

Town of Medway
Commonwealth of Massachusetts
IDEA (Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity Advisory) Committee
December 21, 2021 - 6PM
Sanford Hall

Committee Members Present (In-Person): Dan Kerls, Susan Dietrich, Bill Kingsbury, John Foresto, Brian Sharkey, and Marques Crosby

Committee Members Present (Virtually): Khalid Abdi and Andrea Crow Henry

Committee Members Absent: Judith Lane

Community Members Present: None

1. **Call to Order:** At 6:07PM, Mr. Kerls called the meeting to order. He called the role to ensure attendance of the following individuals: Kerls, Foresto, Kingsbury, Dietrich, Sharkey, Crosby, and Abdi.
2. **Public Comment:** There were none at this time.
3. **Focus Group Discussion: Debrief & Plan**

Mr. Sharkey reflected on the town's focus group, sharing that it would have been helpful to record it; however, per the request of the participants, they opted not to record it at the time. He suggested that in the future, the committee members could offer to pause the recording so that participants can comment off-the-record.

Andrea Crow Henry joined the meeting virtually at 6:11PM.

Ms. Dietrich suggested informing participants prior to the focus group that it will be recorded for note taking purposes and that the recording will not be publicized or shared as public record. Mr. Foresto suggested getting a legal opinion on this matter and offered to look into that. Mr. Crosby agreed with the approach to have more than one correspondence prior to the focus group in order to ensure transparency and full preparation.

Mr. Crosby, having attended both the town and school focus groups, shared that the moderators should try to promote participation from everyone. Mr. Kingsbury agreed, suggesting that the moderator could call on people who have not participated.

Mr. Foresto shared that he felt the town focus group had gone as in-depth as possible, given how small that particular group was. Mr. Crosby stated that no matter the size of the focus group, a

certain level of feedback is expected, particularly given the fact that the individuals in the focus group were identified for a reason.

Mr. Kingsbury shared that during the school focus group, they mentioned that they had difficulty retaining BIPOC educators, but that they did not discuss much regarding why this is the case.

Mr. Foresto shared that the town relayed similar difficulties with ensuring diversity within their employees. He stated that eliminating the civil service test could help break down these barriers.

Mr. Sharkey shared that there are certain policies in place that make hiring some individuals difficult, such as test scores.

Ms. Dietrich shared that the committee could direct participants who are not highly participatory to share their thoughts anonymously via the feedback form. Mr. Crosby agreed with this, citing fear of backlash as a primary reason why participants might hesitate to participate.

Mr. Crosby posed the idea of having follow-up focus groups with the original groups to share collective findings; Mr. Foresto strongly agreed with this approach.

Mr. Crosby shared that Mr. Sharkey prepared a PowerPoint that was projected during the town focus group; it included the mission, the shared language, and the guiding principles of the overarching question. Mr. Sharkey took live notes on the PowerPoint as the conversation flowed.

Mr. Foresto suggested debriefing the focus group right after its conclusion. Mr. Sharkey estimated adding one hour of time to do this thoroughly. The committee wholly agreed with this approach.

Mr. Kingsbury shared that the schools are clearly cognizant of the external political atmosphere and its impacts on the schools. He shared that there are existing feelings of fear of change or backlash in addressing these issues.

Ms. Dietrich shared that one of the teachers shared that of her class of 20 students, there are 6 languages represented. She also shared that schools are seen as the first point of access and see firsthand the level of diversity and need for support. She and Mr. Kingsbury also discussed how there are limited resources in regard to translation services and language acquisition support, partially due to contract stipulations.

Mr. Crosby shared that the schools also discussed major issues of access, as opposed to simply focusing on curriculum issues.

Mr. Sharkey also suggested identifying constraints and functional barriers that impede each focus group's respective progress. He also discussed that there is an existing education issue, as many people are not aware of the progress that can be made by attending town meetings and vocalizing issues.

Ms. Dietrich expanded on this, addressing the role of social capital: when an individual in need is new to a community, it can be difficult to achieve their intended goals, particularly when coupled with diversity barriers. Mr. Kingsbury agreed, sharing that Medway can be viewed as homogeneous in many ways, which exacerbates the issues of access and barriers.

Mr. Crosby shared that the school focus group also addressed the issue of finding ways to identify issues upfront, rather than reacting after the fact. Mr. Kerls agreed, stating that he hopes the committee is able to compile something resembling a checklist of considerations for individuals and departments to consider to ensure inclusion and access. Mr. Sharkey agreed with this, suggesting that the committee revisit this idea at the end of their work in fall of 2022. Mr. Foresto suggested that it be less of a checklist and more of a framework or mindset.

Mr. Kerls reminded the committee that the remaining focus groups are scheduled to be done by the end of January 2022. He recapped the schedule: police on January 4 at 3PM, the business community on a date TBD, Council on Aging with Housing Authority, Affordable Housing Committee with Affordable Housing Trust on January 5, students during a school day in January TBD, religious groups on a date TBD, and Medway Marches on January 10 at 6PM.

Mr. Sharkey and Mr. Kerls offered to facilitate the Medway Marches focus group.

