

# Needham Unite Against Racism Working Group

## 6:00 p.m. June 7, 2021 Via Zoom

### Agenda

Under Governor Baker's emergency "Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law G.L. c. 30A, S20", issued March 12, 2020 and in effect until termination of the emergency, meetings of public bodies may be conducted virtually provided that adequate access is provided to the public.

Please click the link below to join the webinar: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88591891041>  
Or One tap mobile : US: +13017158592,,88591891041# or +13126266799,,88591891041#  
Or Telephone: Dial(for higher quality, dial a number based on your current location):  
US: +1 301 715 8592 or +1 312 626 6799 or +1 646 558 8656 or +1 253 215 8782 or +1 346 248 7799 or +1 669 900 9128 Webinar ID: 885 9189 1041

1. Approval of Minutes February 8, 2021
2. Committee Composition
3. Status of Recommendations
4. Work Plan
5. Community Communications Forum

**Town of Needham**  
**Needham Unite Against Racism Initiative Working Group**  
**Minutes for February 8, 2021**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V2alTCReQZc>

6:00 PM

A meeting of the Needham Unite Against Racism Initiative working group was convened by chair Marianne Cooley. Ms. 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. Ms. Cooley 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](http://www.needhamma.gov) Present were Marianne Cooley, Ramin Abrishamian, Matt Borrelli, Natasha Espada, Toyin Fayemi, Vivian Hsu, Sue Neckes, Marcus Nelson, Jen Howard Schroeder, Jay Spencer, Town Manager Kate Fitzpatrick, Assistant Town Manager Katie King, and Support Services Manager Sandy Cincotta.

Ms. Cooley noted that the working group has received public feedback and comments for specific wording at the prior meeting’s public hearing, and through comments emailed to the group or submitted through the Town website. Some comments related to the work that is ahead. The working group’s task relates to vision, so Ms. Cooley suggests those comments be placed in the “parking lot” and reviewed for recommendations for how to address and acknowledge.

The work at tonight’s meeting revolves around the reviews of the vision draft and to find consensus. The final draft will then be forwarded to the Select Board for adoption. The Select Board will be asked to forward to other boards for adoption, and the Select Board will be asked to host a summit for boards to come to share how goals are being met, demonstrating accountability. The recommendation will also be brought to Town Meeting as a resolution. Mr. Nelson asked if it is anticipated that the summit would be held once or annually. Ms. Cooley suggested that it be an annual meeting, but that all boards regularly discuss the goals throughout the year.

Ms. Cooley welcomed back Lisa Smith-McQueenie, a diversity, equity and inclusion consultant to guide the discussion on the draft vision statement, goals and guiding principles. Ms. Smith-McQueenie discussed the public comments in relation to the task of the working group which is “The NUARI working group has been formed to recommend a vision for racial equality in Needham and determine

guiding principles for future actions. Members will make recommendations to the Select Board.” She suggested that the community be notified of the task but that other ideas have not been dropped but will be forwarded for future action.

Ms. Smith-McQueenie presented the draft vision statement: “Needham will be a community free of racism, racial bias, prejudice and discrimination. Our residents, schools, businesses, organizations and government will work together to identify barriers to racial equity and create solutions, opportunities, resources and support for removing them.”

Mr. Borrelli asked if there was a way to incorporate workers or people in Town into the wording or were they assumed in the current categories. Mr. Spencer suggested that workers were included in the business category, and Ms. Smith-McQueenie noted that people in Town were included in all categories. Ms. Hsu noted the public comments that stated that a community completely free of racism wasn’t realistic, so should the wording indicate that the community “will strive” be considered? Ms. Smith-McQueenie stated that the definition of a vision statement is stating what you want the community to be. Dr. Fayemi noted that Needham should strive for the best and recommended keeping the current wording.

