

## Stronger Together Resource Group

Kate Fitzpatrick <KFitzpatrick@needhamma.gov>

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To: Kate Fitzpatrick <KFitzpatrick@needhamma.gov>

All:

In recent days, I have heard some questions and comments regarding *Stronger Together*, our first Employee Resource Group, which was created specifically for our colleagues who identify as Black, Indigenous, or as a person of color.

Generally speaking, Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) are voluntary, employee-led networks where colleagues who share common interests, backgrounds, or demographic factors such as race or ethnicity can gather to talk, build a sense of community, and raise awareness of relevant issues. ERGs also provide opportunities for professional development and to increase employee engagement.

We launched *Stronger Together* in the fall because there was a clear and unmet need to better support our employees of color. The vast majority of employees in the Town of Needham are white. I do not say this to sow division but to acknowledge a reality. Being in the minority can inherently lead to isolation, and one way to counteract that is to proactively build smaller communities within our larger one. I am proud that we have a designated, welcoming space for our non-white colleagues to gather and talk, and I hope that it remains a meaningful resource.

Vibrant ERGs are valuable not just to the individual participants, but also to the organization overall. *Stronger Together* serves as a resource to me and the entire Town Leadership Team, recommending ways that we can make the Town a more inclusive environment and how we can attract and retain diverse talent. I need that feedback to grow and to lead more effectively.

I take immense pride in the level of professionalism in our local government, and that is reflected in the services we provide to our residents. I expect that all department managers are not just allowing their staff to engage in professional development opportunities, but are actively encouraging them to do so. I view participation in *Stronger Together* in the same way. If you are a manager, please check in with your staff and adjust schedules to allow those who are interested to attend. If you are an employee of color who would like to attend, please contact Rachel. *Stronger Together* meets monthly, every third Thursday, at 3:30 PM via Zoom. The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, February 18, 2021.

To our employees of color, we value you.

To ALL of our staff, we value you.

Let's continue to find ways to support one another and create a work environment where all employees feel valued and empowered to succeed. If anyone has any questions or concerns, please reach out to me, Katie, Dave or Rachel.



Kate Fitzpatrick  
Town Manager

Town Hall  
1471 Highland Avenue  
Needham, MA 02492  
Tel: 781-455-7500 extension 0  
Fax: 781-449-4569

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