

**Town of Needham**  
**Needham Unite Against Racism Initiative Working Group**  
**Minutes for January 11, 2021**

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL3PRZZjHC3yE0eZ-rrW5RDdybU0e1R91L>

6:00 p.m. 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. 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 Matt Borrelli, Vivian Hsu, Sue Neckes, Natasha Espada, Ramin Abrishamian, Marcus Nelson, Jen Howard Schroeder, Jay Spencer, Toyin Fayemi, Town Manager Kate Fitzpatrick, and Assistant Town Manager Katie King.

Ms. Cooley asked for a motion to approve the minutes of December 21, 2020.

**Motion: Mr. Nelson made a motion to approve the minutes of December 21, 2020. Mr. Abrishamian seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved 8-0 by roll call vote.**

Ms. Cooley introduced Police Chief John Schlittler to go over his philosophy in Needham and to talk about the work his department is doing. Chief Schlittler spoke to the group about his background and how police officers in his life growing up influenced him starting out in the field. He says they are always looking for ways to better themselves. He said officers are always looking out for their safety and may have a robotic way of approaching a vehicle when it is stopped. This practice is all done in the interest of safety, but the profession as a whole hasn't been great at explaining why they do what they do. Ultimately, they are trying to protect themselves. He said he would like to find a way to figure out how the community feels and find a way to get their message out. Ms. Cooley appreciated him saying that maybe he and his staff haven't stepped back to think about how the interaction is perceived and that they are thinking about safety. Chief Schlittler said that when they respond to calls, they have a general idea of what they are facing. There is no playbook, they aren't always right and sometimes it's not a situation they can plan for. They rely on training and they try to react based upon their training.

Ms. Cooley asked Chief Schlittler to tell the group about fundamental training. Chief Schlittler told the group there are two types of training. The recruit academy training which is a 26-week long program and then an internal 12-week field training program. During the field training program, a recruit is assigned to three different officers. They review Standard Operating Procedures and then they are

shadowed by plain clothes officers so they can get a feel for what it is like in the field. If needed they can be remediated out and go back and try again. There is a mandated 40 hours of professional development by the State. Needham also offers additional trainings including: in-house annual use of force training which is a classroom session; firearms training twice a year; use of force and de-escalation training; defensive tactics one or two times a year; force on force training/active shooter training; and taser training.

Mr. Nelson asked how the new State reform will impact Needham. Chief Schlittler said there is a period where the new bill will need to be dissected and they will need to figure out what needs to be done. There are a lot of changes with regards to training, and post-certification which will certify or decertify police officers. The Mass. Police Chiefs Association has been asking for a certification process for many years. The biggest impact of the law will be to training and the changes to policies. Everyone across the board will have to follow the same policies so that will be more consistent. When asked about diversity in the Police Department, he noted that hiring in Needham is governed by the Civil Service system, and the Department must use the lists provided for hiring. Civil Service follows a particular formula and the jobs have to be offered in the following order: Veterans, Disabled Veterans that live in Town, family members of police officers that have been killed in the line of duty, and then Needham residents. The Town has asked for minority lists, or Spanish speaking lists but they have been denied. Unfortunately, the Department is bound by the Civil Service system and it does not really provide a diverse group of candidates.

Chief Schlittler also talked about data gathering, such as recording all traffic stop information, including issued violations and verbal warnings. He said that he reviews all the data regularly to see if there is an issue and areas that need to be worked on. Ms. Hsu asked about the training simulation system and whether any of the scenarios analyze and address individual not just biases or racial profiling tendencies but also unconscious biases. Chief Schlittler said there are over 5,000 scenarios. Ms. Hsu asked who is in a position of assessing those responses to the scenarios and if they need additional trainings. Chief Schlittler said they look for deficiencies and they look at it from all angles. Mr. Spencer said they are always in a situation where decisions must be made. There are many cases where people believe that white privilege plays a part in those decisions. He asked how do you overcome that, and what type of training officers need to be better at handling those instances particularly with people of color? Chief Schlittler responded that they can always do better with training. They rely on the community or the Town to let them know what is going on. He said the Department wants to build trust within the community. They are trying to find consistency and to respond to all the situations in the same manner. It doesn't always happen though and there are various environmental factors too. The officers aren't perfect and are human beings too. Probably one of the hardest parts is that people perceive things differently. Ms. Cooley commented that sometimes the discussion of treating equally is still not equitable. We don't know exactly what that means in transactions/interactions with

community members of color but thinks we can learn something even by engaging with them with how things are perceived. Mr. Nelson agreed that having interactions with the community is key.

