

DANVERS HUMAN RIGHTS & INCLUSION COMMITTEE
Meeting of Thursday, September 16, 2021
Danvers Police Department | 120 Ash Street

Pursuant to Open Meeting Law M.G.L. Chapter 30A, §§ 18-25, written notice posted by the Town Clerk, a meeting of the Danvers Inclusion & Human Rights Committee was held on Thursday, August 12, 2021 at 7:00 PM in the Danvers Police Department Training Room.

(9) Committee members present: Dr. Dutochet Djoko, Chair; Kristen Perkins, Vice Chair; Robert Gamer; Deborah Gesualdo; William Graham; Donna Hopkins; David McKenna; Jorge Sanchez-Salazar; Amanda Symmes

(2) Committee members not present: Dr. Charles Desmond; Paul Pawlak

(4) Liaisons present: Eric Crane, School Committee; David Mills, Select Board; Eileen Page, Town Liaison; Rev. Douglas Vooys, Danvers Interfaith Partnership

(1) Liaison not present: Lt. Robert Sullivan, Danvers Police Department

With a quorum present, Dr. Djoko called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM.

Approval of Minutes – August 12, 2021

- ▶ *Vote: Mr. McKenna moved to approve the August 12, 2021 minutes. Mr. Gamer seconded. The motion carried unanimously.*

Discuss Town Liaison Changes

Ms. Page recently left the Human Resources Department for an outside opportunity, but will remain as the Town Liaison for the Committee until a Director of Equity & Inclusion is hired. Ms. Page will continue to provide administrative and organizational support to the Committee.

Annual Nomination and Election of Committee Chair

- ▶ *Vote: Mr. Gamer nominated Dr. Djoko for Chair. Mr. Djoko accepted the nomination. The motion carried unanimously.*

Annual Nomination and Election of Committee Vice Chair

Mr. Gamer nominated Ms. Hopkins for Vice Chair. Ms. Hopkins declined the nomination.

Ms. Perkins nominated Ms. Gesualdo for Vice Chair. Ms. Gesualdo declined the nomination.

- ▶ *Ms. Gesualdo nominated Ms. Perkins for Vice Chair. Ms. Perkins accepted the nomination. The motion carried unanimously.*

Police Liaison Update

On September 9, 2021 at 1 PM, Dr. Djoko received a call from Representative Sally Kerans, who informed him that an apparently racially motivated incident had taken place at Connors Farm the weekend prior. Dr. Djoko then received a call from Congressman Seth Moulton's office informing him of the incident. Dr. Djoko informed the Town Manager, Assistant Town Manager, and Ms. Page of the situation. Dr. Djoko, Chief Lovell, and Mr. Bartha worked together to draft a press release, and met with the victims of the incident. The family stressed that their complaint was with Connors Farm, and that they believe a Danvers police officer involved made an honest mistake, and did not have malicious intent.

Lt. Sullivan stated that Chief Lovell had planned to be at tonight's meeting, but had a prior commitment to have dinner with Wendy Ambrose, wife of the late Chief Patrick Ambrose in recognition of Chief Ambrose's birthday. He will attend the October meeting to address any additional questions the Committee has.

On behalf of Chief Lovell, Lt. Sullivan stated that the DPD's expectation is that officers respond to every call in a professional, productive manner, and use effective, appropriate language. Lt. Sullivan clarified that the officer responding to the incident at Connors Farm documented his interactions appropriately and admitted in his initial report that he made the comment in question. The officer has met with Chief Lovell and Lt. Ashley Sanborn, and the victim believe he spoke out of panic, feeling that he had lost control of the situation.

Dr. Djoko said that he believes the officer immediately regretted his words, and noted that the family specifically stressed that they did not want any disciplinary action taken against the officer, and do not believe his comments were racially motivated. Dr. Djoko will meet with the CEO of the Essex County Community Foundation (ECCF) to discuss how the organization can assist Danvers in providing anti-bias training for the community.

