

DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION COMMISSION MINUTES

7:00 p.m. April 10th, 2025

Present:

	David Martin, liaison		Suravi Bhatia, student
X	Melissa Kaplan Morse, co-chair		Wanjiku Gachugi, liaison
	Sunanda Pepalla, clerk	X	Zayd Dhasthageer, student
	Diane Randolph Jones, co-chair	X	Jack Dirstine
X	Sandra Hinds		

Meeting called to order at 7:05 p.m.

Transfer Station and Curbside Analysis Presentation

Corey York, the DPW Director, presented information about a potential expansion of Acton's municipal drop-off program to a curbside collection program. The town is gathering feedback from various groups and plans to conduct a public survey. The current transfer station offers recycling, composting, and a pay-as-you-throw program for trash, which has successfully reduced waste. Lauren West, from the Sustainability Office, discussed how a curbside program could help reduce emissions and align with the town's climate action goals. Ellie Anderson, from the Finance Office, provided a cost comparison, showing that a town-managed curbside program could be less expensive for residents than private haulers. The team is considering various factors, including program funding, commercial property inclusion, and whether to maintain a hybrid approach with the transfer station. The Transfer Station Committee is gathering feedback from various town committees to develop a questionnaire for a town-wide survey about waste management. They plan to present their findings to the Select Board, likely after the town meeting in late spring. The Committee is seeking input on potential survey questions and is open to suggestions from the DEIC. The Transfer Station Committee also discussed their efforts to educate the community about available services through various channels, including social media and newsletters. Commissioners expressed interest in learning more about potential changes to waste management, such as curbside pickup, and how it might affect different types of residents and housing situations in Acton. Commissioners will provide feedback to the Transfer Station Committee after its May or June meeting.

Town Meeting Warrant

The Commissioners discussed supporting an article from the warrant at the upcoming Town Meeting on May 5th and 6th. They agreed to support Article 31, which amends the zoning bylaw for open space residential development, allowing new subdivisions to keep 60% of the land

unimproved for conservation purposes. The group also discussed the potential for higher density housing and its affordability. Zayd raised a procedural question about the timing of their decision, which Melissa acknowledged as a challenge due to the preliminary draft of the warrant. The Commissioners agreed that they could have Melissa, as co-chair, or her designee represent them, but they needed to come up with general ideas to present. The team also discussed the possibility of having a small group work on the article before the meeting. They decided to focus on developing key ideas for the article and would discuss other agenda items later. Melissa and Zayd discussed the potential for conserving land and increasing affordable housing in Acton. They considered the benefits of preserving land for nature trails and the importance of maintaining a diverse socioeconomic population. They also discussed the need to expand affordable housing beyond 10.58% to maintain the town's Safe Harbor status. Sandra agreed that these points would be impactful if presented at Town Meeting. Melissa offered to make herself available to represent the DEIC at Town Meeting.

Juneteenth Planning

- Juneteenth Working Group is well under way with the planning stages of the celebration.
 - There are 9 members in the group.
 - There are potentially 3 stops that would be in and around Main Street with various activities at each stop.
 - Acton Women's Club (unconfirmed part of the Underground Railroad)
 - Acton Congregational Church (for musical performances)
 - Arboretum as the final stop with food trucks from black owned businesses
 - Zayd is working with the band director at the High School.
 - There is a lot of diversity between the adult and student group members.
 - Some members are reaching out to Robbins House for potential guest speakers.

Recent Antisemitism Incidents

- Melissa brought up recent antisemitic incidents in the school district and proposes drafting a statement in response, which the group agreed to address at the next meeting.
 - Similar to what the Acton Democratic Committee has done and what this Commission has done in the past
 - Sandra and Melissa will work together to write a statement for our meeting in May.

Closing Items

- Commissioners to consider speaking at Town Meeting in support of Article 31 and email Melissa if interested.
- Melissa to follow up with Acton Women's Club about their availability on June 19th for Juneteenth event.
- Commission will formally introduce Jack at the next meeting.
- Melissa to obtain final draft of meeting minutes from Sunanda for approval at next meeting.
- Discuss our Mission, Vision and Values in May.
- The next DEIC meeting is May 8, 2025.
- Meeting adjourned at 8:33 p.m. (Motion Zayd, Seconded Sandra).