Chief Schlittler said being part of a community was important to him. The department has two School Resource Officers, foot patrols around the schools, and housing authority, they are part of the Domestic Violence Action Committee and the Human Rights Committee, and work with Seniors and Veterans in Town. They also play a large role in the Coalition for Suicide Prevention and they do a lot of work around mental health. All of the officers train on mental health and first aid. Building trust, legitimacy, and communication are some of the best things we can do to try and bridge that gap. It is a work in progress, and he hopes to make a difference. They can always be better and are always looking for ways to improve.

Mr. Abrishamian asked if there are any organized deliberate attempts to interact and to connect with the community of color that live or work in Needham? He said not as an individual group but said again that people of color are part of a lot of organized groups in Town. Dr. Fayemi said he empathizes with Chief Schlittler. He says it is tough to take yourself out of the equation and see what is going on around the world and how people respond to people of color. He encouraged the Department to look at things differently and to try not to feel like everyone is pointing at them. Chief Schlittler says they sometimes do feel like everyone is against them, and that there are plenty of times where people come up to the officers and don't have nice things to say to them.

Ms. Cooley asked if he expects that the new de-certification process will help when there are police who are bad cops? If a police officer were to get decertified, they will not be able to go anywhere else. The big issue initially is how it will get rolled out. He isn't sure what it will truly look like yet. Ms. Cooley said that the data from the police is recorded regularly and will be put up on the website. Ms. Fitzpatrick said there is a plan to aggregate the data together and put out more formalized reports. Ms. Cooley thanked Chief Schlittler and said the more conversations like this the better and this will help us as a Town to move forward. She also commented that the School Resource Officers were valuable at the schools.

Ms. Cooley then welcomed back Lisa Smith-McQueenie who joined the meeting for the fourth visioning session. She also noted that Jen Howard and Natasha Espada were able to join the meeting too. Ms. Smith-McQueenie started off saying that there are some suggestions she would have given to Chief Schlittler, and he may have covered them earlier in the meeting. She appreciated his comments about trust and legitimacy but that should also be coupled with authenticity. First of all, what personal legacy might he want to articulate regarding diversity, equity and inclusion, and social justice? As a leader it is important for him to set a standard for his officers and for the community. Second, how would the example of policing at the Capitol be addressed among the Needham police force? Are there other

examples or opportunities for teaching and learning that might help Needham police understand the relationships and inter-relationships among police and civilians and in particular civilians of color? She also said there was mention of the community being comfortable with the Police, but she would flip it and say how comfortable are they with the community because it is a two-way street.

Ms. Smith-McQueenie then shared the Visioning session slides. Ms. Cooley, Mr Abrishamian, Mr Spencer, and Ms. Hsu voiced positive sentiments about the draft language and including the five bullets with the vision statement.

Mr. Abrishamian said he likes the statement and five bullets, but he feels something is missing. Racial bias comes from inside individuals. To eliminate it, involves some process of personal change that comes through education. Ms. Howard agreed that the personal commitment is a critical piece. She said she is still wondering if some of the terms are things that need to be spelled out in the bullets, so people understand what they are talking about. Mr. Borrelli said that because the statement is coming from the Town, he thinks our hands are tied to a certain extent. It is a nice umbrella and states the vision we have.

Ms. Smith-McQueenie then moved on to the Guiding Principles that should inform this work. The group viewed nine different statements and gave their input. Ms. Howard said what is missing is a call for developing tools for accountability and some clearly delineated place for when and how people can bring their concerns. She said it is important to create spaces where people can share their experiences and they can feel listened to. She said that we need to spend time thinking about how to do outreach, as the ways we have done things in the past have not been successful.

