

Town of Medway

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

The Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity Advisory (IDEA) Committee

In-Person Meeting: Sanford Hall, Medway Town Hall - 155 Village St, Medway, MA 02053

Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, and the Governor's March 15, 2020, Order imposing strict limitations on the number of people that may gather in one place, limited attendance of members of the public will be permitted at this meeting.

Committee Members Present: Khalid Abdi, Marques Crosby, Andrea Crow Henry, Susan Dietrich, John Foresto, Dan Kerls, and William Kingsbury

Committee Members Absent: Judith Lane and Brian Sharkey

Call to Order: Mr. Kerls called the meeting to order at 7:30PM.

Mr. Kerls offered his greetings and led the committee in the Pledge of Allegiance. He then offered time for public comment. There was none.

Agenda Item #1: Approval of minutes for 5/5 Meeting:

Mr. Kerls shared that the committee is currently seeking a clerk, as the committee was not satisfied with the minutes from the May 5, 2021 meeting.

Agenda Item #2A: Updates on Takeaways: Anonymous Tip Line

Mr. Kerls then asked Ms. Dietrich and Mr. Crosby to update the committee regarding their progress with the anonymous tip line. Mr. Crosby shared a suggestion to not only make the tip line more welcoming, but also to change the name from "IDEA Tipline" to "IDEA Community Feedback." He also offered the idea to make it less form-like by removing all headings and categories, as well as adding a welcoming message. He demonstrated how he and Ms. Dietrich rearranged the organization of the document to be more personalized and detailed: these adjustments included asking the respondent about the nature of the occurrence and if the individual would like to be contacted about the matter. Mr. Abdi asked if the document should ask for the respondent's home address as part of the contact information, so that the committee can track ongoing trends in various neighborhoods and areas. He suggested that this be optional for the respondent. Ms. Crow Henry responded that this would assist the police in determining the proximity of any respective incident to other ongoing issues. Mr. Kingsbury asked if the tip line document should also include language regarding emergency situations, in order to expedite the process of individuals receiving immediate help for time-sensitive or especially dangerous matters. Ms. Dietrich offered the idea to add a checkbox regarding urgent situations. The committee unanimously agreed to this approach.

Ms. Dietrich discussed the importance of not using labels on the tip line document, especially given the mission of the committee. She mentioned that the committee would ideally do any necessary categorization internally, so that respondents do not need to self-select. Mr. Kerls mentioned how internal categorization will help with identifying trends. He then asked Mr. Kingsbury about how much information the police department tends to receive through anonymous tips. Mr. Kingsbury stated that the police department does not receive constant tips; rather, they receive a steady flow. He estimated that it equates to a couple tips per month. He also stressed the importance of respondents providing thorough details in their reports in order for police to be able to respond most effectively. Mr. Crosby asked how the information from the tip line will be delivered to the committee members. Mr. Kerls expanded on this question by bringing up the importance of having a point person, in order to prevent all committee members responding to the same message. Ms. Dietrich asked if the committee needs a clerk to handle the central email address. She mentioned that this person could help monitor the incoming messages. Mr. Foresto addressed the concern of people's messages going unacknowledged and agreed that a clerk could assist with this. He asked if the clerk would be a town position. Ms. Dietrich referenced how the Finance Committee has a chair, a vice chair, and a clerk. She also mentioned that the volume of incoming tip line messages likely would not be prohibitive and that someone on the IDEA committee could handle it internally, unless it becomes high volume. Mr. Foresto mentioned that this clerk could essentially be a liaison in the community who can return to the IDEA committee and advise them accordingly. Ms. Dietrich underscored her previous point and added that as time progresses, the committee will have a better understanding of the regularity of tip line messages, and therefore be able to make a more informed decision regarding who will handle the tip line. Mr. Abdi raised the idea of sharing the responsibility as a committee and having each person manage the tip line on a rolling basis. Mr. Kerls stated that before the committee can decide upon who will handle incoming messages, they must first make the tip line accessible to the community. Ms. Dietrich clarified that the next step will be reaching out to Rich Boucher regarding finalizing the tip line so that the community can engage with it in a meaningful way. Mr. Foresto also asked about what the plan for communicating this to the community is. Mr. Kingsbury suggested the use of social media platforms, such as Facebook. Mr. Foresto mentioned that using the school system as a pathway for dispersing information could be beneficial. Mr. Kingsbury also brought up sharing the information via Medway Cable.

Agenda Item #2B: Updates on Takeaways: Questionnaire for Newcomers and Groups Outside the Norm

Mr. Kerls raised the idea of the questionnaire for newcomers to Medway. He stressed the importance of having representation in multiple demographics, such as people who just moved to Medway in the last month, as well as people who have lived in Medway for a long time. He underscored the need for inclusion of all backgrounds in the conversation. Mr. Kerls mentioned that newcomers represent a comparably small demographic in the town. He asked how the committee should go about reaching these varying demographics of people. He reminded the committee that they had previously discussed bringing in small groups and asking them prepared questions.