Scholarship Proposed Changes Discussion

- ▶ *Vote: Ms. Hopkins moved to implement the changes suggested by the Scholarship Audit Subcommittee at the Committee's August 12 meeting. Mr. McKenna seconded. The motion carried unanimously.*

Welcoming Community HRIC Members Update

Dr. Djoko reported that the Town Manager is close to approve a job description for a Director of Equity & Inclusion, and hopes to have the position advertised within the next few weeks. The Town hopes to fill the position by the end of the year.

Indigenous Peoples Day

Ms. Gesualdo stressed the importance of advocating to the State Oversight Board to pass Indigenous Peoples Day in Massachusetts (currently known as "Columbus Day.") Written testimony is due to the Oversight Board by October 15.

Subcommittee Sign-Ups for 2022 Events & Discuss Other Community Initiatives

23rd Annual Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day Tribute Subcommittee

1. Paul Pawlak (primary contact)
 2. Dr. Charles Desmond
 3. Dr. Dutrochet Djoko
 4. Amanda Symmes
 5. Bill Graham
-
- A. Eileen Page
 - B. Dr. Lisa Dana

Black History Month Subcommittee

1. David McKenna (primary contact)
 2. Kristen Perkins
 3. VACANT
 4. VACANT
 5. VACANT
-
- A. Rev. Douglas Vooyo

Women's History Month Speaker Series

1. Dr. Charles Desmond
 2. Kristen Perkins
 3. Donna Hopkins
 4. Jorge Sanchez-Salazar
 5. VACANT
-
- A. Eileen Page

PRIDE: Our 9th Annual Celebration

1. Robert Gamer
 2. Donna Hopkins
 3. Deborah Gesualdo
 4. Amanda Symmes
 5. Kristen Perkins
-
- A. Eileen Page (primary contact)
 - B. Rev. Douglas Vooys
 - C. Lt. Rob Sullivan

Juneteenth: Our 2nd Annual Community Celebration

1. Dr. Dutrochet Djoko (primary contact)
 2. Robert Gamer
 3. Donna Hopkins
 4. Deborah Gesualdo
 5. Amanda Symmes
-
- A. Eileen Page

12th Annual Declaration of Independence Reading

1. Robert Gamer (primary contact)
 2. Paul Pawlak
 3. William Graham
 4. VACANT
 5. VACANT
-
- A. Eileen Page

Chanukah

- A. Rev. Douglas Vooys (primary contact)
- B. Eileen Page

Interfaith Partnership Update

The Interfaith Partnership will resume meetings in October.

Select Board Liaison Update

Mr. Mills stated that the Select Board did not meet regularly over the summer.

School Committee Liaison Update

Mr. Crane reported that at their August meeting, the School Committee passed an Anti-Racist and Anti-Racism Resolution 4-1. The School Committee will also be working with Dr. Dana to ensure that students are being exposed to works by authors of color, and to a robust and accurate history of the United States.

The Committee will be meeting at the end of the week to vote on mask mandates for Danvers Public Schools.

New Business

LIBERTY TREE SOCIETY

A Subcommittee was convened to draft a response to an email received from the Liberty Tree Society. Mr. McKenna, Mr. Gamer, and Mr. Graham will be drafting a response to present to the Committee at the October meeting.

Citizen Queries

Kieran Moriarty asked how the Committee defines equity. Dr. Djoko used an analogy in which a 30-year-old and a 5-year-old are both given a two-wheel bicycle to symbolize equality. But when the 30-year-old receives that same bicycle, and the 5-year-old receives a smaller bike with training wheels to better suit their needs, it is equity.

► *Vote: Ms. Hopkins moved to adjourn. Ms. Gesualdo seconded. The motion carried unanimously.*

The Committee adjourned at 9:10 PM.

*Respectfully submitted by Eileen G. Page
10.19.21*