Ms. Hsu said that the Guiding Principles should be for future actions and that a shorter list of principles will resonate with people more. The group spent some time word-smithing the different options. Dr. Fayemi feels using the words “white supremacy” in one of the statements is too much. Maybe something more along the lines of “Black lives have been subjected to white dominance and culture.” He thinks using the wording white supremacy will turn people off. Mr. Borrelli asked if there are better ways of saying things that bring people together and not make people think that it doesn’t speak to them. Ms. Smith-McQueenie said that until we recognize what makes us uncomfortable, we won’t be able to heal.

Mr. Abrishamian said we should be explicit that we cannot move forward without acknowledging history. Ms. Neckes said it’s not just the history, it is happening as we sit here and speak. She finds the term white privilege is something we should reckon with and not find any more offensive than the racism that exists. She doesn’t find that term so off-putting that we can’t work with it given that it is a reality. Ms. Cooley said that there are people who still don’t see themselves in white privilege. Ms. Neckes said that doesn’t mean we shouldn’t confront it. Ms. Cooley said that she likes Dr. Fayemi’s wording around the dominance of white culture, wondering

if we can use explicit language while still inviting people in. Ms. Espada said that the majority doesn't really understand that they are the majority, and that they don't understand the privilege that they have. People do not understand they have biases, so an education piece is what is needed to figure out how to move forward.

Ms. Smith-McQueenie said the group needs to decide what they are going to encourage Needham residents to do. Mr. Borrelli said he thinks it is premature to be telling residents what to do at this point. Ms. Hsu wondered if they should fold the encouragement statements into the goals and objectives? Ms. Cooley said that she likes the explicit list, and the one that jumps out to her is the one that says, "Diversify employment, contracting, and general association." She thinks it would be great to have a list like this. Ms. Smith-McQueenie asked if the group would like to present these statements now or at a later date. Mr. Spencer said they should have the vision statement, guiding principles, and questions they need to ask themselves to further the conversation on diversity. Mr. Borrelli urged the group to be cautious as this is coming from the Town. He said he is not sure "Needham Residents are encouraged to" is really the right wording. He suggests changing it to say "supports" instead of "encouraged". He also wondered if this piece was critical at this time. Ms. Hsu said maybe we need to get feedback on the vision statement first before we finalize the guiding principles or the list about encouraging/supporting the community. Mr. Spencer said that maybe all three should be distributed and for context say it is a working draft. Then people can provide feedback. Ms. Hsu said to just make it clear these statements are things we are thinking about and that they are not final. Ms. Cooley said she thinks the group is pretty comfortable presenting the vision and the basic ideas with the guiding principles and encouragement statements. Ms. Cooley said the next meeting will be a public hearing on January 25, 2021 where the community will be given a chance to give their opinion on the information, we have put out thus far. Ms. Cooley said the group's purpose at the next meeting will be to listen. After the meeting, the group will come back together to discuss the feedback. Ms. Hsu said it would be helpful to hear from the public but wants to be clear what they are presenting is not the final product.

8:40 p.m.

**Motion by Mr. Borrelli that the Needham Unite Against Racism Initiative working group meeting be adjourned. Second: Mr. Spencer. Unanimously approved 10-0 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/4942/Needham-Unite-Against-Racism-Initiative>

**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 three 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 working group 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>.

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

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89833277286>

6:00 p.m. 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. 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 Matt Borrelli, Vivian Hsu, Sue Neckes, Natasha Espada, Ramin Abrishamian, Marcus Nelson, Jen Howard Schroeder, Jay Spencer, Toyin Fayemi, Town Manager Kate Fitzpatrick, and Assistant Town Manager Katie King. Also present was facilitator Lisa Smith-McQueenie.

Ms. Cooley asked for a motion to approve the minutes of January 4, 2021.

**Motion: Ms. Cooley made a motion to approve the minutes of January 4, 2021. Mr. Borrelli seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved 10-0 by roll call vote.**

Ms. Cooley informed the group that the Tidwell Report, expected to be available for discussion at the 3/15 NUARI meeting, would not be available until later. She polled the group to see if there was agreement to move this discussion to another meeting on Monday, March 22, 2021. The Chief of Police will attend that meeting. Another meeting would be added for March 29<sup>th</sup>. After discussion the group agreed.

