

Town of Medway  
Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
IDEA (Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity Advisory) Committee  
January 18, 2022 - 6PM  
Remote via Zoom

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

***Committee Members Absent:*** Judith Lane

***Community Members Present:*** None

**Call to Order:** At 6:04PM, Mr. Kerls called the meeting to order. He confirmed the presence of the following individuals: Dietrich: present, Foresto: present, Kingsbury: present, Crosby: present, Abdi: present, Kerls: present.

**Focus Group Discussion**

Due to COVID, the police focus group has been postponed. Similarly, the Housing Authority/Council on Aging focus group was postponed and is tentatively planned for Wednesday, January 26.

In terms of Medway businesses, Mr. Abdi shared that he has not received much response from potential participants. He offered to continue following up with the identified members.

Mr. Sharkey joined the meeting at 6:07pm.

Ms. Crow Henry joined the meeting at 6:09pm.

**Finalize Notes: School, Town, Medway Marches, and Student Focus Groups**

Mr. Kerls updated the committee that he is in the process of finalizing his notes for the student focus group, as well as Medway Marches.

Mr. Crosby shared that he entered his notes from the School Committee to OneNote, as well as Ms. Dietrich's notes.

Mr. Sharkey offered to add his notes from the town focus group once he is able to transfer the information.

Mr. Crosby suggested that with future focus groups, committee members should organize their thoughts based on diversity, equity, and inclusion. He felt this approach with categorizing would help streamline the note taking process.

Mr. Sharkey shared that many community members from multiple focus groups have shared concerns about not knowing how town politics work, as well as not knowing the impact citizens

can have on the existing school curriculum. He also noted an ongoing trend of people feeling that voicing their opinions on diversity-related matters could lead to backlash.

Mr. Foresto shared that the issue of social media came up with the town focus group; Mr. Sharkey agreed that this idea also came up in the Medway Marches focus group, too.

Mr. Sharkey also shared that many minority citizens often feel obligated to educate others on issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion; he felt that the existence of shared town resources could ameliorate others. Moreover, Mr. Sharkey also shared the importance of promoting healthy and responsible discourse about these topics.

Mr. Kerls expounded upon this, sharing that many individuals shared sentiments of adding traditions in town to be more inclusive and reflective of Medway's sense of diversity, as opposed to removing any existing traditions.

Mr. Sharkey agreed and also shared the community's desire to hire and retain teachers of color, in order to ensure that there are diverse leaders in the town.

Mr. Crosby shared that the student focus group was reflective of the strong job that Medway schools are doing with these topics. He relayed that the students' primary concern was the culture among students, particularly in regard to bullying and derogatory language. He agreed with Mr. Sharkey's point that the students are concerned about the lack of diversity among teachers. Moreover, he stated that mental health was also an overarching concern among the students. Nonetheless, the students did share that they know who to go to for support in this regard. In addition, Mr. Crosby shared that transportation can be an issue for some students, which leads to a lack of access to extracurricular activities.

Mr. Kerls added that the students also had concerns about how the athletic program is quite rigid in regard to gender. The students suggested having coed and/or intramural options in order to be more inclusive of all gender identities.

Ms. Dietrich shared that there currently are unified teams, but they tend to be restricted to the special education program. As of right now, swim and track are the only coed athletic teams at the high school.

Mr. Crosby also shared that there is only one gender-neutral bathroom at the high school, which is on the third floor, and therefore somewhat inaccessible. He suggested that the committee consider advocating for a gender-neutral bathroom on each floor.

Mr. Sharkey left the meeting at 6:31PM.

### **Approve 1/4/21 Minutes**

**VOTE:** Ms. Dietrich motioned to approve the 1/4/21 minutes as amended. Mr. Crosby seconded this motion, which passed unanimously. Foresto: aye, Kingsbury: aye, Crosby: aye, Abdi: aye, Crow Henry: aye, Kerls: aye, Dietrich: aye. **VOTE:** 7-0.

Mr. Foresto left the meeting at 6:34PM.

### **Other Business**

Mr. Kerls reminded the committee of their planning meeting on January 25, 2022 at 6PM. Their next official meeting is February 1, 2022 at 6PM.

### **Determine Future Agenda Items: Survey Planning, Community Forum Planning, Other**

Mr. Kerls reminded the committee to reach out with upcoming agenda items prior to the next meeting.

Ms. Dietrich suggested the committee members reach out to the chairs of the various departments in town with the feedback form. She asked if the committee members would like to reach out to all focus group members, too, in order to provide additional information on the feedback form. She also suggested encouraging these individuals to share the feedback form with their social circles in order to increase engagement. Ms. Dietrich offered to share this with the schools and Dr. Murray using the approved shared language. She also shared her preference to disseminate this information from the IDEA committee's email address.

Mr. Crosby suggested an alternative means of reaching the high school and middle school students, as many of them shared during the focus group that they do not like completing surveys.

Ms. Dietrich suggested that the committee address how to best reach middle school and high school students at the February 1, 2022 meeting. She also mentioned the need to consider providing parents with this information upfront, as well.

Mr. Kingsbury suggested incorporating this information via the school newsletters.

Mr. Crosby shared that the committee has received 11 feedback responses thus far. He stated that 8 are anonymous and 3 include contact information.

Ms. Crow Henry shared she has connected with the veterans about having their focus group on January 31, 2022 at 3PM. She relayed that they are currently considering it; she is hopeful that she will have at least 3 participants and is currently seeking others. Ms. Dietrich and Mr. Kerls offered to help Ms. Crow Henry facilitate this focus group. Ms. Crow Henry suggested the main hall of the VFW as a location. Ms. Dietrich suggested having a Zoom option, too.

Mr. Kingsbury left the meeting at 6:45PM.

**Motion to Adjourn:** At 6:47PM, Mr. Kerls motioned to adjourn. Ms. Dietrich seconded this motion, which passed unanimously. Crosby: aye, Abdi: aye, Crow Henry: aye, Dietrich: aye, Kerls: aye. **VOTE:** 5-0.