**Mr. Spencer made a motion to recommend adoption to the Select Board of the vision statement: “Needham will be a community free of racism, racial bias, prejudice and discrimination. Our residents, schools, businesses, organizations and government will work together to identify barriers to racial equity and create solutions, opportunities, resources and support for removing them.” Mr. Nelson seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved 10-0 by roll call vote.**

Ms. Smith-McQueenie presented that draft bullet points that accompany the vision statement. Not many changes have been made since the prior draft, and there were no public comments related to the points. Ms. Cooley suggested that each bullet point be read and members comment on the specific point. A vote will be taken at the conclusion of the review of the six points.

“We will work collaboratively and democratically toward a just, equitable, anti-racist community.” There were no working group comments.

“We will work to identify and change current policies, procedures, practices, and cultural norms in Needham that prevent meaningful access to opportunities because of race.” There were no working group comments.

“We will create opportunities for the community to confront unpleasant truths and seek solutions that always amplify values of racial equity.” There were no working group comments.

“We will intentionally create spaces for respectful dialogue and difficult conversations toward racial amity.” Ms. Espada asked if the word “amity” was understood by all. Ms. Smith-McQueenie noted that many words will need to be defined and Ms. Cooley suggested “amity” be added to the glossary of terms. There were no additional comments.

“We will actively engage with those who feel the impact of racism most directly, seeking their input, guidance, and honoring the wisdom of their experience.” There were no working group comments.

“We will commit as individuals to be intentional in our efforts to learn and practice anti-bias and antiracism, transforming our thinking, attitudes and behaviors.” Mr. Borrelli noted that this was the only bullet item that referenced individual as all others referenced “Town.” Ms. Smith-McQueenie stated that this point is included as the other bullet points did not include individual commitment.

**Mr. Spencer made a motion to recommend the six bullet points be recommended to the Select Board for adoption, as written. The motion was seconded by Mr. Nelson. The motion was unanimously approved 10-0 by roll call vote.**

Ms. Smith-McQueenie suggested that the working group review Guiding Principles #3-5, initially, as they are shorter statements, and then return to #1-2.

Guiding Principles 3: A healthy community recognizes the harm created by implicit bias, intolerance and racism and strives to embrace diversity and inclusion by using a racial equity lens to promote anti-racist behaviors and attitudes in all aspects of civic and inter-personal living.

Mr. Nelson asked how “healthy community” was defined. Ms. Smith-McQueenie noted that it was a thriving community with the capacity to recognize. Mr. Spencer asked if there was another word closer to “equity.” Mr. Abrishamian suggested that “healthy” has universality as opposed to “equitable.” Ms. Neckes suggested the word “healthy” connected to areas identified including physical, mental and emotional harm. Ms. Howard Schroeder suggested that “healthy” opened the door to public health, with the physical and mental health system. Mr. Borrelli asked if both the words “healthy” and “equitable” could be included.

**Mr. Abrishamian made a motion to recommend Guiding Principle 3 to be recommended for adoption as “A healthy and equitable community recognizes the harm created by implicit bias, intolerance and racism and strives to embrace diversity and inclusion by using a racial equity lens to promote anti-racist behaviors and attitudes in all aspects of civic and inter-personal living.” The motion was seconded by Mr. Nelson. The motion was unanimously approved 10-0 by roll call vote.**

Guiding Principles 4: We value lifelong/ongoing self and group learning and critical social analysis to acknowledge and to further understand the dominance of white culture and privilege throughout US history, and the importance of disrupting racial structures that perpetuate it.