Mr. Spencer asked what was holding up the report. Ms. Cooley replied that the Town has been working with Ms. Tidwell to ensure that the report provided a good set of recommendations for the Town. It is very close to being released. The internal investigation document will be released at the same time. The Select Board will be discussing this report before it will be discussed at NUARI.

Mr. Nelson asked if the group could submit questions for the Police Chief in advance of the next meeting? Ms. Cooley said that would be useful.

6:10 p.m. Ms. Rachel Glisper, HR Director for the Town and Dr. Alex Montes McNeil, Assistant Superintendent for the Needham Public Schools, presented the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) programs that the Town and Schools have been working on.

Ms. Glisper provided an overview of the Town's programs, such as:

1. Applicant Tracking System – Human Resources in implementing an applicant tracking system that will have features which allow the hiding/masking of personally identifiable information of candidates. This feature will prevent the unconscious bias that may be used while managers rate candidate applications. It will allow for job qualifications/experience to be used as the sole criteria while reviewing applications. The system also allows for the redaction of information.
2. METCO Summer Hiring – Human Resources will be working with the Park & Recreation Department as it gears up for hiring for the Pool and Summer Programs. Park & Recreation is partnering with the School METCO program to allow METCO students to work at the summer programs.
3. Roundtable Discussion Series – On March 22<sup>nd</sup> the first Diversity, Equity and Inclusion roundtable discussion will be held for any interested employees.
4. Employee Resource Group – “Stronger Together,” a collaboration with the School Department, was created for BIPOC employees to have a safe place to share experiences in Town and to discuss ways to drive change in the area of equity. The group meets once a month and is a sponsor of the Roundtable Series.

Dr. McNeil provided an overview of the School's DEI programs. She stated that when she started with the NPS just under three years ago, it was clear that a major focus of the work was diversifying staff and staff retention. This focus is included in the School Department's Portrait of a Needham Graduate and in the School's REAL Coalition.

1. A small group of staff of color was created, similar to the efforts underway by the Town. Ms. Glisper and Dr. McNeil discussed their efforts and decided that the two groups would be “Stronger Together” and hence the program took shape.
2. Over the past two years, the School Department has hired over 37 people of color. Dr. McNeil has been training staff about bias and the effect that desegregation and the history that occurred after that resulted in a loss of 37,000 jobs in the education profession.
3. Dr. Mc Neil said that she views staff/professional development in the vein of “What is a portrait of a Needham teacher?” She said that professional development should align with the district goals.

Ms. Cooley asked Ms. McNeil if the School's had retained all 37 of the staff hired? Ms. McNeil responded that some staff left for promotional reasons and they have left with a good impression of Needham.

Ms. Cooley asked Ms. Glisper if there was a diverse pool of employees in the Town of Needham. Ms. Glisper responded that there are no baseline numbers. But that the Town needs to do better; in particular, to increase diversity in higher level positions.

Mr. Nelson asked about the 37 staff hired in comparison to the total number hired during that period. Dr. McNeil responded that it is difficult to state because of incremental growth; however, she would like to see it expand further. Posting positions for longer periods of time to allow vacancies to be publicized on other networks is one strategy she is considering.

Ms. Cooley asked Dr. McNeil if exit interviews have been positive or a mix. Dr. McNeil responded for the most part, most staff leave for personal reasons.

Ms. Cooley asked Ms. Glisper how we are measuring the Town's success. Ms. Glisper responded that many exit from the Town for promotional reasons. The new applicant tracking system will provide us with that data in the future. Stronger Together information is now included in new employee packets.

Ms. Espada asked how are people attending the Roundtable discussions. Ms. Glisper responded that all Town employees and School employees can attend and that it is voluntary, not mandatory.

Ms. Espada stated that she hopes the Town will have support for the METCO students this summer should they experience any discrimination.

Ms. Hsu, who has served on the Town's Personnel Board for 20 years offered a few observations: to be sure equity and parity are used in hiring, the Board reviews policies and procedures in the community and the Board holds managers feet to the fire when it comes to recruitment. She stated that Needham must compete with the private sector, State and other municipalities for senior level positions.

Ms. Neckes asked if there were barriers for using METCO students (e.g. Transportation). Ms. Glisper responded that transportation was on the top of the concern list – however Park & Recreation is offering alternative schedules commensurate with the train schedules and offering T passes. She stated that transportation is no longer at the top of the concern list. Ms. Glisper stated that training costs for these summer program jobs are reimbursable.

