

DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION COMMISSION MINUTES
7:00 p.m. November 13th, 2025

Present:

X	David Martin, liaison	X	Suravi Bhatia, Co-Chair
X	Melissa Kaplan Morse, Co-chair		Wanjiku Gachugi, liaison
X	Sunanda Pepalla		
X	Diane Randolph Jones		
X	Sandra Hinds		
X	Jack Dirstine		

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

1. Special Business:

- **Citizen's Petition: Indigenous People's Day discussion**

Bettina Abe and Cindy Soule presented their Citizen's Petition to formally recognize Indigenous People's Day in Acton. Bettina and Cindy are sharing their Citizen's Petition with boards and committees in Acton and began with the DEIC. Many Commissioners expressed support for this Citizen's Petition, and David volunteered to assist with its wording.

Wendy Gloyd from the Westford DEIC explained how their town replaced Columbus Day with Indigenous People's Day. Wendy mentioned contacting federally and state recognized tribes.

David mentioned that the Citizen's Petition would need to be completed before the Acton Town Warrant closed in late February/early March. Melissa suggested Bettina and Cindy share their Petition as they continue its development.

2. Regular Business:

- **Co-Chair Update on Braver Angels "Conversation Across Differences" and Shared Legacies documentary discussion.**

Melissa announced the Braver Angels "Conversation Across Differences" event at the Acton Congregational Church on November 19 at 7:00 pm, which shares techniques for having conversations with people with whom you disagree. The DEIC also discussed the Shared Legacies documentary about the Black Jewish Alliance during the Civil Rights Movement, which was shown at ABRHS. Melissa and David attended the event, and Diane was a facilitator.

3. Commissioner Updates & Discussion:

a. Identify 2-3 Major Events for Participation

- **Juneteenth**

The Commissioners agreed to proceed with a Juneteenth event. Diane volunteered to lead or co-lead the event. We discussed expanding the Working Group to include more community members.

Sandra suggested including African drummers and pursuing a grant for their work. Other Commissioners discussed the importance of having music. We could possibly work with the Acton Memorial Library and have a concert on their back lawn. By collaborating with others, we may be able to secure funds for musical groups. Suravi suggested getting the Black Student Union involved along with Josie.

- **Table events**

The Commissioners discussed several potential opportunities: Pride Festival, Oktoberfest and Diwali. These events would allow all Commissioners to participate and work closely with the community. In addition, the DEIC could develop a mailing list to inform community members of our work.

- **Veterans event**

The Commissioners discussed a Veterans event. Diane mentioned that there are several Veteran Appreciation months, including November and May.

b. Contact Westford and Concord DEICs for Collaboration

Sunanda volunteered to scope out potential opportunities and report back at the next meeting.

c. Identify Potential Speakers/Presentations

The Commissioners discussed having Ian Bergeman, Community Conservation Specialist, speak with the Commission again and do a deeper dive into exploring open space and recreation through a DEI lens.

d. Talking Points for Recruiting New Commissioners

Diane volunteered to write up ideas to share at our next meeting. These points will be important for table events.

e. **Communication with the Community**

At our last meeting, Sandra volunteered to announce our new Co-Chairs through the Acton Exchange. Melissa and Suravi provided information to Sandra.

The Commission discussed that only Commissioners should post information, rather than working with a high school student Social Media Coordinator. We can discuss information to post every month or two at our meetings.

e. **Reintroduce Public Comment.**

Since almost all boards and committees in Acton allow public comment, the DEIC will do so as well. The Commission discussed why public comment had been suspended and will closely monitor this new addition.

Closing Items:

1. **Discuss approving minutes next meeting**
2. **Adjourn meeting (Motion Sunanda, Seconded Suravi)**

Ended meeting at 8:38 PM