Ms. Dietrich shared that the schools intend to share the feedback form with all students, not just the students who participate in the focus group.

Mr. Crosby inquired whether he would be involved in the Medway Marches group as a facilitator or as a participant; the committee confirmed that he can choose which role he would like to fulfill. Mr. Crosby opted to be a participant.

In regard to the church focus group, Mr. Sharkey shared that he will be reaching out to Lynne Sheehan of St. Joseph Academy; he shared that he has been unable to yet due to COVID concerns.

In regard to the business focus group, Mr. Abdi reached out to Julie Dennehy from the Business Council and is waiting to hear back regarding participation. He will update the committee once he has more information.

Ms. Crow Henry asked about adding a potential focus group for veterans. The committee agreed with this approach. Ms. Crow Henry shared that she will reach out to them and organize it.

Mr. Foresto shared that he needs another facilitator to assist him with the Affordable Housing Committee and Affordable Housing Trust. Mr. Abdi confirmed that he can help with this.

Ms. Crow Henry agreed to assist Mr. Kerls and Mr. Kingsbury with the police focus group.

Mr. Foresto shared that the community forum can take place on March 14, 2022 at Thayer Homestead. Ms. Dietrich clarified that the purpose of the community forum is for the committee to present their findings and formally launch the community survey.

Ms. Dietrich asked if the committee envisions the community forum as a seminar or a discussion; Mr. Foresto and Mr. Kerls underscored the importance of not sounding sanctimonious. Mr. Kerls also raised the issue of community members potentially coming to the community forum under the assumption that they can share their ideas.

Ms. Dietrich shared that a webinar approach has been successful with the schools; she shared that making the webinar accessible remotely was also helpful. She also suggested allowing people to ask questions in a 10-15 minute Q&A period, as well as providing an email follow-up for additional feedback. Mr. Sharkey supported this approach, as it has been proven successful before.

4. Community Survey Discussion

Mr. Sharkey shared his findings regarding platforms for the community survey. He suggested Qualtrics, Survey Monkey, QuestionPro and Google Forms. The average range of accessing the platforms that have translation services is about \$1,5000. He stated that Qualtrics or Survey Monkey would be his personal recommendations.

Ms. Dietrich and Mr. Foresto discussed the potential to request funds from Mr. Boynton for this purpose. Mr. Foresto offered to handle this.

Mr. Sharkey confirmed that the community survey will take place after all of the focus groups have taken place. The launch date for the survey will either be March 14 or March 15, 2022.

5. Language and Accessibility Discussion

Ms. Dietrich requested that the committee defer this to the January 4, 2022 meeting. Mr. Kerls agreed to this.

6. Discuss Presentation Format

Mr. Sharkey recapped that the PowerPoint he used with the town focus group included the mission, the shared language, and the guiding principles of the overarching question. He also shared that the final presentation should include high-level takeaways for challenges, opportunities, and what is working well holistically, as well as on a group-by-group basis.

Mr. Crosby also shared a visual of the note taking process in order to keep all of the participants' sharings. All members agreed to adhere to this approach.

7. OneDrive Discussion

Mr. Crosby requested that the committee defer this to the January 4, 2022 meeting. Mr. Kerls agreed to this.

8. Approve 7/14/21 Minutes

VOTE: Mr. Foresto motioned to approve the 7/14/21 minutes. Ms. Dietrich seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. Crow Henry: aye, Abdi: aye, Kingsbury: aye, Foresto: aye, Kerls: aye, Sharkey: aye, Crosby: aye, Dietrich: aye. VOTE: 8-0.

VOTE: Ms. Dietrich motioned to approve the 12/7/21 minutes. Mr. Crosby seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. Crow Henry: aye, Abdi: aye, Kingsbury: aye, Foresto: aye, Kerls: aye, Sharkey: aye, Crosby: aye, Dietrich: aye. VOTE: 8-0.

9. Other Business

Mr. Sharkey shared that the gray font on the committee's website is difficult to read.

The committee also ensured that the "Contact Us" function worked on the website. Ms. Dietrich also suggested adding language to direct users where to find the contact option.

Mr. Crosby reported that the background on the links is not changeable, as it is a standard format. He shared the timeline, feedback form, and committee charge are all now visible on the website.

Ms. Dietrich asked where the feedback form goes upon completion by a recipient; Mr. Crosby shared that it goes directly to the email address that he and Mr. Sharkey are jointly managing. He stated that as of right now, there have been no respondents. Ms. Dietrich also asked in what

format the form generates; she suggested managing the data by categorizing it, as well as compiling it in a more narrative form.

Mr. Crosby shared that the feedback form compiles an aggregate that readily allows for analysis and compilation of trends.

Motion to Adjourn: At 7:33PM, Mr. Foresto offered a motion to adjourn. Mr. Kerls seconded this motion, which passed unanimously. Crow Henry: aye, Abdi: aye, Kingsbury: aye, Foresto: aye, Kerls: aye, Sharkey: aye, Crosby: aye, Dietrich: aye. VOTE: 8-0.

Next Meeting: January 4, 2022 at 6PM in Sanford Hall