Ms. Neckes asked how DEI is part of the professional development for Town employees? Ms. Glisper responded that the Town continues to beef up the program and more training offerings are needed for staff.

Ms. Howard Schroeder asked about Stronger Together meetings, and without breaching confidentiality, was Ms. Glisper able to share concerns that could be worked on. Ms. Glisper responded that right now the group is just there to support each other and checking in on each other. The two subjects which have been brought up are recruitment and retention. Ms. Howard Schroeder asked if there were ways that the community could help. Ms. Glisper responded that Town

Manager Kate Fitzpatrick has been supportive with messaging that this subject is a priority and that Roundtable discussions for employees will help.

Ms. McNeil responded that having help to communicate high level position vacancies with outside channels is needed. They rely on communications and networking will be greatly appreciated. Mr. Borrelli asked if the Town's Public Information Officer could be of assistance distributing this information.

Mr. Spencer asked how far outside of the State does the Town recruit, rather than waiting for applicants to come to us rather than us going out to actively recruit. Ms. Glisper responded that there has been no barrier to location. She likes the idea of recruiting at Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Using Zoom has provided an easy opportunity to recruit from more remote areas. Ms. McNeil responded that the School Department gets candidates from all areas. She has been reaching out to universities who have high enrollments of people of color using Handshake.

Ms. Cooley asked because we have not done a good job about collecting data on our employees, is it an issue to go back and ask for it. Ms. Glisper responded that the racial data information is asked for on applications, but not everyone answers it. She does not have accurate information on current staff.

The group thanked Ms. Glisper and Dr. McNeil for their very informative discussion.

7:10 p.m. Lisa Smith-McQueenie resumed discussion with the group on the Guiding Principles. Discussion continued combining the points of Guiding Principles 1 and 2. After some deliberating on wordsmithing the refining of the Guiding Principles was finished.

Intentional Practices was the remaining data to be discussed. Mr. Abrishamian explained why he added the 8<sup>th</sup> practice as it is in line with Race Amity Day. Ms. Cooley asked the group if they supported inclusion of this practice. All agreed.

Ms. Cooley asked the group if there were any comments about the list of Select Board appointed Board and Committee members which she distributed. She offered her observations that there were very few people of color on the list, there is a mixture of men and women, one committee was all women, three committees were all white men and some appointees have served for many years.

The need to increase the diversity of the applicant pool is a goal. This subject will be something the group will come back to.

Ms. Howard Schroeder asked if the group could speak to some of the items which have been given to the NUARI group for discussion. NUARI has been asking the

community to be engaged; they have, but we need to be responsive. Mr. Nelson added that he would like the EJV report added to the Tidwell Report for discussion.

Ms. Cooley responded that she wants to focus on the Tidwell Report first, then come back to EJV to give full attention.

8:02 p.m.

**Motion: Mr. Borrelli made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Spencer seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved 10-0 by roll call vote.**

Zoom recording of this meeting can be found on the Town's YouTube Channel at: [youtube.com/townofneedhamma](https://youtube.com/townofneedhamma).

**Town of Needham**  
**Needham Unite Against Racism Initiative Working Group**  
**Minutes for April 12, 2021**

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL3PRZZjHC3yE0eZ-rrW5RDdybU0e1R91L>

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 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, Town Manager Kate Fitzpatrick, Assistant Town Manager Katie King, and Support Services Manager Sandy Cincotta.

Ms. Cooley asked for a motion to approve the minutes of January 25, 2021.

**Motion: Mr. Borrelli made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 25, 2021 meeting. Ms. Neckes seconded them motion. The motion was unanimously approved 9-0 by roll call vote.**

Ms. Cooley noted that Mary Lammi from Needham Public Schools was not available to attend tonight's meeting, so hopes to be available for the next meeting of the committee.