Mr. Borrelli stated that “the dominance of white culture and privilege” appeared to be controversial. Ms. Espada suggested adding the wording “majority white culture” so that the phrase still makes an important statement. Ms. Cooley suggested that Guiding Principle 4 discussion be held, as there isn’t consensus, and return to the discussion after reviewing the other guiding principles. Mr. Nelson asked if only a majority vote was needed on each item or if unanimous vote was needed for each. Ms. Hsu stated that the statement is viewing the term through a historical lens and a recognition of concepts. Uncomfortable dialogue is needed to go forward. Ms. Howard Schroeder stated that no matter what words are used, some people will be uncomfortable, and that it is time for difficult conversations and to learn. Mr. Spencer stated that the wording was tough but true. The wording needs to be defined and promote dialogue. Dr. Fayemi challenged Mr. Borrelli to develop similar wording that provides needed message. Mr. Abrishamian noted the statement is true and asked what people found offensive. Mr. Borrelli agreed that difficult discussions are needed, but that the final document would be presented by the Town of Needham, so he suggested that something less divisive and “finger pointing” would help move forward. Mr. Abrishamian asked if the statement was true, and Mr. Borrelli agreed that it was, but that it didn’t recognize good that had been accomplished. Mr. Nelson noted that the statement wasn’t just about the past but about what was still happening. Dr. Fayemi stated that his culture has not been considered human, being killed for being in the wrong place or not being able to purchase a home. Many people, today, did not do any of that personally and are not at fault, but benefited from it. Ms. Howard Schroeder stated that the guiding principles are tools to fight against racism. If the working group doesn’t define using powerful language, not sure there is purpose in doing anything else.

**Mr. Spencer made a motion to recommend adoption of Guiding Principle 4 for adoption as “We value lifelong/ongoing self and group learning and critical social analysis to acknowledge and to further understand the dominance of white culture and privilege throughout US history, and the importance of disrupting racial structures that perpetuate it.” Mr. Nelson seconded the motion.** Discussion continued. Mr. Borrelli acknowledged horrible events throughout the country, but stated he was Needham-centered. Mr. Nelson felt that the statement reflected Needham and how many people living in Needham currently, and Ms. Cooley stated that the working group was addressing current Needham issues. Ms. Espada explained how her family had been impacted by blatant racism and that it was her goal to help change Needham to be a better community. **Ms. Cooley called the roll, and the motion was passed 9-1. Mr. Borrelli voted against adoption.**

Guiding Principles 5: Becoming anti-racist means that we must tackle our own implicit and discriminatory lenses – thus, bringing about restorative justice, healing and reconciliation to truly bring together the community we live in.

On the wording, Ms. Neckes stated that “restorative justice” is a process to correct a wrong, so is that the wording that was meant to be used in this principle? Ms. Smith-McQueenie noted it was included with healing and reconciliation, so there was a place for it, but it did indicate a commitment. Ms. Cooley asked if the wording connects the Town to a “means and methods”? Ms. Neckes noted it was a desirable commitment. Ms. Hsu noted “restorative justice” is a concept as well as a process. The concept of it is important to the state. The consensus was to leave the concept in the text.

**Ms. Neckes made a motion to recommend adoption of Guiding Principle 5 as “Becoming anti-racist means that we must tackle our own implicit and discriminatory lenses – thus, bringing about restorative justice, healing and reconciliation to truly bring together the community we live in.” The motion was seconded by Mr. Borrelli and the motion was approved unanimously on a roll vote 9-0. Natasha Espada had to leave the meeting early.**

A discussion was held on whether there was time at this meeting to discuss Guiding Principles 1 and 2, and after review it was agreed to hold both for an upcoming meeting. Ms. Cooley stated that the Vision Statement with bullet points and Guiding Principles 3-5 will be presented for adoption by the Select Board, with a notation that additional guiding principles will be coming forward. She thanked all the members for working together on a significant statement and for the respectful and candid conversations. The next meeting will include discussions on zoning and housing policies. There will be 3 meetings in March. The Tidwell report is due in late February. Ms. Hsu recommended that work begin on the glossary of terms. Ms. Cooley thanked Ms. Smith-McQueenie for all her work with the group. Ms. Smith-McQueenie acknowledged that hard work done by the working group, with each member bringing his/her whole self to the conversation.

7:45 PM

**Motion made by Mr. Borrelli that the Needham Unite Against Racism Initiative meeting be adjourned. Second: Mr. Nelson. Unanimously approved 9-0 by roll call vote.**

A list of all documents used at this Needham Unite Against Racism Initiative Working Group meeting is available at

<https://www.needhamma.gov/Archive.aspx?ADID=8833>.

