

Minutes

Pelham Anti-Racism Advisory Committee

September 9, 2020

7:00 p.m.

This was a virtual meeting.

Present: Members: Anne Stoddard, Roy Regozin, Charlie Lynch, Cyd Reiman, Joe Davis, Jake Klar, Jessie Jean-Louis, Charlie Rizzuto, Pat Schumm, Matteo Ramos-Mucci, Karen Ribeiro, Daniel Robb.
Public: Rusty Rowell, Robert Agolia, James McPherson, Michael Hussin.

Bob Agolia, Chair of the Selectboard, spoke at the outset, expressing the hope that over time the Committee will come back to the selectboard with particular recommendations that the town can act on which are more inclusive and antiracist. Encouraged that the Committee delve deep into the town, look at town code/bylaws, history,

Karen Ribeiro, former Selectboard member, volunteered to create a google folder for the group. Spoke of Connect Pelham. Also spoke of norms and protocols for how best to be online in virtual meetings such as these, assigning different roles to participants so that the meetings can be effective and inclusive, said that the way we are together is at least as important as open meeting law. Encouraged that we all be really respectful of each other, suggested that we use a timekeeper, and a person to be on the lookout for those who want to comment.

It was suggested that we go around the “circle” of members, each to say something about the issues they see as among the most important.

Dan Robb suggested that we might begin to think about whether there were sub-groups that we would consider forming around specific areas of town organization and administration, such as Housing/Zoning/Conservation Commission; Public Safety; Schools and Education; History; and Town governance and Administration, etc.

Roy Regozin posed the question of whether we should reach out to nearby towns/Amherst to find out what they have been doing in this regard, what resources are available.

Charlie Lynch spoke of umbrella issues: Housing and lack of diversity and the systemic issues associated with these; Education and history (of the town); Budgeting and Police.

Cyd Reiman: Said that to her, education (of the general public, of townspeople) was the most important piece.

Bob Agolia expressed his feeling that a committee like this ought to really take time to explore for itself what the issue of racism means in Pelham. Suggests reading *Waking Up White*.by Debbie Irving.

Charlie Rizzuto said he thought reading that was a great idea.

Anne Stoddard suggested reading *How to Be An Anti-Racist*.

Matteo Ramon-Mucci then warned against spending too much time on self-education, encourages us to be more action-oriented in the present.

Jessie Jean-Louis offered that the new principal at the school is very into social justice. Said that she led a book club group discussion about How To Be an Antiracist, and that the next book they were going to discuss would be So You Want To Talk About Race, that all were welcome to join that book club.

Pat Schumm said that the reason to talk about self-education together is so that we can all be on the same page, said that if we read something together it provides some context, and that we need to do that.

Charlie Lynch said that he wanted to agree with Matteo, that we shouldn't let the Committee turn into a group, does worry that the Committee might devolve into a discussion group that would fail to do coherent work.

Joe expressed that he agreed with Charlie, really liked the idea of forming subcommittees to work on specific issues. Favors also making the town at large aware that the Committee is working on these issues, so that townspeople know. Encourages the Committee to think about ways to publicize that this is an important part of the town's work.

Matteo – encourages the Committee to define its mission, and to come up with a definition of racism.

Some rough sub-committee coalitions began to emerge around topics that members found compelling:

Mission: Matteo, Charlie,

Outreach: Roy, Joe, Dan

History: Joe, Dan

Education: Jesse, Cyd, Dan

Contracting, Hiring, Budget: Matteo, Joe

Housing: Charlie, Matteo

Town Administration: Joe, Matteo

A question arose re. This: How does town administer legal policy?

Joe posed the question: How does the town administer itself? What are policies around anonymity, sexism, treatment of vendors and citizens?

Public safety: Anne

There was general agreement that these rough coalitions would attempt to communicate amongst themselves in the interim until the next meeting.

Next meeting:

Charlie Lynch volunteered to facilitate

Jessie Jean-Louis volunteered to take notes

Anne Stoddard volunteered to set up Zoom link, etc.

Jake Klar volunteered to do something which my notes do not reveal...

Meeting adjourned, 9:02 p.m.

Next meeting to be held in about a month, date to be determined.

Respectfully submitted,
Daniel Robb, volunteer notetaker.