Agenda Item #2C: Updates on Takeaways: Focus Groups

Ms. Dietrich discussed leveraging best practices from the Master Plan consultant who is currently gathering feedback in Medway. She suggested using the consultant's strategies and applying those principles to the committee's approach. She offered an example strategy, which is identifying a handful of questions and asking each focus group the same questions. She also discussed the role of neutral, unbiased language in the questions, such as "what is the town doing well and what can be improved?" Mr. Kerls underscored that this unbiased approach will lead to more authentic answers. Ms. Dietrich expanded on Mr. Kerls's point by stating that the conversation can vacillate between positives and negatives in order to promote a fluid, all-encompassing conversation. She then brought up the idea of "norming activities" in order to ensure vocabulary and shared language is consistent within the committee and therefore the community. She stressed that this should ideally be done prior to meeting with the first focus group. She raised the idea of providing a document to the community that clarifies meaning and usage of relevant terms. She also suggested that the committee itself be the first focus group in order to fully grasp their own opinions, as well as familiarize themselves with the process itself. Mr. Kerls discussed how different people's understanding of the same words can be quite different. He suggested defining relevant terms at the next committee meeting. Mr. Abdi and Mr. Crosby both mentioned that they know people who could serve as a facilitator in these language-based discussions and that they will reach out to their respective associates. Mr. Kerls discussed the intertwined nature of many of these words and the need for all people to fully understand the terminology in the same way. Ms. Crow Henry brought up the ambiguity and potential difficulty in finding shared language for certain words and terms, as many individuals do not define themselves on the basis of criteria such as race, ethnicity, or gender. Mr. Abdi clarified his previous point by emphasizing the importance of characterizing and categorizing these words for the sake of common language. Mr. Kerls responded by clarifying the importance of not being disjointed when interacting with a focus group. Mr. Foresto mentioned the interrelatedness of many of these terms and the potential difficulty in differentiating them from each other. Ms. Dietrich mentioned taking a workshop approach with a facilitator in order to be most efficient in preparing to engage with focus groups. Mr. Crosby suggested the committee write their focus group questions with their overall audience in mind. Ms. Dietrich asked if the committee should review dates for future meetings. The committee agreed to fill out their availability on a provided spreadsheet. Ms. Dietrich then asked if it would be helpful for the committee members to review other towns' lists of terminology in advance of the committee's upcoming discussion about meanings and usages. She mentioned that there are certain manners of speaking that could be unintentionally upsetting or offensive. The committee agreed to each make a list of terms that each member would like to have a shared understanding of.

Agenda Item #2Ci: Updates on Takeaways: Identification of Various Champions in Multiple Demographics

Mr. Kerls suggested tabling the idea of focus groups and "champions" until the committee is prepared to move forward with a newfound understanding of their terminology and goals. He also mentioned that community members will be easier to reach and meet with after the summer; therefore, the summer should be devoted to honing the committee's current plan. Ms. Crow Henry asked about having a committee liaison in the field of mental health, to which Mr. Kingsbury responded that he works with a highly skilled individual who could collaborate with the committee. Mr. Foresto raised the idea of creating positions in the town to handle social

issues, particularly within the school department. Ms. Dietrich reminded the committee that their charge is to gather information and make a recommendation to the Select Board, and that an idea such as Mr. Foresto's would likely be an end-result or recommendation that comes out of a year's worth of listening. She also stated that there are many existing resources in Medway, but that many community members might be currently unaware of them. Ms. Crow Henry expanded upon Ms. Dietrich's point by connecting back to the field of mental health and the importance of finding resources for individuals, especially those who have experienced trauma. Mr. Kerls agreed with Ms. Crow Henry and discussed the need for identifying resources based on different populations. He stated that learning from all kinds of people upfront will be critical in finding multiple solutions and options for varying demographics.

Agenda Item #4A: Summer Schedule - Contact with Other Towns

Mr. Kerls introduced the last agenda item, which is making contact with other towns. He asked Mr. Foresto and Mr. Crosby about their progress in this regard. Mr. Foresto stated that he has the appropriate contact information and has reached out to two people via email and is waiting to hear back. Mr. Crosby said that he connected with Acton and Shrewsbury. He said the information was quite valuable and that the conversations were incredibly different. He recapped that Acton's committee shared helpful information regarding what kinds of conversations would be most beneficial, including a discussion about common language. He also relayed that they implemented a highly effective survey, which Medway could adopt. Additionally, he shared the idea of translating all documents into various languages in order to be accessible to everyone. He then summarized the various ways in which Acton shared information about their committee, which included newsletters and social media. As for Shrewsbury, Mr. Crosby said that their committee is composed of 20 people, including a library representative. This committee hired a mediating consultant to be present at their first few meetings. They met for 2 hours per week and are now nearing the end of their ongoing work, which began in October of 2020. Mr. Crosby also shared that Shrewsbury's committee is highly diverse. In addition, their committee chose to focus primarily on race, as opposed to multiple aspects of diversity and inclusion. Furthermore, Shrewsbury's committee divided itself into subgroups and decided on a chairperson for each one. Lastly, they also had a storytelling committee and a survey committee. Ms. Dietrich reminded the committee that everything they do is public record, so the committee should be strategic in how they capture and share the community's feedback. She also shared that the IDEA committee is approximately twice the size of other town committees, so she felt that adopting Shrewsbury's strategy of creating subcommittees would be doable with 9 people. Mr. Kerls asked if anyone had further questions or ideas before recapping the meeting. Ms. Dietrich shared her takeaways: scheduling upcoming meetings, making personal lists of terms for the upcoming workshop, and ensuring that Mr. Crosby and Mr. Abdi connect with their associates who could consult with the committee. Mr. Foresto revisited the idea of funding and money. He suggested that the committee identify how much money they need for the upcoming year and subsequently share that information at a town meeting. Mr. Kerls asked if any committee members had any further comments. All committee members replied that they did not.

Motion to Adjourn: Mr. Foresto motioned to adjourn at 8:18PM and all committee members were in favor.

Agenda Item #3, New Business, was not discussed by the committee at this meeting.