

TOWN OF BOLTON
DIVERSITY COMMISSION
December 21, 2021 - MINUTES

The Diversity Commission met on December, 2021 with the Chair Amanda Gordon presiding. Also, in attendance were: Vice Chair Kawan Gordon, Cheryl Udin, , Jennifer Cyr, John Toomey, Rhea Klein and Paula Meyers. First Selectman Pam Sawyer was also in attendance.

1. Call To Order A. Gordon called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

2. Introductions

New member Anne Decker was introduced. Other board members introduced themselves. First Selectman Pam Sawyer introduced herself

3. Approval of Minutes - 11/10/21

- a. Motion: I move that we accept the minutes of 11/10/21 meeting
By: Cheryl Udin Seconded: Kawan Gordon
Voting: For: Unanimous 7 in favor
Against: None
Abstained: Anne Decker

4. Commission Business - Ethics and Swearing In

- a. A. Gordon reminded anyone who has not previously served on a board to go in and sign ethics form. And get sworn in, if haven't already done so.
- b. J.Toomey thought perhaps sexual harassment training and FOI training is require as well.
- c. A. Gordon will check if that is available/ required. Will confirm if any other commission members need to sign the ethics paperwork.

5. Establish Group Norms/ Values

- a. A. Gordon – kicked off discussion on how this group expects to interact with each other given the unique nature of the work this group is tasked with doing.
 - i. K. Gordon- Have Respect, Actively Listen and entertain thoughts and opinions even if different
 - ii. A. Decker - Understand that we are all coming with vulnerabilities and be open to learning.
 - iii. J. Toomey – indiated he would contract Whethersfield Human Rights commission to see what they have done. Might be useful to discuss the mission statement of the group.
 - iv. A. Gordon –Mission statements falls under next agenda item related to the charge of the commission. Other group norms to agree to might be commit to being open and honest and not get defensive and come to the table with authenticity.
 - v. A. Decker - Be interested in learning and open to listening and good discussions and participation and learning: i.e. open mindedness. All coming from various places of privilege depending on our identities.
 - vi. P. Sawyer- reiteration of active listening, integrity.

6. Review Charge of the Commission.

- a. A. Gordon- reading off sections of the Resolution from the January 4, 2021 meeting. Unclear what capacity for action this committee has without express permission from the Board of Selectman as it is written to be an “advisory body reporting to the Board of Selectmen.”
Reminder that the committee is choosing to adopt a broad, “inclusive” definition of Diversity.
- b. J. Toomey- can P. Sawyer provide any type of clarification on this?
- c. P. Sawyer clarified that this is an advisory group to bring data to the BOS for the BOS to review regarding areas of concern in town.
 - i. A question was asked if we can survey, do community outreach, etc. Pam will clarify with the BOS, but believes that would be the case.
 - ii. A. Gordon-Read a mission statement taken from other municipal diversity commissions: *“Serve as a resource for City government and the community by providing information, education, and communication that facilitates a better understanding and celebrates our differences.”* Questions if we want to seek permission from BOS to establish a similar mission statement for our commission.
 - iii. P. Sawyer- cannot speak on behalf of the whole BOS. Suggestion that Amanda as chair present to the BOS about the types of activities the committee wishes to undertake to see if the BOS approves.
 - iv. K. Gordon suggested that we include “making recommendations” action items be included in the advisory role.

7. Review of Research from CT Data Collaborative.

- a. A. Gordon put together some resources (listed below) that were reviewed and provided a bulleted summary of some of the data.
 - i. 2021 Town Profile - Bolton
 1. Population is slightly older than the state average
 2. Median income is about 30K More than the state median, poverty rate is 5% less
 3. Less racially diverse than the rest of the state 1% black (10%), 2% Asian (4%), 8% Hispanic (16%) 89% white (67%)- *State average in parentheses*
 4. Slightly more people with secondary degrees
 5. Housing stock is much more owner occupied and detached homes.
 6. Rent is lower than state average
 7. Our Property Tax Revenue per capita is 116% of state average while our debt per capita is 89% of state avg.
 8. Bolton has less people without access to a car
 9. Bolton has less people without access to internet
 - ii. How Diverse Is Connecticut?
 1. Higher diversity index = more racially diverse population
 2. U.S. = 61%, CT = 56%, (increased 10% from 2010-2020), Bolton = 25% (increased 12% from 2010-2020)
 3. Bolton is slightly higher than Andover and Coventry and saw a slightly larger increase, but lower than Vernon (48%) and Manchester (66%).

iii. ESSENTIAL EQUITY: Women, Covid-19 and Rebuilding CT

1. Outlines the disparate impact COVID has had on women and children.
 - b. A. Gordon- asked for initial responses to the data.
 - c. J. Toomey- has anyone looked at the data on Police stops? Might be good to ask our State Trooper to come present on this to the Committee. Offered to reach out to him and see if this was possible.
 - i. A. Gordon- data for each stop include nature of the stop and race is available. Did try to analyze the data for stops in Bolton to see if stops for “people of color” were disproportionate to the percentage of “people in color” in town but unsure how to account for out of town drivers coming through town.
 - d. P. Meyers- suggested that the data showing 12% people of “non-white” people equating to 600 people was higher than anticipated
 - e. A. Gordon- clarified the percentage may be lower because ethnicity of any race was presented so people who identify as Black, Asian, or other non-white race may be the same person who identifies as Latinx.

