shrewsbury MA. We identified an estimate of 22 brick and mortar real estate agencies in Shrewsbury. The Housing Subcommittee did further research on the expectation of realtors and rental agencies regarding signage and communication about the Fair Housing Law, MGL 151B (see Appendix 1). We learned that there is a Massachusetts Association of Realtors (MAR) (see marealtor.com) which is the largest association of realtors in Massachusetts. Members are required to complete the Code of Ethics training every three years. In the Code of Ethics, it is outlined that the realtor commits to the practice of Fair Housing Law. The MAR collaboration with Suffolk University Law School is an online Fair Housing Act Resource “to educate the public about their rights, section 8 housing, workforce housing, affordability and more.” (mass.realtor). This resource further educates realtors about Fair Housing problems in Massachusetts. With the understanding that realtors and rental agencies have these resources, the Housing Subcommittee wonders whether it is only market forces that monitor for compliance? In addition, during the COVID-19 pandemic, how was this information communicated to renters/buyers when business was being conducted remotely?

What we learned is that monitoring for compliance of these practices is not managed by a specific state agency or commission. Issues would only be recognized by reporting non-compliance and/or violations of the Fair Housing Law to either the Massachusetts Commission on Discrimination, the State Attorney General’s office, the MAR, or some other entity.

As a result, the Housing Subcommittee is considering a recommendation to have a resource available through the Shrewsbury town website that would enable consumers seeking housing in Shrewsbury to link to relevant resources identified by the DEI Housing Subcommittee. Suggested links are:

- Fair Housing Act Resource (<https://mass.realtor>) hosted by Suffolk University Law School) in partnership with the Massachusetts Association of Realtors
- Fair Housing - Massachusetts Association of REALTORS® (marealtor.com)

- Massachusetts DHCD Fair Housing and Civil Rights Information Page (DHCD Fair Housing and Civil Rights Information | Mass.gov) where the Mission Statement and Principles of Fair Housing (1a Inside Cover.PDF (mass.gov)) are clearly and concisely stated (See Appendix 2) and eleven more additional links are assembled.

The housing subcommittee will deliberate further appropriate recommendations over the next two months.

Appendix 1 - Mandatory Signage

THE FAIR HOUSING LAW

THE FAIR HOUSING LAW DECLARES THAT IT IS ILLEGAL TO DISCRIMINATE ON THE BASIS OF RACE, COLOR RELIGIOUS CREED, NATIONAL ORIGIN, SEX, SEXUAL ORIENTATION, AGE, CHILDREN, ANCESTRY, MARITAL STATUS, VETERAN HISTORY, PUBLIC ASSISTANCE RECIPIENCY, OR HANDICAP (MENTAL OR PHYSICAL)

It its unlawful practice for Owners, lessees, sublessees, licensed real estate brokers, assignees, managing agents, or unit owners to refuse (on the basis of membership in one or more of the above groups) the:

Right to Buy	Right to Lease	Right to Rent
Right of Ownership	Right of Possession	

Under Massachusetts Law, it is illegal to:

- Discourage a person from buying or renting a dwelling in a particular area and encourage him or her to buy or rent in another area.
- Represent that a dwelling is not available for sale, rent or inspection when the dwelling is in fact so available.
- Charge or quote a higher rental or sale price for a dwelling.
- State or provide less favorable terms for the rental or a sale of a dwelling.
- Publish discriminatory advertising.
- Discriminate in the granting or mortgage loans.
- Discriminate on the basis of handicap by refusing to make reasonable accommodations in policies and services or refusing to permit reasonable modifications of dwellings.
- Discriminate on the basis of rental subsidy recipiency by refusing to rent to subsidy recipients because of subsidy program requirements.
- Refuse to rent to families with children under six because of lead paint.

Notice to Real Estate Agents:
 State Law provides *limited* exemptions for owners of *certain types* of residential properties. *These exemptions do not apply to real estate agents.*

Complaints:
 ALL COMPLAINTS MUST BE FILED IN WRITING. INFORMATION ON THE FILING OF COMPLAINTS CAN BE OBTAINED BY EITHER VISITING OR CONTACTING THE MASSACHUSETTS COMMISSION AGAINST DISCRIMINATION AT THE FOLOWING LOCATIONS:

One Ashburton Place, Rm. 601	436 Dwight Street, Rm. 220
Boston MA 02108	Springfield MA 01103
617-994-6000 Voice	413-739-2145 Voice
617-994-6196 TTY	

www.mass.gov/mcad

Massachusetts General Laws, G.L. c. 151B §7 mandates the posting of this notice.

