



41 West Street, Cromwell CT 06416
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Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee

Special Meeting Minutes- Ammended

Date: Monday, March 22, 2021 **Time:** 6:00PM
VIA ZOOM

In Attendance: Erin Omicioli, Alice Henley, Jennifer Beck, Clare Serrantino, Carol Perry, Whitney Simmons, Aigné Goldsby, Elsie Newcombe, Bob Vanderzee, Sue Vanderzee, Ann Grasso

Also Present: Rachel Eleiott, Jazzy Hampton, Bella Beverley, Jasmine Jones, Victoria Colon, Keeli Ni, Monique Hennessey, Bob McNaughton

Town Liaison: Kate Puorro

Town Council Liaisons Present: James Demetriades, Steve Fortenbach, Deputy Mayor Jenn Donohue

The meeting was called to order at 6:04 via Zoom by chairperson Aigne. Kate Puorro took attendance.

The minutes of the last meeting were moved and accepted unanimously.

Aigne and Kate asked if everyone had received subcommittee mailings appropriate for the subcommittees they had expressed interest in.

There was acknowledgement of such receipts, and Sue asked "What next?"

Kate reported that the facilitator group should just wait and that the dialogue guide group was already working. Given last week's apparent hate crime against Asian Americans in Atlanta, she reported that the guide group was leaning towards using Gloria's customized guide as it defines racism broadly. After the guide group is done with their work, it will go to the messaging/communications group, which will have a more long term assignment in getting out into the community before community conversations begin.

Ann asked who is responsible for starting communications with the subcommittees. She was particularly interested in logo progress.

Aigne noted that some logo selections have already been shared. Discussion continued on whether we should indeed have a logo quickly (consensus was "yes") and how that logo will be decided on. This led to a discussion of protocols and rules of operation, such as "Should group members RSVP after getting a meeting announcement?"

Kate contributed that she thought subcommittee leadership should arise “organically” if possible, but that subcommittees will be prompted by she or Aigne when they should begin their tasks.

Whitney asked how subcommittee meetings will be held—Zoom, in-person or hybrid? Aigne noted that this was the call of the members of the group, and Kate offered to help with set-up in any setting.

Monique, a visiting member of the public, asked how someone like her would know when subcommittees are meeting. Kate responded that the public is welcome to all meetings, and meetings are posted on the town website. (Question from Sue: Is there also an email chain of all official and non-official participants so everyone could be notified?)

Discussion then returned to the logo suggestions so far collected. Discussion centered on words vs. pictures with puzzle pieces gaining some support. Also cost of printing in color, black and white or grayscale. After this discussion, it was voted 13-0 to go ahead with logo development. Aigne asked if anyone knew any graphic/design folks and Whitney, Alice and Jazzy responded affirmatively. Clare volunteered to be point person for the project, and members and friends were asked to email her with any ideas at clareinto@sbcglobal.net. Aigne suggested that we vote on a logo at our next meeting.

Whitney asked about the name of the committee and suggested that the word “equity” be included as that is a concept we want to stress and that is prominent in current work on this subject. A cartoon was shared on the difference between equality and equity. A motion was made and seconded and passed unanimously (14-0) to send a request to the Town Council via James that the committee be renamed the Cromwell Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee.

New Business

Rules and protocol: Aigne and Elsie will get together before the next meeting and bring some suggestions for rules we might like to adhere to, including such things as RSVPing and allowing Aigne and Elsie to issue statements on the committee’s behalf, particularly in the wake of challenges or tragedies in the news.

Keeli Ni was visiting the group and spoke about the heart-wrenching tragedy in Atlanta that targeted Asian Americans. She noted that there is currently a bill in the state legislature to add Asian American and Pacific Islander history to the public school curriculum. She said that she had contacted both of Cromwell’s representatives—Senator Matt Lesser, who was very helpful, and Rep. Kristy Carlino who was noticeably less helpful. Members of the group thanked Keeli for sharing her views. The bill is Senate Bill 678 (SB 678). There was consensus that a letter in support of this bill would be sent by Aigne and Elsie on behalf of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee to our representatives.

Whitney asked for a schedule and benchmarks so that we can forward as quickly as possible.

Bob noted that the Social Studies curriculum at Cromwell High School does not seem to have changed in the 20 years since he worked there, and Whitney agreed that sharing cultures and education are important going forward. Kate noted that the schools are taking equity audits, and that individual teachers are doing very good things in this vein but that it needs to be system-wide. She will touch base with Superintendent Macri before the next meeting.

Bob asked if there have been any recent incidents or attacks in the community based on race? Kate responded “Yes” though she was not at liberty to give details. Keeli explained that attacks do not have

to be violent but can include microaggressions and hateful speech. Clare noted that, in her work at CREC, they are trying to make children aware of things like being bystanders, upstanders and allies. She is cheered by the kids apparent understanding of these concepts that we all need to take to heart.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:37.

Respectfully submitted,

Sue VanDerzee, secretary