6:03 PM Ms. Cooley opened the Public Listening Session on the Interim Report to Town Meeting with an overview of the work of the committee, highlighting comments through an on-screen presentation. The Select Board has adopted the vision and guiding principles developed by the committee. NUARI is not a permanent Town committee, but a group of residents brought together to provide advice to the Select Board. The committee is charged with articulating a recommended vision for racial equity and guiding principles that will inform future actions; establishing protocols and practices for getting community feedback, with specific focus on engaging Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), and others who have been marginalized due to their race or ethnicity; setting up communication structures to ensure sustainability and accountability of the Initiative; discussing and promoting

other recommendations that have been submitted to Select Board; and making recommendation to Select Board about future action.

After adoption by the Select Board, the vision and guiding principles have been sent to other Town boards and organizations. Both have been adopted and endorsed by the League of Women Voters and Green Needham. The Diversity and Inclusion Committee of the Needham-Newton Chamber have recommended adoption. The Clergy Association will review at their next meeting. A resolution will be before Town Meeting in May, 2021, and the interim report to Town Meeting is in draft form and under discussion at tonight's public listening session. On the next bi-annual Town resident survey, a question will be added to gauge residents' perceptions of how welcoming and inclusive the Needham community is.

Noting that most current board members are white, with limited female members, it is recommended that the Town make intentional efforts and identify creative ideas for community outreach to diversify the candidate pool for all appointed boards and committees. The Town should identify strategies and partners to encourage diverse candidates to run for elected office and take steps to measure efforts and progress on efforts to make boards and committees more diverse.

The Town should work with stakeholders to develop a discrimination complaint process and provide forums where individuals feel comfortable discussing their concerns related to diversity, equity, and/or inclusion. The Town should identify opportunities and partners to provide educational opportunities and community dialogues on the history of racism in America and other topics on equity. The Town should partner with stakeholders to 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. The Town should identify opportunities and partnerships to promote cultural events and celebrations to be welcoming and inclusive; explore ways to increase, encourage and assist minority-owned businesses; work with stakeholders to provide education to local businesses about the negative experiences of Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) individuals and ways to improve; identify and engage partners in this work, including faith community, business community, hospitals, colleges, civic and community organizations, and neighboring municipalities.

The Town should create pathways for racially and economically diverse neighbors to buy and rent homes in Needham; set new goals related to affordable housing as the Town has met the 10% threshold; evaluate and prioritize policies and programs for encouraging the development of housing for individuals and families across all affordability levels; identify and address any barriers to fair housing.

Ms. Cooley noted that much discussion has centered on policing in Needham, and the Police Chief has attended two meetings, to date. Police reforms will be implemented in Massachusetts in July 2021. The Police Department should meet regularly with stakeholder groups to build mutual trust and respect; the Town

should sponsor a series of conversations between the public and police officers, and the Police Department should educate the public on the role of police officers through programs such as a Citizen Academy. The Police Department should emphasize training on mental health issues, threshold inquiries, de-escalation techniques and impact of implicit bias on policing. The Town should prioritize leaving Civil Service to gain more flexibility on hiring and promotions that better reflect the broader community. With the upcoming implementation of the new police reform law, the department should adopt all local components, and review Use of Force Policy for revisions, with a strong emphasis on de-escalation. The Police Department should regularly report and make publicly available key enforcement data, broken down by race, gender and residency, to identify potential disparities and monitor trends over time. The Town should support funding for regional collaboration with Needham, Dedham and Riverside Community Care.

Ms. Cooley noted that the School Department has had the REAL Coalition in place for a number of years, so it is important that REAL and NUARI collaborate and coordinate strategies. The School Department should support the development of curriculum and programs that further promote diversity, equity, and inclusion at all grade levels; and continue to use the Portrait of a Needham Graduate Strategic Framework to guide decision making. The Town and School Department should identify what community-based equity work is needed to better support the school district; explore opportunities for ongoing community engagement, including Voices in Unity, a regular convening of equity-focused groups in Needham hosted by the School Department; and identify opportunities for collaboration and communication with private and parochial schools.

In regard to hiring, both the Town and School Department should identify and implement strategies for hiring, supporting and retaining diverse staff at every level; measure their efforts on recruiting and retaining BIPOC individuals annually; provide professional development opportunities; and analyze the pilot year of the METCO/Park and Recreation summer jobs partnership.

After Town Meeting, NUARI will turn its focus to establishing protocols and practices, with a specific focus on engaging Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), and others who have been marginalized due to their race or ethnicity; and set up communication structures to ensure the sustainability and accountability of the initiative.