#	Category	Recommendation
1	General	Submit a resolution requesting that Town Meeting adopt Needham's vision statement for racial equity at the May 2021 Special Town Meeting.
2	General	Forward the vision statement and guiding principles to all Needham Boards and Committees for their consideration and integration into their goals.
3	General	Encourage Needham non-profit organizations, civic groups, and businesses to adopt or endorse, as appropriate, the vision statement. All community members are welcomed in this work.
4	General	Include a question in its bi-annual Town survey to gauge residents' perceptions of how welcoming and inclusive the Needham community is.
5	Boards & Committees	Make intentional efforts and identify creative ideas for community outreach to diversify the candidate pool for all appointed Boards and Committees.
6	Boards & Committees	Identify strategies and partners to encourage diverse candidates to run for elected office.
7	Boards & Committees	Measure efforts and progress on efforts to make Boards and Committees more diverse.
8	Community	Develop a discrimination complaint process and provide forums where individuals feel comfortable discussing their concerns related to diversity, equity, and/or inclusion.
9	Community	Provide educational opportunities and community dialogues on the history of racism in America and other topics on equity.
10	Community	Create a framework for how community members can effectively engage in conversations around race, diversity, equity, and inclusion, to build relationships and a stronger understanding of different perspectives and lived experiences.
11	Community	Host and promote cultural events and celebrations to be welcoming and inclusive of all cultures and backgrounds.
12	Community	Increase, encourage and assist minority-owned businesses.
13	Community	Provide education to local businesses about the negative experiences of Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) individuals in local businesses and ways to improve.
14	Community	Strengthen the network of those engaged in this work including but not limited to the faith community, the business community, hospitals, colleges, civic and community organizations, and neighboring municipalities.

15	Housing	Create pathways for racially and economically diverse neighbors to buy and rent homes in Needham.
16	Housing	Set new goals related to affordable housing, and identify strategies to achieve them now that Needham has surpassed the 10% threshold under MGL Chapter 40B.
17	Housing	Evaluate and prioritize policies and programs for encouraging the development of housing for individuals and families across all affordability levels, with a particular focus on those earning less than 80% of the Area Median Income.
18	Housing	Encourage Federal support for affordable housing, including the redevelopment of Needham Housing Authority units.
19	Housing	Identify and address any barriers to fair housing in Needham.
20	Policing	Meet regularly with stakeholder groups and communities of color to build mutual trust and respect.
21	Policing	Work with stakeholders to sponsor a series of conversations between the public and police officers, including especially BIPOC individuals, to build relationships and a stronger understanding of different perspectives and lived experiences.
22	Policing	Find ways to educate the public on the role of police officers, such as through a Citizen Academy.
23	Policing	Emphasize training on mental health issues, threshold inquires, de-escalation techniques and the impact of implicit bias on policing. Further de-escalation training in non-life-threatening conditions should also be considered.
24	Policing	Prioritize leaving Civil Service to gain greater flexibility within the hiring and promotional process to achieve a more diverse department which reflects the broader community.
25	Policing	Implement all local components of the new state police reform law once additional guidance is made available. Following that, the Select Board should identify if any local policies or practices warrant additional review or changes or whether additional reforms should be made.

26	Policing	Review the Use of Force Policy after the Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) Commission issues the model policy and determine whether NPD's policy should include a stronger focus on de-escalation.
27	Policing	Have the Select Board serve as the oversight body of the Needham Police Department until the POST Commission role is defined.
28	Policing	Report regularly and make publicly available key enforcement data, broken down by race, gender and residency, to identify potential disparities and monitor trends over time.
29	Policing	Support funding for a regional collaboration with the Needham Police Department, Dedham Police Department, and Riverside Community Care to provide clinical support services for individuals with mental illness, co-occurring substance use disorders and trauma histories who might otherwise become incarcerated (see May 2021 Special Town Meeting Warrant Article 15).
30	Schools	Collaborate to determine how NUARI and the REAL Coalition can be complementary partners, including ongoing communication and coordination strategies.
31	Schools	Continue to support the development of curriculum and programs that further promote diversity, equity, and inclusion at all grade levels.
32	Schools	Continue to use the Portrait of a Needham Graduate Strategic Framework to guide decision making and planning around DEI program development, budgets, staffing, data collection, and accountability.
33	Schools	Identify what community-based equity work is needed to better support the school district.
34	Schools	Explore opportunities for ongoing community engagement including but not limited to Voices in Unity, a regular convening of equity-focused groups in Needham hosted by the school district.
35	Schools	Identify opportunities for collaboration and communication with private and parochial schools regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives.
36	Staffing	Identify and implement strategies to hire, support and retain diverse staff at every level of the organization.
37	Staffing	Measure their efforts to recruit and retain BIPOC individuals and provide annual updates on progress.
38	Staffing	Continue to provide diversity, equity and inclusion professional development opportunities for all staff geared towards deepening understanding and becoming culturally responsive, anti-racist, and anti-biased members of the Needham community.