Appendix 2 - Massachusetts DHCD Fair Housing Mission Statement and Principles

Fair Housing Mission Statement and Principles

The mission of DHCD through its programs and partnerships is to be a leader in creating housing choice and providing opportunities for inclusive patterns of housing occupancy to all residents of the Commonwealth, regardless of income, race, religious creed, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, ancestry, familial status, veteran status, or physical or mental impairment.

It shall be our objective to ensure that new and ongoing programs and policies affirmatively advance fair housing, promote equity, and maximize choice. In order to achieve our objective, we shall be guided by the following principles:

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1. **Encourage Equity:** Support public and private housing and community investment proposals that promote equality and opportunity for all residents of the Commonwealth. Increase diversity and bridge differences among residents regardless of race, disability, social, economic, educational, or cultural background, and provide integrated social, educational, and recreational experiences.
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2. **Be Affirmative:** Direct resources to promote the goals of fair housing. Educate all housing partners of their responsibilities under the law and how to meet this important state and federal mandate.
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3. **Promote Housing Choice:** Create quality affordable housing opportunities that are geographically and architecturally accessible to all residents of the commonwealth. Establish policies and mechanisms to ensure fair housing practices in all aspects of marketing.
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4. **Enhance Mobility:** Enable all residents to make informed choices about the range of communities in which to live. Target high-poverty areas and provide information and assistance to residents with respect to availability of affordable homeownership and rental opportunities throughout Massachusetts and how to access them.
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5. **Promote Greater Opportunity:** Utilize resources to stimulate private investment that will create diverse communities that are positive, desirable destinations. Foster neighborhoods that will improve the quality of life for existing residents. Make each community a place where any resident could choose to live, regardless of income.
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6. **Reduce Concentrations of Poverty:** Ensure an equitable geographic distribution of housing and community development resources. Coordinate allocation of housing resources with employment opportunities, as well as availability of public transportation and services.
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7. **Preserve and Produce Affordable Housing Choices:** Encourage and support rehabilitation of existing affordable housing while ensuring that investment in new housing promotes diversity, and economic, educational, and social opportunity. Make housing preservation and production investments that will create a path to social and economic mobility.
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8. **Balance Housing Needs:** Coordinate the allocation of resources to address local and regional housing need, as identified by state and community stakeholders. Ensure that affordable housing preservation and production initiatives and investment of other housing resources promote diversity and social equity and improve neighborhoods while limiting displacement of current residents.
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9. **Measure Outcomes:** Collect and analyze data on households throughout the housing delivery system, including the number of applicants and households served. Utilize data to assess the fair housing impact of housing policies and their effect over time, and to guide future housing development policies.
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10. **Rigorously Enforce All Fair Housing and Anti-Discrimination Laws and Policies:** Direct resources only to projects that adhere to the spirit, intent, and letter of applicable fair housing laws, civil rights laws, disability laws, and architectural accessibility laws. Ensure that policies allow resources to be invested only in projects that are wholly compliant with such laws.
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Public Safety Subcommittee Report

Members: Donna Jarrell, Elizabeth Hylton, Juan Acosta, Beth Casavant, Kelly Joseph

The Public Safety (PS) Subcommittee met on the Following Dates:

November 30, 2020

January 4, 2021

January 19, 2021

February 22, 2021

March 1, 2021

March 22, 2021

April 15, 2021

May 19, 2021

June 2, 2021

June 16, 2021

Next Meeting – June 29/30 pending final planning.

The goal of this subcommittee is put forth recommendations that will focus on transparency and DE&I-effective policies and practices within the Shrewsbury Police Department (SPD) and the Shrewsbury Fire Department (SFD) to assure a positive relationship particularly with Shrewsbury residents of color (BIPOC). We would like this to be evident in the diversity of SPD/SFD staff, the SPD/SFD mission and strategy, organizational culture and communications, data collection and analysis on police and fire activities and most importantly an on-going partnership demonstrated through the establishment of a community advocacy group that has access and stakeholder input on SPD/SFD plans and DE&I trends as well as community complaints.