Ms. Cooley opened the meeting up to public comment and welcomed Noah Mertz. Mr. Mertz asked to restate some of his comments on the guiding principles and stated that there needs to be a better understanding of the NUARI scope which he believes is missing from the guiding principles. He suggested that possibly the Needham Human Rights Committee could be re-empowered to take on the current role of NUARI. He noted that this meeting was being held the night prior to the Town elections and that it was possibly that there could be more diversity on the Select Board based on the outcome of the election.

Anna Giraldo-Kerr sent an e-mail to the committee with her comments, and gave a brief outline at the meeting. She stated that it seemed premature for there to be recommendations for action prior to input and engagement from the community. Ms. Giraldo-Kerr noted that members need to clarify the different views prior to recommendations being created. She also stated that the vision statement could never be accomplished, noting that it was misleading to state that racial bias could be ended as it can only be mitigated and managed.

John Kirk read the conclusion from the Tidwell report and stated that Mr. Henry had never received an official apology from the Town and wondered if NUARI was considering issuing an apology. Ms. Cooley stated that the Select Board had stated an apology at one of their meetings, but Mr. Kirk stated that Mr. Henry did not personally receive the apology. Ms. Cooley said that the draft Tidwell Report and final version were all made public to the community. The final report was updated to include the Select Board's request to Mr. Henry's lawyer.

Joe Leghorn applauded the committee on their work to-date and stated that it is an effort that needs to be sustained, and not dropped as often has happened with prior efforts. He requested that the Select Board commit to the long-term goal and have more in-person conversations, so people get to know each other.

Mr. Mertz asked to discuss tomorrow's local election. He was concerned that the diverse candidates were not receiving endorsements. Ms. Cooley noted that it was not unusual, and that she herself and not publicly endorse any candidate for Select Board but was ready to embrace the two elected members, whether new to the board or returning.

As there were no additional public comments, Ms. Cooley stated that input was still welcome, by e-mail to the committee or by speaking to any member of the committee.

The committee reviewed the comments from the public listening session. Ms. Espada wondered if the word "should" was correct on the recommendations without more public input. Ms. Hsu agreed, noting that directives weren't issued, but a framework has been provided. Ms. Cooley said that the recommendations were still tentative and confusing to those who thought the work of NUARI is complete. Mr. Abrishamian commented on the need for the Town to systemize the recommendations and providing a budget so that the work continues beyond the existence of NUARI.

Ms. Fitzpatrick said that information is being mailed to Town Meeting members within the next two weeks to allow them time to prepare before the start of Town Meeting. Mr. Borrelli agreed that more public input is needed.

Resident Ross Donald asked to speak to the committee. He asked how he would be impacted by any actions as a resident of Needham Housing Authority. Ms. Cooley stated that NUARI is not a policy making board, so Needham Housing Authority would need to provide input.

Ms. Howard-Schroeder has attended a session with Professor Gary Bailey has facilitated another group's listening sessions. She suggested getting input from professionals who can recommend strategies for getting the needed community input. Ms. Cooley has heard suggestions of a comment board in front of Town Hall, and there was committee consensus that there needs to be multiple avenues other than participation in a Zoom meeting. Ms. Hsu stated that NUARI is focused on the vision so that it might not be the correct committee to receive the feedback, but Ms. Howard-Schroeder said that feedback was needed on the work of NUARI. Ms. Hsu stated that Town Meeting members needed to be accountable to reach out to their constituents, and Ms. Cooley said that outreach to Town committees and organizations has already begun.

At their recent meeting, the Finance Committee asked Ms. Cooley why the full text of the vision statement and guiding principles was not included in the Town Meeting warrant. Ms. Cooley explained that Town Meeting was being asked to vote to support or not support and would not be making motions to change the working presented by NUARI. As tomorrow is election day, Ms. Cooley wished all the best to the members of the committee who are on the ballot.

7:20 PM      **Motion: Mr. Borrelli made a motion that the Needham Unite Against Racism Initiative working group meeting be adjourned. Second: Mr. Nelson. The motion was approved unanimously 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/4942/NUARI---Needham-Unite-Against-Racism-Ini>