

**DANVERS HUMAN RIGHTS & INCLUSION COMMITTEE**  
**Meeting of Thursday, September 24, 2020**

In accordance with the Governor's March 12 Order suspending provisions of Open Meeting Law and to promote public health and social distancing, a meeting of the Danvers Human Rights & Inclusion Committee was held on Thursday, September 24, 2020, 2020 at 7:00 PM via WebEx video conference call.

Committee members present: Dutrochet Djoko, Chair; Eric Crane, School Committee Liaison; Charlie Desmond; Bob Gamer; Bill Graham; Donna Hopkins; Sally Kerans; David McKenna; David Mills, Board of Selectmen Liaison; Paul Pawlak; Jorge Sanchez-Salazar; Douglas Vooyo, Interfaith Liaison

Staff present: Eileen Page, Human Resources; Lt. Rob Sullivan, Police Liaison

Not present: Cathy Sullivan-Bradley

With a quorum present, Mr. Djoko called the meeting to order.

**Approval of Minutes**

- I. August 20, 2020
- II. September 2, 2020

- *Vote: Mr. McKenna moved to approve the minutes from the August 20 and September 2 meetings. Mr. Gamer seconded. The motion carried unanimously via roll call.*

**Website and Social Media Management**

The Committee discussed whether to renew its contract with the current website maintenance vendor, or to merge their webpage to the Town website.

Mr. Desmond stated that he would like to see data regarding webpage traffic as the site currently stands before making a decision. Mr. Graham agreed.

Lt. Sullivan suggested that having a separate website makes the Committee easier to find online and on social media.

A Social Media Subcommittee was formed with Mr. Gamer and Ms. Hopkins as members.

**Lawn Sign Proposal**

Ms. Hopkins stated that residents have been expressing interest in lawn signs conveying messages of unity. She presented a design that was put together by a resident. She has been quoted \$700 for the production of 250 signs. The design reads *Unity in Our Community* and *Hate Has No Place Here*.

Mr. Gamer, Mr. Graham, Mr. McKenna, and Lt. Sullivan supported the proposal. Lt. Sullivan also suggested a banner be made that could be hung downtown.

Reverend Vooyo suggested the phrase *Hate Has No Place Here* be replaced with *Hope Resides Here*. The Committee discussed the phrasing.

The Committee briefly recessed to allow the Friends to convene a meeting to appropriate funds for production of the signs.

**Liaison Update**

**SCHOOL COMMITTEE – ERIC CRANE**

Mr. Crane reported that the investigation discussed at the September 24 meeting is still ongoing.

**DANVERS POLICE DEPARTMENT – LT. ROB SULLIVAN**

A *Black Lives Matter* sign was vandalized on a residential property. The police investigated. The homeowner was able to repost a new sign.

A remote learning session through the Danvers Public Schools was infiltrated with “Zoom-bombed” with racist messages. The DPD is investigating.

The DPD responded to a call at a store in which a customer claimed they were being asked to leave the premises based on their race. Based on their interactions with the customer at the store, the DPD determined that the customer had been asked to leave after becoming hostile regarding a return/exchange policy. A DPD officer provide the store’s corporate number to the customer so that he could file a complaint at a higher level.

The DPD is currently handling a complaint that will be going to the District Court as an alleged civil rights violation. The incident took place in a store, in which the alleged victim initially complained that an employee did not speak English. The alleged victim later amended the report saying that the employee seemed as though she was going to attack her, and called her the n-word. A companion of the alleged victim recorded part of the incident. A Spanish-speaking officer reviewed the tape, and determined that while the employee did use profanity, she did not use the n-word. Additionally, the video shows the employee to be short, under 100 pounds, and showing no aggression towards the alleged victim. The DPD will take part in the case when the District Court reopens.

Lt. Sullivan addressed a letter sent to the HRIC from the Sudan Enrichment for Families on behalf of a Peabody resident who has been arrested in Danvers and has felt targeted based on his race. Regarding a reported incident where the individual was reportedly confronted by police in a grocery store parking lot, it was determined that a shopper had called police after seeing the individual try to break into a car. It was later determined that the individual owned the car, and had locked his keys inside. Regarding a report that the individual lost his job at a Danvers nursing home following an allegation and then had a restraining order issued against him on behalf of the nursing home, Lt. Sullivan reported that police were on the premises during the termination, but this is not uncommon of companies if they suspect an employee may become aggressive, but there was no threat indicated in this case. No restraining order was filed, however, Lt. Sullivan reported it is possible that a no-trespass order was issued. Regarding the arrest of the individual on DUI charges, Lt. Sullivan stated that a 911 call was received asking for a well-being check on a man who was “stumbling and seemingly intoxicated.” When police arrived, the individual drove over a grass medium, blowing out a tire on the concrete. When he was pulled over, he almost backed into the police cruiser, and then tried to drive away. The police report states there was a “moderate odor of alcohol,” the individual’s eyes were glassy and bloodshot, and he was unsteady on his feet. At the police station, the individual did not complete two breath samples, per department policy (also per department policy, the lowest reading is used.) Lt. Sullivan reported that in cases where individuals are unwilling or unable to provide breath samples, no BAC reading can be generated, and the test is submitted as a refusal. The letter to the HRIC sent alleges that the individual blew over a .08, but this does not appear in any police report. Lt. Sullivan speculated that there may have been a confusion regarding paperwork received from the court, which would include statutory language but is not a reflection of wording in the police report. Lt. Sullivan confirmed that the individual’s vehicle was searched and inventoried before being towed, per department policy.

Lt. Sullivan also reported that in 2019 the DPD made 47 OUI arrests. Of those, 1 was a black female, 1 was a black male, 1 was a Hispanic female, 18 were white males, and 26 were white females.

#### SELECT BOARD – DAVID MILLS

The Select Board held a “listening session” regarding the Thin Blue Line flag controversy. Following the session, the Board voted 4-1 to approve the actions of the Town Manager. Since the session, a group of residents have begun gathering signatures for the matter to be reconsidered at Special Town Meeting.

#### INTERFAITH COMMITTEE – REV. DOUGLAS VOOYS

Rev. Vooys reported that the Interfaith Committee took the summer off, but will reconvene their meetings in October. The Committee is available for any needs that arise for residents, particularly related to housing and food insecurity.

#### New Business

Mr. McKenna asked for an update on the Jewish cemetery in Peabody that was vandalized. Lt. Sullivan reported that there was no evidence of a hate crime, but the Peabody Police are investigating.

Ms. Hopkins asked if the Town Manager had addressed issues of presidential campaign merchandise being sold outside Town Hall during the Back the Blue rally. She also asked if the Town Manager had addressed Peabody police cars driving through the rally showing support.

**Public Comment**

From Keith Lucy, via email: "I have a question for the human rights and inclusion committee. I would like to know when they plan to go back to in-person meetings as I would like to discuss some issues with them that I feel as though would be best discussed in person. I reached out to two members of the committee. One has agreed to meet with me at some point and the other has said he would not be willing to agree with me at some point, so I'm wondering when the committee is planning on going to in-person meetings so I can address the full committee." Mr. Djoko responded that the Committee will continue remote meetings per the Governor's executive order.

From Keith Lucy, via email: "The group you have mentioned several times tonight is not about HATE. It is about RESPECT. Respect for all. HATE has no place on any message from this committee."

➤ *Vote: Mr. Desmond moved to adjourn. Ms. Kerans seconded. The motion carried unanimously via roll call.*

The Committee adjourned at 9:13 PM.

*Respectfully submitted by Eileen G. Page  
09.30.2020*