8. Brainstorming of Commission Activities

- a. A. Gordon kicked off a conversation about activities the Diversity Commission may want to engage in that would fall in line with the charge from the Board of Selectmen. The following were discussed as possibilities with the intent of them being summarized and brought to the Board of Selectmen for approval before implementation.
 - i. Survey-
 1. Would need to figure out who to ask, what to ask. Need for multiple, diverse perspectives.
 2. Goal of identifying issues around diversity and inclusion that already exist in town
 3. J. Toomey- suggested some of the Facebook Pages, such as Bolton Anti-Racism might include some examples that residents may be willing to talk about further.
 - ii. J. Cyr -Bringing Awareness to bullying in school system, - issues of inclusion start at a young age in school – have an event at school
 - a. R. Klein to ask BOE what they are doing currently
 - b. School systems look at ways to measure “the climate” so data may already exist.
 - iii. R. Klein - Celebration of Diversity in Bolton- Events that bring people together
 - iv. Would it be possible to have a student Representative on this committee?
 1. Are there existing clubs at Bolton High School that would align with the purpose of this commission?
 - v. J. Toomey- Use CVC similar to how “Bolton Living History” interviews were done for willing participants to share their family histories
 1. Could tweak the model with a focus on issues related to Diversity/ Cultures
 - vi. Diversity training for Educators – to help teachers recognize issues before they arise.
 1. R. Klein to ask what is already required and how often. Does it just address race, or diversity more broadly?
 - vii. Diversity training for Town employees/commissions

1. Does this currently happen? What does it include? How often does it take place?
2. P. Sawyer offered to ask if Town employees must do this.
- viii. A. Gordon - Book Club and/or diversity section in Bentley Library
 1. J. Toomey- think they already do this during special “history month”
 2. A. Gordon- this in and of itself may be a point of advocacy for the committee to advocate that “diverse” authors, resources, etc. are highlighted ALL year and not during just special times of the year.
- ix. A. Gordon – could also consider a Film series for those who prefer that to reading
 1. Could pull together resource list for all kinds of mediums that would be available/ promoted to residents (recommended books, films, etc)
- x. J. Cyr- could highlight town businesses that are female owned, minority owned, etc.
- xi. A. Gordon -Approach needs to be “local” to emphasize this is people we know. This isn’t necessarily about “change” but rather acknowledging and appreciating the Diversity that already exist in Bolton
- xii. Tap into the senior population and have them tell their stories.
 1. Seniors have unique issues- transportation, technology, internet, etc.

9. Discussion on Fundraising.

- a. A. Gordon- tabled until a later date due to time.

1. Summary of Assigned Tasks.

- a. A. Gordon - provided a summary of next steps
 - i. J. Toomey to ask Resident Trooper about presenting on data about police stops
 - ii. R. Klein to follow up with the Board of Ed on the above questions the committee had
 - iii. P. Sawyer to follow up with Town employee’s about diversity training
 - iv. A. Gordon to follow up with town clerk about Ethics acknowledgements and other trainings required for commission members.
 - v. A. Gordon – asked if committee preferred her to present to BOS in January with a broad list of potential projects or to wait until the committee had a more fully fleshed out list of actions.
 1. Consensus was due to the one-year timeframe for this commission that presenting in January would be best so that the work could be started.
 2. P. Sawyer to include Diversity Commission in the January 2022 BOS agenda.
- b. A. Decker – Do we have a working definition of Diversity? This would be helpful
 - i. K. Gordon- would be useful to have working definitions of other related terms such as “implicit bias” and “prejudice”
 - ii. A. Gordon offered to pull together a definition for review for the next meeting
- c. J. Toomey- Connecticut Conference of Municipalities is conducting a webinar on Assessing Community Well Being and equity- should be free to all members of any member town commission.
 - i. A. Gordon to forward the registration link to committee members who wish to attend.

11. Discussion of Future meetings

- a. A. Gordon- due to COVID, proposing that the meetings continue to be virtual
- b. Next meeting is scheduled for January 18, 2022 at 7:00 p.m

12. Adjournment

- a. A. Gordon – having come to the end of the agenda will entertain a motion to adjourn.
- b. Motion: I move that to adjourn the meeting
 - By: John Toomey Seconded: Cheryl Udin
 - Voting: For: Unanimous 8 in favor
 - Against: None
 - Abstained: None.
- c. Meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.

Respectfully Submitted:

Paula Meyers and Amanda Gordon

Please see minutes of subsequent meetings for corrections to these minutes and any corrections hereto.