



# Town of Colchester, Connecticut

127 Norwich Avenue, Colchester, Connecticut 06415

Mary Bylone, First Selectman

Ad Hoc Committee for Diversity & Inclusion Minutes  
Tuesday, September 8, 2020 at 6 p.m.  
Via Zoom

Members Present: Denise Turner, Isaiah Stewart, Joanne Rose, Roberta Avery, Lisa Johnson, Denise Mizla and Youth and Social Services Liaison Valerie Geato and BOE Liaison Joanne Philips  
Others Present: Rosemary Coyle, Gayle Furman, Christos Stravoravdis, John Malsbenden

1. Call to order: Meeting Called to Order by M. Bylone at 6:02 pm.
2. Additions or Deletions to Agenda: D. Turner requested to move #4a Elect Chair to become #3 and reorder the remaining items. Motion R. Avery. 2nd I. Stewart. **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**
3. Election of Chairperson: J. Rose nominated D. Turner for Chair. 2nd by R. Avery. No other nominations were made. **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**
4. Citizens Comments: John Malsbenden spoke in favor of the committee's formation  
Frances Park spoke in favor of the committee  
Christos Stravoravdis spoke in favor of the committee  
Vince Rose spoke in favor of the committee  
R. Avery, Committee member asked for clarification of the scope of the work for the committee and D. Turner explained that would be discussed later in the agenda.  
M. Bylone was recognized by the Chair and explained the purpose and appropriate use of Citizen's Comments.
5. Committee business
  - a. Elect Vice Chairperson: I. Stewart stated interest and was nominated by D. Mizla. 2nd by L. Johnson. **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**
  - b. Meeting schedule: Group requests meeting to be held on Tuesdays at 6 pm. D. Turner will select a particular week after checking with other potential conflicts and notify committee members.
6. Discussion on commission structure: D. Turner shared some thoughts on the work of the committee. She stated that the impetus for exploring the formation of a commission came out of the Black Lives

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Gayle Furman  
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Matter issues, but it is intended to look at all types of diversity. “Not a political issue, but an issue of humanity.”

D. Turner opened the discussion to the group to state some of their thoughts. Each member contributed ideas of areas that needed exploring. These areas included education on the topics, managing learning with intentional sensitivity towards others and starting at a young age. L. Johnson mention school curriculum doesn't include civil rights content until the 8th grade. D. Mizla sees the work of the exploratory committee to do research to better understand where there are opportunities and strengths in Colchester at the current time and these findings should drive the charge moving forward. She also mentioned this would help to identify whether there is a need for a permanent commission to work on these areas. D. Mizla explained that a new commission would need Town Meeting approval. To be included would be the hiring practices of the Town Hall staff and the onboarding training around diversity and inclusion topics.

D. Turner explained this is a working ad hoc committee and each member will be expected to have conversations around the topic and bring back findings to the committee to be considered. J. Rose added that LGBTQ and people with disabilities also be considered as part of the population to be addressed, ensuring every citizen can develop to their fullest potential.

D. Turner also asked the group to consider if there are other areas of the population which should be represented with a liaison to the committee. She has a call out to the Colchester Police Department to send a representative also. The SRO Corporal Owens had agreed to serve, but has recently returned to patrol and the new SRO, OFC Brown has not been contacted yet.

7. Next steps: D. Turner asked the group members to identify an area they would like to do some research about and perhaps speak to members in that group, like businesses, teachers, students of color, elderly, etc. Send the information to D. Turner. R. Avery asked if they can work in pairs to interview groups. It was explained the committee members can work in pairs, but cannot create a quorum, which would mean no more than three people could come together for discussion without it being a public meeting.
8. Adjourn: Motion to Adjourn made by D. Mizla and 2nd by R. Avery. **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.** Meeting adjourned at 6:59pm