As described in our last quarterly update, we have nailed down our focus to several key DE&I-related topics associated with our likely recommendations. These include:

- **Hiring and Employment DE&I Practices in the SPD:** specifically, what is needed to move away from the Civil Service requirement for hiring in SPD and what is the timeline for making that happen?
- **SPD Data Collection on Police Activity (traffic stops, complaints, etc.):** what data is consistently collected and tracked with accurate DE&I data? Can services call responses be broken down by type and percentages? Can our Subcommittee get SPD compliant data for 2016-2020 or some comparable period of time?
- **SPD Public Engagement in Departmental Oversight:** support for independent community representative group to advise SPD on policies, practices and actual performance (including public complaints) as it relates to DE&I. Provide public perspective on technologically considerations and budget priorities. Also encourage proactive BIPOC-related youth supportive activities (assist in eliminating “myths” like Driving While Black)
- **SPD Officer Wellness Program:** ensure employee assistance program options for officer and family stress management and wellness that helps minimize implicit bias and post-traumatic stress reactions that can negatively impact Shrewsbury’s BIPOC residents.
- **SPD Current DE&I Culture:** How would the current SPD DE&I culture be defined and what should Shrewsbury’s BIPOC residents expect from SPD when it comes to how that culture is demonstrated/validated? A good question to assess that culture is to ask what is the SPD’s current position on the Black Lives Matter Movement or What racial profiling/implicit bias

training(s) are part of training and development what impact have you seen as a result? What other ways are certifications and accreditations assessed for DE&I effectiveness.

We have engaged twice with SPD Chief Anderson (March 22 and April 15th). The goal of these meetings was to engage with Chief Anderson, as a key stakeholder in any recommendations, in implementing change and to discuss the above topics to get his perspective on the SPD's position and priority for each. It is worth noting that the Subcommittee received questions from the larger DE&I Task Force in addition to questions that we have generated within our own membership. We followed up that meeting with additional requests for information which the Chief provide and we reviewed at our most recent meeting on June 14th.

Our Subcommittee met on May 19th and June 2nd to discuss the meetings with the Chief as well as respond to a request to meet with the SFD Chief James Vuona. We are still working to find a time to meet with the SFD Chief.

On June 14th we met and began to formulate our draft report to be submitted by our PS Subcommittee as a part of the overall Task Force's final report. We will identify a template and share that with the rest of the Subcommittee chairs as an example to bring continuity to the final report.

Recommendations Being Vetted

- End civil service in Shrewsbury
- Evaluate the benefit/costs (from DE&I perspective) for School Resource Officer (SRO)
- Create public safety engagement board (promotes opportunities for better community engagement around DE&I; See It/Send It technology education?)
- Improve diversity and professional services/expertise capabilities in the SPD (non-enforcement)
- Create public safety oversight board (focus on organizational oversight; policies and procedures, compliance, selection of new technologies, data analysis)
- Promote a proactive DE&I image/culture for both SPD/SFD

Lastly, it is worth noting that changes in federal and state laws regarding police reform are on-going and may have an impact on the timing and type of final recommendations. Whatever the PS Subcommittee recommends will require on-going check-ins on expected outcomes and evidence that those outcomes were achieved.

Storyteller Subcommittee Report

Members: Noor Ali, Paula Collins, Roop Jyot Kaur

Our subcommittee will be collecting stories till July 15th from Town residents. July 15,2021 is the deadline for story submission.

A call for story collection was started on May 4 through the Town of Shrewsbury website and other portals.

The following call for stories was made:

Shrewsbury Stories - Call for Participants Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Task Force

About The Project - 'Shrewsbury Stories'

The storytelling subcommittee is part of the Shrewsbury Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Task Force. The members of the subcommittee are Noor Ali, Roop Kaur and Paula Collins.

There has never been a more appropriate time to start and share conversations about race, inclusion, and diversity in our community. Our attempt is to collect stories directly from town residents. We hope to give residents a chance to share lived experiences of race, diversity and inclusion in our town.

Residents can share rich inside perspectives no matter how big or seemingly small, be they negative or positive. Every story needs to be honored. When we share experiences, we empower each other.

