

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

May, 25, 2021 - 7:30pm

Zoom Meeting: Online

Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, and the Governor's Orders imposing strict limitations on the number of people that may gather in one place, no in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted at this meeting. Board members may be participating remotely. For public hearings, access via Zoom is provided for the required opportunity for public participation.

Committee Members Present: Khalid Abdi, Marques Crosby, Susan Dietrich, John Foresto, Dan Kerls, Brian Sharkey, Andrea Crow Henry (joined at 7:45pm)

Committee Members Absent: William Kingsbury and Judith Lane

Others Present: Dennis Crowley(joined at 7:35pm) and Glenn Trindade (joined at 7:38pm)

Call to Order: Mr. Foresto called the meeting to order at 7:34pm confirming the attendance of himself, Ms. Dietrich, Mr. Abdi, Mr. Kerls, Mr. Sharkey, and Mr. Crosby.

Agenda Item #1: Review of Action Items from Previous Meeting

Based on discussions from the last meeting, Mr. Foresto reiterated the importance of establishing a leadership team for the committee. He identified the need for a chair and vice chair. Mr. Kerls expressed interest in assuming a leadership position for this committee. He stated he does not have experience with town leadership, but feels his professional experience is relevant. Mr. Foresto offered to be the vice chair and support Mr. Kerls in his role as chair.

Agenda Item #2: Selection of Team Leadership

Mr. Foresto moved to nominate Mr. Kerls to be the chair of the IDEA Committee. Ms. Dietrich seconded this motion. It was voted by roll call: Adbi aye; Crosby aye; Dietrich aye; Foresto aye; Kerls aye; Sharkey aye; Vote: 6-0-0.

Ms. Dietrich moved to nominate Mr. Foresto to be vice chair of the IDEA Committee. Mr. Sharkey seconded this motion. It was voted by roll call: Adbi aye; Crosby aye; Dietrich aye; Foresto aye; Kerls aye; Sharkey aye; Vote: 6-0-0.

Agenda Item #3: Further Discussion on How to Move Forward

Mr. Foresto raised the issue of the tip line, per the committee's discussion at the last meeting. Mr. Crosby reminded the committee that the tip line document still needs to be broken down into categories. Ms. Dietrich shared that she felt the document currently does not feel particularly welcoming. Mr. Foresto asked who is willing to focus on updating the document as an action item for the committee's next meeting. He suggested these people meet with Rich Boucher and share their findings with the committee. Ms. Dietrich and Mr. Crosby both stated they can assist with this.

Agenda Item #4: Review of Proposed Questionnaire – Brian Sharkey and Daniel Kerls

Mr. Sharkey shared a presentation with the committee entitled “IDEA Committee Research Proposal.” The first part of the presentation covered the committee’s mission statement, the objectives of the committee’s project and proposed steps. The objectives included defining what it means to be a “welcoming and inclusive” community, identifying opportunities for improvement or development in the areas of equity, diversity, and inclusion, and developing and prioritizing recommendations and solutions that will positively impact Medway in the areas of equity, diversity, and inclusion. The proposed steps for the first objective were to assess other communities and other previously developed DEI resources, to hypothesize and develop potential DEI definitions for Medway, and to map out the town systems and citizen groups within Medway to help develop the framework for recommendations. He also clarified that the systems would include school, police, housing, and the like. He also clarified that the citizen groups would include LGBTQIA, BIPOC, persons with disabilities, and senior citizens. At this point Mr. Sharkey paused to field questions and welcome any feedback.

Mr. Kerls raised the idea of adding a citizens group for individuals who are new to the town of Medway. Mr. Sharkey supported this idea, stressing that adopting this citizen group could provide fresh perspectives and opinions, as well as offer a stronger sense of diversity. Mr. Kerls substantiated this point by sharing that many people who move to Medway or the MetroWest from more diverse communities would have to adjust in many ways to the new demographics. Mr. Sharkey expanded on this point by adding that the committee could also seek out individuals from other towns who are considering moving to Medway in the next 3-5 years. At this point, Mr. Sharkey segued back into his presentation and moved into a discussion of the proposed steps for the second objective. The steps included understanding and mapping current policies and steps that have been taken by town systems to address DEI related issues, discussing the experiences and opinions of Medway residents on DEI related issues, finalizing Medway’s definition for “welcoming and inclusive” based on qualitative feedback, and developing a list of DEI related needs for residents. Next, Mr. Sharkey shared his ideas regarding Step 3 Processes & Outputs by providing a chart of prioritization of needs via quantitative survey, as well as a chart of prioritization of recommendations via the workshop. Lastly, Mr. Sharkey raised the idea of next steps and general questions for the IDEA committee. He stated that he wanted to discuss any potential changes to the approach, review what is necessary for steps 1-3, then map out a timeline and address any budget-related questions.

