

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (“DEI”) Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Thursday, September 21, 2023

6:00 PM

Longmeadow Adult Center, Conference Room

211 Maple Road, Longmeadow, MA 01106

Meeting of the newly formed DEI Advisory Committee, appointed by the Longmeadow Select Board to continue the work of the Longmeadow Coalition for Racial Justice as the DEI group facing outward to the community.

1. The Chair, Dr. AnnMarie Martinez (she/her) called the meeting to order at 6:01 PM.

Committee Members Present – Chair-AnnMarie, Clerk - Tammye Erb (she/they), Saul Finestone (he/him), Ronnie Leavitt (she/her), Christopher Morris (he/him), and Beverly Sager (she/her)

Committee Members Absent – Gabriel Mokwuah (he/him) and Linda Preston (she/her). Tammye Erb will be excused in October due to surgery recovery.

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Public – None

2. Public Comments: The meeting was an open meeting where public comment was offered but no one from the public was present. There were no public comments. This committee encourages the public to attend.
3. Committee Comments.
 - a. Several committee members met “Longmeadow Neighbors” publisher, Dan Reider and noted more diverse representation in the magazine’s cover stories in the last couple of months.
4. Old Business.
 - a. Approval of Meeting Minutes from August 17, 2023. Chair requested a motion that was made and seconded by Ronnie to approve August 17, 2023, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Advisory Committee Regular Meeting Minutes. The motion passed unanimously 6-0.
 - b. Regarding the Town’s Long-Range Planning Committee, Saul informed the members that he participated in that group’s “Kitchen Conversations” initiative. Chris provided a status of LRPC’s efforts that will include this committee and reported that their review will be released sometime soon and another meeting is scheduled in late November.
 - c. This committee connected to LRPC’s initiative and asked similar questions while including the DEI lens in their survey presented to the public during the Longmeadow Fall Festival and the Longmeadow Pride Festival at their booth. The results thus far were shared just prior to this meeting; the members will review the results and discuss the next steps at the October meeting.

- d. Ronnie asked for feedback on the email she sent to the committee, and it was agreed that she may begin her interviews using the submitted materials. Saul made the motion and there were no nays or abstentions. Ronnie appreciates any suggestions going forward.
 - e. Saul reported that he continues to share books and has new ones in the car.
 - f. Chair AnnMarie reported a brief conversation with Longmeadow Town Manager Lyn Simmons, and that they scheduled an upcoming meeting to discuss potential budgets. According to Lyn there is no budget for any town committee *per se* but there is an opportunity to address the Select Board with financial endeavors. Lyn will guide AnnMarie through that process. Related to budgets Ronnie asked Tammye if there were expenses from the festivals that needed reimbursement and Tammye answered that Linda would have better information.
 - g. Upon a question from Ronnie to Tammye regarding real estate policies in town, Tammye replied that she may be rethinking her focus since real estate transactions and whether there are discriminatory practices appear to be a full-time job with policies and laws in place.
 - h. No report from Linda regarding school liaison since Linda was absent.
 - i. Saul asked if there was an update on filling the open position on the committee. Ronnie wondered about encouraging someone. Tammye stated that everyone in town has the opportunity to apply and be interviewed as all present committee members were and that the question of how we are to go about “recruiting” members should be elevated so that this committee knows how to proceed.
5. New Business
- a. A short time prior to the meeting’s start an email was sent from Linda to the committee regarding survey results thus far. With no time to review, discussing results and immediate and longer-term next steps will be part of the October 19th meeting agenda.
 - b. Committee members shared their experiences at the recent Longmeadow Fall (September 9-10) and Longmeadow Pride (September 17) Festivals, including comments about working the booth itself, interactions with attendees, and feedback received that was mostly positive. They thanked Linda, Chili Salazar, and others for organizing, in a short time, a booth and games at both events and that a goal was reached in achieving some of the prior Anti-Racism Coalition’s vision of a future-looking Longmeadow Days event.
 - c. Regarding the festival booth, Tammye described an encounter she had with an older teen who pointedly asked, “What does this group do?” Tammye answered the question: “...on behalf of the Select Board we liaison with the community and that can be businesses, houses of worship, schools, every kind of group, and every person who will meet with us to learn if people in town feel that they have a sense of belonging in Longmeadow.” Tammye made the point that we need to know exactly what we do and that we keep remembering that we are the DEI *Advisory* Committee. And who we are advising is the Select Board. A short discussion occurred pondering whether we need more committee members. Another short discussion occurred pondering whether we need to meet more often than once per month. For now, we can have

- innumerable members of the community attend meetings, participate in sub-committees, and volunteer at events where we appear.
- d. The Committee agreed unanimously that using community members' emails, shared for the sole purpose of receiving the DEI Survey in the absence of other ways of receiving it, absolutely will not be used for any other contact purpose. We may only use a community member's email address to contact them if they said specifically in the DEI Survey that they want to be contacted.
 - e. Further to c. above, committee members discussed at length and candidly the need for training and guidance on committee formation, etiquette, and goals. They expressed frustration with the lack of structure and orientation provided for them by the Town since the committee's formation. No one on this committee wants to be part of something that is "just checking a 'DEI box.'" We all, as did the former Anti-Racism Coalition, experienced numerous community members who live, work, or shop here who said they "felt relieved" that this committee "exists." The Chair has the support of the committee to bring tougher issues to the Select Board than "just budgets." We don't want to fail at the job we've been given, and we know that the needle does not move overnight, but we also want to have the full backing *of* the Select Board.
 - f. To that end, several members who met Town Moderator Rebecca Townsend asked the Chair to invite her to the next meeting which also occurs ahead of the November town meeting. Tammye will provide Town Moderator Townsend's contact information to Chair AnnMarie and will also include her in the email with minutes and agenda ahead of the October meeting.
 - g. Also, to that end, the committee also plans to invite Longmeadow Town Manager Lyn Simmons to future meetings. The committee appointees acknowledged the challenges they faced as a committee but remained committed to their goals.
 - h. Saul reminded that he and Ryan McCollum will be continuing their speaker series for the foreseeable future at the Adult Center the next talk being on October 10 (*change from the prior Oct. 31 date*) on "Diversity, Equity and Inclusion." In December (date TBD) they will make room for this committee to address the public if that makes sense to us, e.g., "DEI 201," or they will speak on another topic.
6. The next meeting will be on October 19th at 6 p.m. at the Longmeadow Adult Center.
 7. Adjournment. Upon no further agenda items or points of discussion, at 7:19 PM, Ronnie moved, and Christopher seconded to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously 6-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Tammye Erb
Clerk