

**Human Rights Commission
Meeting Minutes February 17, 2021**

Attendance: Chris Kelly, Dr. Margaret Adams, Joe Borsellino, Diane Loud, Lianna Manos, Margaret Matthews, Dr. Oneida Fox Roye, Amy Wax Lafont, Diane Barry Preston

Also in Attendance: Lauren Golberg, Town Counsel, and Amanda Smith, Public Information Officer

The meeting was convened at 6:04 PM.

HRC Statement on Equity and Inclusion in the Dedham Public Schools

The first order of the business was the ratification of the Dedham Human Rights Commission statement as published in the Dedham Times. Joe Borsellino discussed that the statement is consistent with the goals of equity and inclusion of the Dedham Human Rights and has collaborated with the Dedham Public Schools in this topic. Joe Borsellino also provided some historical background on the topic of equity and equality in our schools. Joe Borsellino also affirmed that all of our students and families have the right to be represented in the schools, town government, and services. Our students also have affirmed that they want to be acknowledged and represented in their community. The Dedham HRC has made strides in working with the local police department, Dedham Historical Commission, and the Anti-Racism Coalition towards the goals of making the community more inclusive. We believe that the majority of the town is in favor of these goals as well.

The statement was unanimously approved. Margaret Adams read the statement into the record.

The statement reads as follows:

Dear Neighbors,

The Dedham Human Rights Commission acknowledges that a community's greatest asset is its citizens. In Dedham, we are empowered by the diversity of our residents, including its differing ages, lengths of time living in town, sexual orientations, socio-economic levels, races, and cultural backgrounds. We honor and celebrate that diversity recognizing how it strengthens our ability to plan for our collective economic, social, and health challenges ahead. When we stand together, we are better able to conquer these challenges.

The Dedham Human Rights Commission acknowledges that systemic racism exists in our town, in our state, and in our nation, and that it has always existed. Black,

Indigenous, and people of color have been and continue to be harmed and subjected to marked inequities in most every facet of American life.

We support the commitment of the Dedham Public Schools and School Committee to develop in our youngest citizens the skills they will need to build and thrive in a community that is equitable and inclusive. We support all of the efforts towards the inclusion of anti-racist education in our schools. We honor the teachers who bravely have taken on lessons to engage our children in these difficult and needed conversations. We salute the administrators who have acknowledged and supported the educators in their efforts. We urge that such efforts continue and expand.

We stand with the Black, Indigenous, and people of color in our community. We acknowledge your harm, hurt, disparate experiences of life, and fear. Dedham's leaders and its citizens must earn your trust. We will continue our efforts to amplify the voices of people of color in our community and advocate that our community must do better.

We call on all elected officials and town leaders, both formal and informal, and all of our residents to stand in unity. Dedham should actively pursue as a community the principles of equity and antiracism and never waiver from those principles.

Sincerely,

Dedham Human Rights Commission

Chris Kelly made a motion to approve the statement. Diane Loud seconded the motion. The following members voted in the affirmative:

Diane Loud

Amy Wax LaFont

Joe Borsellino

Diane Barry Preston

Dr. Margaret Adams

Lianna Manos

Dr. Oneida Fox Roye

Margaret Matthews

New Member

Diana Barry Preston is the new member of the Human Rights Commission representing the Council of Aging. She shared that she is the co-founder of Livable Dedham where 32% of our residents are over 60.

Dedham Human Rights Website

Amanda Smith, Public Information Officer, is trying to build a functioning website for the Dedham Human Rights Commission with all of the content and resources

developed by the Commission. It will have all of the “I am Dedham” and articles published by the Dedham Human Rights Commission. Amanda is making sure that the website can be viewed on multiple types of devices.

I Am Dedham Program

This month's session had a parent and child talking with each other about what Black History Month meant to them. The Commission discussed focusing upcoming meetings on particular Commissions and their work to support inclusion and equity in the town. Margaret Matthews will check on Dedham Housing Commission to identify the timing for a show on housing opportunities. Diane Loud will commit to April to highlight LGBTQ group at the middle school. Joe Borsellino will take the lead on the March session to focus on the history of redlining in Dedham along with the Dedham Historical Commission.

Article for the Dedham Times

Dr. Oneida Fox Roye made the motion to approve Joe Borsellino to write an article for the Dedham Times on equity and inclusion in the schools. Dianne Loud seconded the motion. All of the following members voted affirmatively:

Diane Loud

Amy Wax LaFont

Joe Borsellino

Diane Barry Preston

Dr. Margaret Adams

Lianna Manos

Dr. Oneida Fox Roye

Margaret Matthews

Chris Kelly also moved that Diane Loud write an article on affirmative action. Margaret Matthews seconded the motion.

All of the following members voted affirmatively:

Diane Loud

Amy Wax LaFont

Joe Borsellino

Diane Barry Preston

Dr. Margaret Adams

Lianna Manos

Dr. Oneida Fox Roye

Margaret Matthews

Townwide Forum on Race

Collette Phillips has met with various groups including members of the Select Board. She believes that a statement, commitment, and vision from town government is needed. That work is currently underway to support the creation of the commitment. Joe Borsellino will continue meeting with Collette Phillips along with the town officials.

Update on Gould Memorial

The group seeking funds to commemorate William Gould asked if the Human Rights Commission would write a letter in support of their application for a state veterans grant. Diane Preston will write the letter on behalf of the Dedham Human Rights Commission.

Dr. Oneida Fox Roye made a motion to approve Diane Barry Preston write a letter on behalf of the Dedham HRC in support of their application for a state veterans grant. Diane Loud seconded the motion. All of the following voted in the affirmative in the motion:

Diane Loud

Amy Wax LaFont

Joe Borsellino

Diane Barry Preston

Dr. Margaret Adams

Lianna Manos

Dr. Oneida Fox Roye

Margaret Matthews

The Human Rights Commission adjourned at 7:00 PM.

Future meeting dates on the third Wednesday of the month.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dr. Margaret Adams, Clerk Human Rights Commission