

TOWN OF COLCHESTER
SPECIAL MEETING – September 9, 2021
Colchester's Openness to Respecting Equity
MINUTES

Present: First Selectman: Mary Bylone, Selectmen: Denise Turner, Rosemary Coyle, Denise Mizla, Board of Education: Mary Tomasi, Jessica Morozowich, Joanne Rose, Amy Domeika, Board of Finance: Robert Tarlov, Michael Hayes, Bernie Dennler, Mike Egan, Other attendees: John Malsbenden, Karen Romero, Julie Shilosky, Heide Perham, Stacey Kilgus, Maggie Cosgrove, Tiffany Quinn, Steven Coyle, Valerie Geato, Roberta Avery, Lisa Johnson, Gayle Furman and other citizens.

Meeting was called to order by Mary Bylone, First Selectman at 6:40 p.m.

Motion that John Malsbenden be Moderator was made by Joanne Rose, seconded by Rosemary Coyle. MOTION CARRIED

Motion to close nominations made by Don Kennedy, seconded by Mike Hayes. MOTION CARRIED.

Voice vote for John Malsbenden for moderator. SO VOTED AND CARRIED

Town Clerk, Gayle Furman, read the warning of the meeting.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all.

Motion to move Item #1, to establish the CORE (Colchester's Openness to Respecting Equity) Town Committee, as recommended by the Colchester Board of Selectmen, made by Rosemary Coyle, seconded by Mike Hayes.

Members of the Ad Hoc Committee for diversity and Inclusion presented their charge.

Discussion:

- J. Rose went over the scope of the commission
- J. Duigou asked if they took into account the needs of the veterans. J. Rose indicated that they are aware that there may be additional areas to be looked at. R. Avery stated that it should be included and there will be much overlapping in the areas to address.
- S. Van Zilen stated that many existing commissions are not staffed and was concerned this commission may not be fully staffed down the line. M. Bylone stated there are not many vacancies in the existing committees currently and all have had a quorum. R. Avery stated that this would be of interest to different people and another way for people to get involved.
- E. Evans asked when there is overlap who becomes the lead. M. Bylone answered that policies are established by the Board of Selectmen. She stated that she has seen collaboration between other commissions and committees and there are Board of

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Gayle Furman
TOWN CLERK

Selectmen liaisons at each meeting. D. Turner stated that the hope is to have liaisons from the public.

- E. Evans asked what would keep this commission from changing its focus in the future. D. Turner stated that the commission has a certain charge that the Board of Selectmen oversee. E. Evans felt the charge presented is vague. R. Coyle stated that the charge is typical of what the Board usually asked for. She also stated that each commission member is interviewed by the board.
- J. Barnes stated that this meeting was not inclusive as we did not have the requirements needed for the disabled and excluded the hearing impaired. J. Holmes stated that this is why this commission is needed.
- D. Antonacci wanted to clarify that the members of this commission would not be a rollover of the members of the Ad Hoc Committee. R. Coyle confirmed.
- S. Schuster stated that he is disappointed that people believe racism in Colchester is an issue. He believes the commission will be “chasing their tails”.
- K. Byrne stated that he believes it is good government to have a commission like this.
- S. Chapman stated that each navy ship and command has a committee like this proactively
- T. Dimitri commented that they have seen a trend that many municipalities are embracing commissions like this.

Moderator called for a vote on Item #1, J. Shilosky and G. Furman counted each person in favor and each person against. The total was YES 69 and NO 17. SO VOTED AND CARRIED.

Motion to move Item #2, to adjourn by Rosemary Coyle, seconded by D. Kennedy.

Moderator called for a voice vote on Item #2, SO VOTED AND CARRIED.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Gayle Furman, Town Clerk

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Commission Charge

Objective:

The objective of this document is to provide a statement of scope for the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Commission in their charge to serve as an advisory commission for the mission of increasing awareness of diversity in our town.

Scope:

The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Commission shall work at this effort with input from the community, the Board of Selectmen and the HR Director.

Work shall include:

1. The commission shall have seven members and two alternates with 3-year terms, who shall strive to advocate for diversity, equity and inclusion in the areas of race, color, national origin, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disabilities, and income.
2. In the initial start up of the commission, 4 members will hold 3-year terms, 3 members will hold 2-year terms, and alternates will hold 3-year terms. In 2023, or upon renewal, all terms will become 3-year terms.

3. Promote cultural diversity, social equity and a spirit of inclusiveness in Colchester by discovering, bridging, supporting and celebrating the various cultures in our town, including all groups as set forth above.

Work may include:

The commission may partner with organizations locally and regionally to promote progress in diversity, equity and inclusion efforts.

Work does not include:

The commission is not an investigative body for ethics complaints or any other interpersonal or systemic complaint related to Town employees or Town elected/appointed officials. The commission will act in an advisory capacity only with the scope limited to acting as a repository of information related to diversity, equity and inclusion resources.

This commission's work shall be accomplished through the members' outreach to the local community and to state and federal resources.

Ad Hoc Committee for Diversity and Inclusion

Charge: Design and develop the structure and a charge for a formal commission on diversity and inclusion.

The committee identified areas to address

These areas include: housing, transportation, elderly, youth, education, law enforcement, religion, LGBTQ+, physical and mental health, racial and ethnic diversity, employment, and economic development.

The committee interviewed the following:

Shannon Ramsby, Director of Human Resources, Town of Colchester and Colchester Board of Education

- 1) Formulate an Affirmative Action plan since Colchester doesn't have one
- 2) Expand our advertising channels: Middletown, Hartford, and New Britain are in our market, let's advertise here
- 3) Expand the on-boarding training of new employees to include diversity training
- 4) Conduct exit interviews: why do people leave?

Chuck Maynard, President Colchester Business Association

- 1) CBA has no involvement in recruiting businesses, works with businesses as a resource

Are there publications to promote diverse business owners/businesses?

Matt Bordeaux, Colchester Town Planner

- 1) Build a relationship with CBA
incentivize businesses to come...support and promote businesses
- 2) Pedestrian connectivity improvement program
improve the Town Green: benches, lighting, new bus shelter, pedestrian, and bicycle connectivity

- 3) Encourage "all walks of life" (Matt's words) to engage in the community
- 4) Make permitting process easier

Matt spoke about various programs:

CTIP (Colchester Tax Incentive Program)

CPACE - administered by CT Green Bank, deals with utilities/energy efficiency

SECTER (Southeast CT Enterprise Region)

- 5) Colchester needs to have an Affordable Housing Plan by 2022

James Stavola, Chair Colchester Police Commission

- 1) Need more training regarding implicit bias
- 2) More clear-cut policy on use of force, de-escalation, more community policing

Patty Watts, Director Colchester Senior Center

- 1) Age and disability factor into diversity and inclusion
- 2) The membership of the Senior Center has grown in the last 7 years; we could use more senior housing in Colchester

Committee began to work on the charge for the commission

Committee discussed structure of permanent commission and decided on the number of members

This Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion permanent commission is an advisory group for the town of Colchester. The commission will consist of 7 permanent members and 2 alternates. Citizens will apply to be part of the commission and will be appointed by the Board of Selectmen.

Worked on a name for the commission

CORE:

Colchester's

Openness to

Respecting

Equity

Why does the committee recommend the town move forward a formal commission?

The ad hoc committee sees the commission as an opportunity for Colchester to discover, bridge, support and celebrate the diversity within our community, where all voices are welcome.

Complete/present the charge