Mr. Crosby mentioned that it could be worthwhile to have focus groups and brainstorming sessions upfront in order to narrow down specific content for the questionnaire. Mr. Sharkey validated this point by stating that focus groups can be quite efficient. He stated that this would be a productive way to facilitate an open discussion. He also suggested that after the first couple focus groups, it would be worthwhile to revisit this idea and determine if it is worth continuing. Ms. Dietrich expressed that the Master Plan Committee found this approach successful. She shared that an outside consultant played a crucial role in preparing the committee members to have a fruitful, productive conversation. Dietrich also expressed the need to identify the high-level topics and questions the committee would like to address with the community. She also shared that each focus group within the Master Plan Committee had no more than 7 people. Lastly, Ms. Dietrich reiterated the value in reaching out to other towns about their experience

and approach with these matters. Mr. Crosby added onto this point, mentioning that he has reached out to several towns about this, and is currently waiting to hear back. Mr. Foresto referred to the committee's previous conversation about active committees in Acton, Sharon, and Canton. He stated that reaching out to these particular towns would be productive. Ms. Dietrich suggested that the committee ask respondents in what ways they felt welcome and unwelcome in Medway. She also suggested that the committee itself respond to this question upfront, in order to share their own opinions upfront, and therefore be a better listener for the community. Mr. Sharkey agreed with this idea. He also brought up the importance of capturing diverse voices of individuals within the community, rather than strictly focusing on town departments. Mr. Crosby expanded on this point by suggesting that the committee focus on sharing the anonymous form with all members of the community, rather than just with the focus groups. Mr. Abdi asked if the committee should include Medway businesses in their approach. Mr. Foresto stated that businesses could be one of the focus groups. Ms. Dietrich stated that the Master Plan Committee found success with reaching out to a point person for each focus group. She expressed that this is a streamlined way to hear from diverse perspectives and delegate responsibilities.

Mr. Abdi expressed concern that not all businesses are affiliated with the Medway Business Council, due to the necessary fee. He wanted to be sure the committee includes their perspectives. Ms. Dietrich agreed with this thought and expressed that the committee can assemble business owners, who may or may not be associated with the Business Council. Mr. Sharkey clarified his interpretation of Ms. Dietrich's point, confirming that the committee could identify a "champion" within each focus group, who would then recruit other members. Ms. Dietrich suggested the committee review their charge and brainstorm relevant individuals in the community for each focus group. Mr. Kerls expanded on this, sharing that more soft spoken individuals might be deterred by a group-style of discussion, and that the committee should offer one-on-one appointments as an alternative.

Mr. Sharkey revisited the need for identifying next steps. He asked if the committee wants to spread out the outreach to other towns or assign one person to be responsible. Mr. Foresto shared that he will continue seeking contact with the 3 towns he previously identified. Mr. Crosby suggested that Mr. Foresto identify whether the towns are actively engaging in community outreach. Ms. Dietrich referred to how Sharon held a storytelling event about their experiences in the town. Mr. Foresto asked Mr. Crosby to find 3-4 other towns to reach out to. Mr. Abdi noted the Town of Sudbury, which has a similar charge and strategy as Medway's IDEA committee. He stated he will reach out to them.

Mr. Sharkey recapped the committee's points on the matter, then suggested creating an ongoing document to brainstorm questionnaire questions. Ms. Dietrich expressed that the Master Plan Committee only had 2 questions, but that it led to a meaningful, open-ended discussion. She also shared that there is significant overlap between the approach of the Master Plan Committee and the IDEA committee, so there will be many insights to glean from the Master Plan Committee moving forward. Mr. Trindade asked if the committee should hire assistance in achieving their goals.

Agenda Item #5: Discussion of Anonymous Tip Line

The committee did not discuss this agenda item at this meeting.

Agenda Item #6: Meeting Schedule

Ms. Dietrich stated the need to discuss meeting locations and frequency. Ms. Crow suggested meeting at the VFW Trophy Room. She also shared that she has an associate who has assisted with similar work in the past. She offered to reach out to this person regarding his availability. Mr. Foresto redirected the conversation back to Ms. Dietrich's previous point about scheduling meetings and corresponding locations. He suggested continuing to stream the meetings for public access. He then stated that he felt the committee should meet again in less than a month. Mr. Kerls replied that he will send an email tomorrow regarding availability to ensure a meeting takes place in the near future. He suggested meeting biweekly. Mr. Foresto stated that he will reach out to Liz Langlely about sending out a spreadsheet for everyone's availability.

All committee members agreed that Tuesday, June 8 at 7:30PM will be their next meeting.

Ms. Dietrich reminded the committee to brainstorm potential champions for each focus group, as well as identifying potential items for the questionnaire.

At 8:36pm, Mr. Kerls motioned to adjourn. Mr. Foresto seconded this motion. It was voted by roll call: Adbi aye; Crosby aye; Crow-Henry aye; Dietrich aye; Foresto aye; Kerls aye; Sharkey aye; Vote: 6-0-0.