'Shrewsbury Stories' is a public space under the umbrella of the DEI Task Force where residents can share experiences that can give us a nuanced and intimate understanding of 'DEI' issues in town that may be missed otherwise. The stories elicited can potentially help us learn about the perspectives of our fellow residents who may be feeling voiceless or misunderstood. Our aspiration is by hearing shared stories, we can attempt to break complex issues such as race/diversity/inequity, into life size pieces.

We aim to collect residents' stories systematically and amplify diverse voices. These stories can help the Shrewsbury Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Task Force gather vital information in order to make meaningful recommendations for positive change.

Residents are encouraged to share their stories. Hearing them may help us illuminate our collective understanding of how Shrewsbury can be a more inclusive home for us all where our differences are celebrated. Please sign up at the link below or share your story by emailing deistories@shrewsburyma.gov.

<https://shrewsburyma.gov/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=4929>

Our subcommittee continues to reach out to residents inviting their narratives and have been occasionally meeting to assess what has been coming in.

Since we have not edited for privacy and complied the material yet, we will not be able to say much about the stories received this far.

Survey Subcommittee Report

Members: Paula Collins, Deb DelDotto, Maura Egan, Jennie Fishman, Milind Kanitkar

Update

On June 21, 2021, the Survey Subcommittee launched the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Task Force Survey

The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Task Force is conducting a survey to obtain a general sense within the community as to how you are feeling with regard to diversity, equity and inclusion in Shrewsbury.

The survey focus is, particularly in the areas of Housing, Education, Health, Safety, and Employment. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion covers all marginalized groups including, but not limited to, race, religion, LGBTQ+, disability, age, and gender.

We are inviting adults 18 and over who live in Shrewsbury to participate in this survey. This survey is anonymous and voluntary.

The survey can be filled out electronically by clicking the link below.

<https://forms.gle/y4kt9LLENbk9F6zC6>

For those who do not have access to computers, copies of the survey will be made available at locations like Town Hall, Library and Senior Center at a date yet to be determined.

The results of the survey will shape the recommendations of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Task Force to inform future work to improve the inclusive culture in Shrewsbury.

Please take a few minutes to fill this survey. Thank you for your participation and helping our town in becoming a better community.

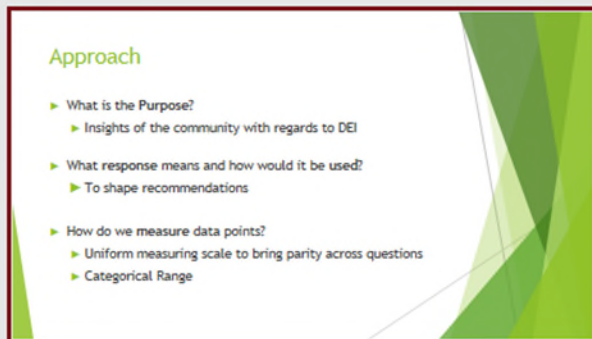
Slides Presented to DEI Task Force



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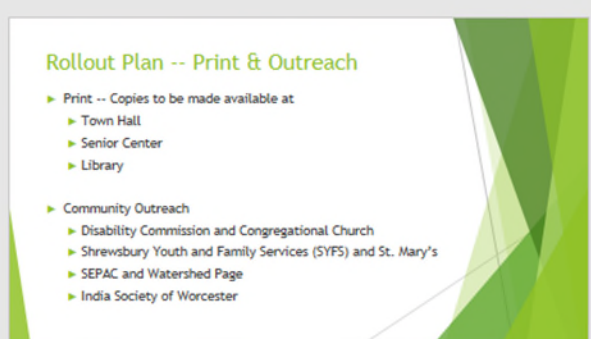
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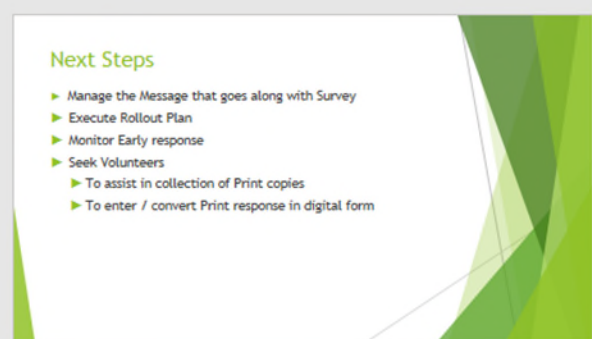
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