

Minutes for Commission for Diversity, Inclusion and Community Relations
Town of Winthrop
ZOOM Meeting: Wednesday, September 30, 2020

Attendees: Andrea Baez (chair); Walter Connelly (secr); John Bentley; Suzanne Martucci- Gallo, Nas Patel; John Morgan; Sid Belghiti; Lydia Ramos; Anthony Williams (absent); Phil Boncore (council pres); Laurisa Wojcik (town ZOOM host).

1. Thursday Protests at Metcalf Square: What is the role of the Commission?

Diana Ploss (Trump/Back the Blue) gathering protesters from beyond Winthrop and refuses to wear masks. Counter-protest of BLM and allies. Police details need for public order but no permit required. Major concern of Commission is that many protesters are not wearing face masks given that the Board of Health is requiring masks in publicly frequented spaces.

Motion: The town will equally apply Board of Health requirements for Face Masks. Moved by Walter Connelly, seconded by John Bentley; passed unanimously.

2. Statement against Hate Speech.

Commission concerned with mounting level of disrespectful discourse and hate speech in general and at Thursday rallies in particular.

Motion: The Commission will collaborate with Town Manager in crafting a message of no tolerance for hate speech.

Motion: The Commission will request (suggest?) that the school department solicit slogans from students expressing the no hate message.

Both motions moved by Walter Connelly, and seconded by John Bentley; passed unanimously.

(During open discussion it was recognized that both the Town Manager AND the Town Council should collaborate with Commission to create the widest possible sense of collective ownership and buy-in for the message. This may require a new vote).

3. Signage in town

Commission discussed the many layered significance of yard signs in support of local police. As the Commission is focused on inclusion and community relations, there is obvious concern that these signs convey an unwelcome message to People of Color (POC) and advocates of police reform specifically BLM. (As subsequent discussion revealed, this topic is “hot” and cannot be swept under the rug. Commission committed to maintaining respectful and safe forum for these concerns.)

4. Charter Work: looking for focus to flesh out the work of the Commission.

Andrea Baez: the ongoing task of the Commission is to work towards making all Winthrop residents welcomed and valued within community. It’s a work in progress that requires openness to new ideas and outsiders.

5. Open discussion

Participants voiced wide ranging concerns, yet unified by desire to address exclusion and discrimination as realities in Winthrop.

Voices at the table: should the Commission include members from The Police Dept, the School Committee, One Winthrop, etc.

Respectfully Submitted by Walter Connelly, Secretary on 10/02/20