Staffing

Analyze the pilot year of the METCO/Park & Recreation summer jobs partnership to identify opportunities for improvement and expansion.

Primary Board/Committee(s)	Other Potential Committees	Town Department(s)
Select Board, NUARI		OTM (Office of the Town Manager)
Select Board		OTM
Select Board, NUARI		OTM
Select Board		OTM
Select Board, Moderator	all	OTM
Select Board	all	Clerk's Office, OTM
Select Board, Moderator	all	Clerk's Office, OTM
Human Rights Committee	Select Board	OTM, Human Resources, Police Dept
Human Rights Committee, Library Trustees		OTM, Library
Human Rights Committee		OTM
Human Rights Committee, Select Board Select Board, Council of Economic Advisors	School Committee, Needham Council for Arts & Culture	OTM/Econ Dev, Planning & Community Development
Human Rights Committee	Council of Economic Advisors	
all	all	

Select Board, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Needham Housing Authority, Affordable Housing Trust Fund	Community Preservation Committee, Council of Economic Advisors	Planning & Community Development, OTM, NHA
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Select Board, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Needham Housing Authority, Affordable Housing Trust Fund	Community Preservation Committee, Council of Economic Advisors	Planning & Community Development, OTM, NHA
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Select Board, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Needham Housing Authority, Affordable Housing Trust Fund	Community Preservation Committee, Council of Economic Advisors	Planning & Community Development, OTM, NHA
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Select Board, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Needham Housing Authority, Affordable Housing Trust Fund	Community Preservation Committee, Council of Economic Advisors	Planning & Community Development, OTM, NHA
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Select Board, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Needham Housing Authority, Affordable Housing Trust Fund	Human Rights Committee	Planning & Community Development, OTM, NHA
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Select Board		Police Department
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Select Board		Police Department
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Select Board		Police Department
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Select Board		Police Department
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Select Board		OTM, Police Department
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Select Board		Police Department
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Select Board Police Department

Select Board Police Department

Select Board Police Department

Select Board Board of Health Police Department

School Committee Select Board NPS, OTM

School Committee NPS

School Committee NPS

School Committee NPS

School Committee Human Rights Committee NPS

School Committee NPS

Select Board, School Committee OTM/HR, NPS

Select Board, School Committee OTM/HR, NPS

Select Board, School Committee OTM/HR, NPS

Park & Recreation Commission,  
Select Board, School Committee

Park & Rec, OTM/HR, NPS

**Status**

**Notes**

completed

Approved by Town  
Meeting 5/1/2021

On-going - Follow up  
planned by 6/4/2021

To begin by 6/4/2021

Citizen Survey is  
planned for spring 2022  
Drafting a new  
volunteer application to  
consider voluntary data  
on race/gender

HRC will discuss a draft  
at its meeting on  
6/17/2021

Meeting with consultant  
to develop a framework  
6/3/2021

Meeting with consultant  
to develop a framework  
6/3/2021

Planning Board to  
discuss housing strategy  
on XX/XX/2021

Planning Board to  
discuss housing strategy  
on XX/XX/2021

Planning Board to  
discuss housing strategy  
on XX/XX/2021

NHA to select project  
consultant XX/XX/2021

Planning Board to  
discuss housing strategy  
on XX/XX/2021

See Policing Document

