

DEI Commission Meeting

November 18, 2021

Meeting held via Zoom

Present:

Peju Champion	Nuha Muntasser	Janine Taylor	Paula Hudson
Katina Fontes	Sue Abrams	Tanisha Tate	Sue Rushfirth
Stephanie Oliver	Peng Zhou	Vona Hill	
Nalini Luthra	Joanna Steffey	Yana Bloomstein	

Also present:

Henry Hayes (Town Manager), Sudbury TV, Sylvia Nersessian (School Committee), Kim Swain (Assistant Superintendent, Sudbury Public Schools) Brad Crozier (Superintendent, Sudbury Public Schools), Scott Nix (SPD), Jen Roberts (Sudbury Select Board), Janie Dretler (Sudbury Select Board), Kay Bell (Sudbury Commission on Disability)

Agenda:

Welcome and open meeting by roll call vote
Public comments
SPS Discussion and Q&A
Continued discussion on survey submitted by members of the Commission - establishing a consensus on the Commission's identity & vision
Working group updates & subcommittee structure discussion
Attendance and Commission schedule
Immediate initiative recommendations: Land acknowledgement, international flags in town center, and storytelling workshops
Discussion on inquiries and concerns submitted to the Commission
Press release photo
Review and approve minutes of September 23, 2021 meeting
Adjourn meeting by roll call vote.

Call to order

Co-Chair Muntasser, following acknowledgement of a quorum, called the meeting to order at 7:32PM.

She welcomed everyone and reminded them that we all have a shared experience and are here to serve the town of Sudbury. She encouraged people to be active participants in the discussions and to step back to let others speak and share ideas and to step up to share your own.

Vote taken to call the meeting to order:

Nalini Luthra	Aye	Nuha Muntasser	Aye	Vona Hill	Aye
Katina Fontes	Aye	Sue Abrams	Aye	Tanisha Tate	Aye
Joanna Steffey	Aye	Peng Zhou	Aye	Peju Champion	Aye
Stephanie Oliver	Aye	Janine Taylor	Aye	Paula Hudson	Aye
Sue Rushfirth	Aye	Yana Bloomstein	Aye		

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

SPS Discussion and Q&A

Kim and Brad presented a power point designed to answer questions submitted by the commission members and to give additional information about the work of the Sudbury Public Schools in the area of diversity, equity and inclusion.

- The staff developed an equity statement that was approved by the School Committee. This statement is linked to the district goals and policies and is aligned with what is taught in the classrooms. <https://www.sudbury.k12.ma.us/domain/64> The district also developed SMART goals around equity for the 2021-2022 school year, and a superintendent goal and action steps.
- A PowerPoint included data for a variety of areas, including district race and ethnicity, a student survey on school climate, the district's belief statement for teaching social studies and content across grade levels, and messaging to families and students.
- Connectedness survey: This included social and emotional climate measures and noted some decline in how welcome out of town students feel at the middle school. This may be a reflection of the remote learning from last year.
- Learning focus areas: The staff is in the third year of working on new curriculum. The belief statement was shared with families 2 years ago. New curriculum content is an interdisciplinary approach across the grades and includes a social-emotional learning component.
- There is a diversity club included in the extracurricular activities at the middle school. Although the group was originally only students of color (and was called the Tenacity Club), it has been renamed the expanded to include all demographics.
- All schools have a behavior rubric that spells out responses to hurtful actions.
- There is a mandated professional development training on culturally responsive teaching for all new faculty in the first few years of their employment. The training is provided by IDEAS (formerly EMI). There is also a webinar series that is expanding to include families so they can see how the school is aligned with the core values of the community. The topic is a regular agenda item at administrative meetings, along with book groups.
- The school committee is partnering with the schools to further this work and move the initiatives forward.

Questions:

- How is the school responding to the issue of a welcoming school and the fact that some students do not feel welcomed.
 - Brad noted that some of this is a result of the remote learning and is not limited to the METCO students. There is a social calendar that has been created to address this, including a zoo trip. In the elementary schools the SMILE program is used to welcome new students.
- Hiring:
 - The district is working with other consortiums to recruit teachers of color, including HBUCs. It was suggested the district examine where it is placing ads and think about other resources to reach out to teachers of color.
 - They are also trying to connect with a "pipeline" that would help find new teachers at the beginning of their career and the district would provide the mentoring and help with licensure.
 - Retention is a challenge...the administration is reaching out to other districts to form affinity groups.
 - Hiring committees are working on hiring practices that seek people with a commitment to diversity and equity.

