

Town of Needham
Needham Unite Against Racism Initiative Working Group
Minutes for February 7, 2022

Members Present: Marianne Cooley, Vivian Hsu, Liz Lee, Marcus Nelson,
Jen Howard Schroeder

Members Absent: Ramin Abrishamian, Jay Spencer, Natasha Espada, Toyin Fayemi

Staff Present: Katie King

6:00 p.m. **Call to Order:** This meeting of the Needham Unite Against Racism Initiative working group was convened by Chair, Marianne Cooley.

Chair Cooley announced this open meeting is being conducted remotely consistent with Governor Baker's Executive Order of March 12, 2020 due to the current state of emergency from the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus. She noted all public gatherings have been suspended as advised and directed by the Commonwealth. And, as such, suspending the requirement of the open meeting law to have all meetings in a public, accessible, physical location while encouraging and allowing members of all public bodies to participate remotely. She stated the meeting will not include public comment and the Needham Unite Against Racism Initiative working group and all attendees are convening by Zoom, as posted on the Town's website identifying how the public may join. All supporting documents used at this meeting are available on the Town's website www.needhamma.gov.

Update on Town Boards, Committees and Commissions with respect to adoption of the vision statement

Ms. Cooley shared with members a list of Town Boards and Committees that have adopted the vision statement.

- Members discussed new editions to the list. Members asked that staff send the list of committees that have adopted the vision statement to each board and committee.
- NUARI members discussed the idea of selecting committees who have not yet accepted and contacting them.

Plan for providing education and guidance to Town boards and committees and community organizations – report of subcommittees

Ms. Cooley suggested NUARI create an annotated bibliography of links to lectures and events because they educate in different ways.

Members split into groups to develop an education plan for specific groups to understand how they might be able to contribute to the NUARI mission.

Ms. Hsu shared the plans the Education Subcommittee developed:

- Figure out Outreach and Education without duplicating the efforts of other organizations and committees in Town
- Provide information about how to have conversations in a functional way for boards and committees
- Try to encourage consistency for leadership
- Assemble guidelines, ground rules, conversation prompts for discussions
- Make sure any such group of people have trained facilitators for conversations so there is consistency with practices but also a common glossary of terms in facilitating conversations as well as making sure there is consistency.
- Make expectations clear that the Town has for each group understanding that the group is coming with different perspectives
- Focus on boards and committees first
- Encourage a series of cross functional conversations starting with chairs of committees and boards to talk about this and go through it, then go back to their committees and tell them how they could apply this to their work
- The process would then flip over to the Toolkit Subcommittee, so they know how to report back
- What is NUARI's work plan for what it will do to move toward the vision?
- Conversation pieces - don't duplicate efforts already happening
- Develop a common reading list
- Have people engage in open and honest dialogues such as in the Zero Workshop
- It's important for committees to create space for people to have basic conversations
 - Format, substance, resources for people to continue the work
- Put structure behind it - have a session to pull in committee chairs. Have a trained facilitator for the group of chairs. A NUARI member could accompany the chair with their board when they try to facilitate conversations with their board.
- Have cross representation with members from different town boards paired with the facilitators - different perspectives including student perspectives
- Train the framer - train the committee group leadership to understand and be immersed in the agenda and they can take it back for their group to have meaningful conversations. Need consistency through shared language or stories. Frame a discussion, give them grounding to take next steps.
- Help them get out of the box of what they think race equity means (race quotas)
- Have a session with Town Meeting Members; get the word out to the precincts
- Every community member belongs. If that's your organizing principle, how does that mean you organize your budget and priorities?
- What would be in a train the framer facilitator session?
- Find a glossary, and be clear that it's a living document that will grow with our work. It won't be perfect.
- Start with the NDI glossary as a base.

- Collect success stories from the police force in Elliot, ME to get people to adopt a true story experience. Mr. Nelson and Mr. Spencer hope to meet Elliot police this month.

Mr. Nelson's subcommittee focused on Toolkits:

- Used the six-step process from the Government Alliance of Race Equity
- Decided the different questions the group be asking
- Place some accountability on the chairs of these committees
- Lay a framework so the process moves forward
- Ask “what does the data show and what does it tell us?”
- Community engagement - make sure with each committee or person, the steps NUARI is taking to have a more diverse committee
- Does the intention match the impact? If not, why not?
- Plan for implementation. DEI funding for town warrant for a person
- How does NUARI sustain the implementation effort?
- Ensure accountability - communicate and evaluate results
- Discussed a biannual meeting where NUARI talks about its projects
- Biannually, where does NUARI and the Town need to improve if goals aren't being accomplished?
- Questions will come up. People will ask: “What is my role?”
 - NUARI will have to ask boards to integrate race equity goals into what they have.

The end goal is to make our goals align to work toward equity.

Chair Cooley cited next steps:

- Circulate glossary to everyone as part of the Toolkit
- What would workshop look for mini-chairs?
- Meet again. Design a framework and bring back to the full group
- Find out how NDI developed their glossary
- If a subgroup gets back together, does the whole workgroup think it would be beneficial to engage Lisa?
- Get chairs together before June so they can think about what they're going to accomplish in the next year
- Does the Town have money to pay someone to come in who is expert at engaging community groups?
- The Town has 30-35 chairs and vice-chairs

Someone has been identified for staff education.

NUARI members work with Katie to get Lisa on board.

Mr. Nelson will get 6 Steps notes to share with members before 2/28. Send to Ms. Fitzpatrick or Ms. King.

Updates: Community Conversations on Race/Forums (Select Board), Complaint Resolution Procedure (HRC), Resilience Network (NDI), and DEI budget funding request

Plan to do the history of policing in Needham and in the U.S.

Human Rights Committee (HRC) continues on their work with the Complaint Resolution Procedure. The challenge with the process has been understanding that Open Meeting Law overlaps the need for confidentiality.

Resilience Network is getting ready for a March kick-off meeting. NUARI wants them to help them understand what our overlaps and alignments are and how it can work together.

Mr. Nelson followed up with people who have not adopted the NUARI vision. There are 30 people from different committees in Needham. The common goal is to make Needham a place where one can be reached out to and feel safe. It is important to define how the Town “shows up” for one another.

The DEI budget funding request has been submitted to the Select Board. Ms. King said when there has been a decision about who is going to do the staff training, and that NUARI would be updated. It is funded by a pool of money that will be allocated on different projects.

1. Next Meeting February 28, 2022 for community conversations

Matters not reasonably anticipated by the Chair 48 hours in advance - None.

7:11 p.m.

Adjourn

Motion:

M. Nelson moved to adjourn.

Seconded:

J. Howard Schroeder

Roll Call Vote:

M. Cooley, yes; V. Hsu, yes; L. Lee, yes; M. Nelson, yes;
J. Howard Schroeder, yes

Motion Carries:

5-0