

Groton Diversity Task Force

November 5, 2020

Present: Nii-Ama Akuete, Michelle Collette, Deb Dowson, Rafael Glod, Nadia Madden, Tim Manugian, Raquel Majeski, James Moore, Audra Waiters

Also present: Groton Channel

Not Present: Josh Degen, Paul Shay.

Guest: Chief Mike Luth, Groton Police Department.

Meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm.

Chair Raquel Majeski reviewed the progress of the working groups (See attached document, Groton DTF October 29th).

Tim Manugian inquired about asking questions about housing to the police chief.

Michelle Collette asked if stakeholder engagement would be in working groups or in the public DTF meeting.

A. Meet With Police Chief -- Discuss Various Issues

Training: Discussion of what the Police Department needs for inclusive training. Chief Luth expects new training parameters and guidance on fair and impartial training brought forth as part of ongoing police reform in the state. Chief Luth expressed an interest in training for the police from outside the police community, he mentioned the program “Black Like Me: understanding African-American culture and its relationship with the police”.

Nadia Madden asked about the size and scope of training the police was considering. Chief Luth needs to budget for what the state mandates first, then has a training budget of \$8,000. A 4-hour training for the whole police department costs \$4000.

Nii-Ama Akuete asked what the department does already and what is being considered for training de-escalation, mental health calls, and training materials, as well as randomizing scenario training. Chief Luth explained that scenario trainings are with current police department members, and diversifying is not something he has thought of. MPTC has been focusing on mental health calls, the GDP also has a de-escalation training officer. Chief Luth is working on making sure the in-department trainer is working on ongoing trainings for officers, and has also been partnering with nearby towns and state resources to ensure that officers are being continuously trained in de-escalation, particularly in using verbal skills and using lower levels of force whenever possible. The department has regular training on mental health intervention and mental health first aid. Mental health calls have gone up significantly over time, but there is not the kind of demand where it makes sense to have a clinician on staff. GPD

is part of a cooperative called COIN which provides follow up resources for mental health issues. For domestic violence, they've been working with the YWCA in Leominster for professional services.

Nii-Ama Akuete asked about bias screening as part of the hiring process. Chief Luth says it isn't something the department currently screens for, but that it's an interesting idea.

Use of force: currently the Groton Police Department uses force about 2x/year, and the police are required to do a special report on that.

Town Image: Discussion of more inclusive signage at the Groton Police Department. James Moore asked if the Police Department would consider removing the blue ribbons from the tree behind the police station sign, as it may present as a political statement. He suggested that the Police Department consider a sign to the effect of: "We support our police and believe that all are welcome." Chief Luth says he is open to that suggestion, and agreed to further discussion with James Moore and the Town Image working group.

Tim Manugian mentioned that diversity funding has been set aside from the Lawrence Academy PILOT funding for the purposes of diversity.

Affordable Housing: Tim Manugian asked how the zoning in Groton impacts response times for emergencies and how impacts emergency response, Chief Luth says he doesn't see emergency response being impacted by housing spacing. Tim also asked if the police department employees are able to afford living in Groton. Chief Luth said officers being able to live in town gives them more buy-in, but that only a few officers currently have the family income to afford it.

Other Questions:

Josh Degen asked for further clarification on mental health, substance abuse and other types of issues where multiple calls are being made for the same household, and mentioned that the Select Board .

James Moore asked if the Groton Police Department has a policy regarding asking for immigration status during police stops. Chief Luth says the department does not ask anyone about immigration status.

B. Determine Next Steps

Training: Group is meeting and planning to move forwards after tonight's meeting with Chief Luth

Town Image: Now have something actionable with signage. Next action step is moving forwards with Chief Luth

Housing: Still working on something to bring forward.

Community Education: still working on options to bring forwards.

Welcoming Community: hold for now until existing work is finished up. James Moore will join this group.

Young Adults partnering with COA:hold for now until existing work is finished. Josh Degen needs to step back from this group, and Michelle Collette will join it.

By November 19th, every working group should have presented a snapshot of their current progress to Chair Raquel Majeski so that she can compile it and share it with the Diversity Task Force.

Next DTF meeting will be on Thursday, December 3rd.

- C. Approve Minutes: Minutes for October meetings will be presented for approval at our next meeting

Meeting adjourned at 8:10 pm

Attached document: Groton DTF October 29

Workgroups

Training (Nadia, Deb, Raquel) *Paused pending stakeholder feedback

Contact: Nadia

Objective: Provide recommendations for cultural competency training for town employees

Task

- Research cultural competency training for town employees
- Create a purpose statement for the training
- Create a scope and sequence for implementation of the training

Outcome: Develop a framework for cultural competency training

Housing (Audra, Tim, Nii-Ama) *Active

Contact: Nii - Ama

Objective: Provide observations and give recommendations to the Select Board to create inclusive housing options.

Task:

- Examine: Friendly 40B Policy (Public)
- Research: Other towns that mirror Groton to inform thinking
- Research: Programs that will assist in informing thinking
- Explore investment in, fair access to, and policy encouraging affordable housing for both homeowners and renters

Outcome: Develop a framework to present to the larger group

Town Image (Michelle, Paul, James) *Moving forward with signage

Contact: James

Objective: Provide observations and give recommendations to the Select Board on signage and ribbons displayed around town.

Task:

- Examine the Conflict of Interest Policy
- Research the signage, ribbons, etc that are displayed around town
- Research other towns that mirror Groton to inform thinking

- Research aesthetics and symbols to inform thinking
- Seal – removing the words “Holy Bible” and replacing the words with knowledge, wisdom and labor
- Groton Country Club name change
- Parking spaces/ curb cuts

Outcome: Develop a framework to present to the larger group

Sub working groups of town image group

Welcoming Community (Michelle and Nadia)

- Research existing communities' policy around welcoming communities that mirror Groton
- Develop a framework for a welcoming community policy (mirrors Concord's policy)

Young Adults partnering with Council of Aging (Josh, Raquel, James and Deb)

- Hearing from stakeholders about the needs of Council of Aging
- Creating a framework for a system that best connects young adults with the needs of Council of Aging

Community Education (Rafael, Josh) *Active

Contact: Josh

Objective: Provide recommendations for a system that connects and advertises community initiatives

Task

- Research current community initiatives focused on diversity, cultural awareness, and inclusivity
- Research initiatives that exist in towns that mirror Groton

Outcome: A framework for a system that connects and advertises community initiatives