- Tenacity Club:
 - As noted earlier, this group has been changed to be more diverse and is open to all students, not just the students of color. It is part of a statewide organization.
 - Harmony curriculum:
 - The language in the curriculum is binary-Brad noted that the district changes the language in delivering the curriculum and the curriculum is not used exactly as presented.
- Brad and Kim will send a copy of the slides to the commission.

Land Acknowledgment

Note: this is intended for the beginning of the meeting in the future.

Katina read the acknowledgment and a reflection on a passage from the book *The Mourning Road to Thanksgiving* by Larry Spotted Crow Mann.

Continued discussion on survey submitted by members of the Commission - establishing a consensus on the Commission's identity & vision

There was no consensus on the identity and vision for the commission.

Discussion:

- It was suggested that the working group on structure could work on this, although the group needs some direction from the commission before they can move forward. Commission members weighed in on a variety of opinions, including the commission representing more than one of the options in the survey because some of the identities can include others. For example, advocacy includes education.
- As an advisory group we need data and information to give us the direction.
- There are other groups that provide education-perhaps we should let them be that resource. They can do advocacy work resulting from the education. We could work with them to curate resources to support the advocacy.
- The charge from the Select Board states the role as advisory. As an advisory body we can impact policy.
- Should we focus on a product like Needham did?

Recommendation: The structure subcommittee will tackle this and come back with recommendations.

Motion: Move to make the focus of the commission an advisory body. Moved by Stephanie and seconded by Vona Hill.

Nalini Luthra	Aye	Nuha Muntasser	Aye	Vona Hill	Aye
Katina Fontes	Aye	Sue Abrams	Aye	Tanisha Tate	Aye
Joanna Steffey	Aye	Peng Zhou	Aye	Peju Champion	Aye
Stephanie Oliver	Aye	Janine Taylor	Aye	Paula Hudson	Aye
Sue Rushfirth	Aye	Yana Bloomstein	Aye		

Working group updates & subcommittee structure discussion

- Moving forward with subcommittees (not working groups) we will need to post those meetings and keep minutes.
- The structure subcommittee will make recommendations to the commission on this. The committee is Peju Champion, Sue Abrams, Nalini Luthra, Nuha Muntasser, Sue Rushfirth, Paula Hudson.
- There was discussion about the difficulty of data collection in a public meeting. These subcommittee meetings will not be broadcast.
- Survey: One person can be in charge of this project so there is no need to post any meetings for this.

- A doodle poll will go out to decide the best week for these meetings. The original commission meetings are posted for the second and fourth Thursday so they could serve as posting for the subcommittee if that is the decision for meeting times.

Immediate initiative recommendations: Land acknowledgement, international flags in town center, and storytelling workshops.

- Land acknowledgment: This should be one of our recommendations to all boards and committees as part of our advisory role.
- Flags: Nalini told the committee about the flags that the town of Sharon has as you come into the town. They represent the countries of the residents. Janine will talk to them and get more information about how they went about doing it and will report back at a future meeting. There are flags in the schools that represent the students’ families home country.
- Grant applications: Nalini suggested having Jennifer Deleon come to do a storytelling workshop. She will research the details and bring it back to the group. It could be a grant possibility.
- We need to have a source of funding from the town. Budget discussions are already under way. Stephanie will investigate the costs of a project like Needham’s to help with our projected budget request.

Review and approve minutes of October 14, 2021 meeting.

Motion by Sue Rushfirth and seconded by Nuha Muntasser to accept the minutes of the October 14 minutes with one correction: Commission on Disability (not Disabilities).

Nalini Luthra	Aye	Nuha Muntasser	Aye
Katina Fontes	Aye	Sue Abrams	Aye
Peng Zhou	Aye	Peju Champion	Aye
Stephanie Oliver	Aye	Janine Taylor	Aye
Sue Rushfirth	Aye	Paula Hudson	Aye
Tanisha Tate	Aye		

**Next Meeting: Nuha will send a Doodle poll for the date in December.
Sue Rushfirth volunteered to do the land acknowledgment and reflection.**

Motion to adjourn by Nuha and seconded by Nalini.

Nalini Luthra	Aye	Nuha Muntasser	Aye
Katina Fontes	Aye	Sue Abrams	Aye
Peng Zhou	Aye	Peju Champion	Aye
Stephanie Oliver	Aye	Janine Taylor	Aye
Sue Rushfirth	Aye	Paula Hudson	Aye

Meeting adjourned at 10:07pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sue Abrams

Clerk