

***Groton Diversity Task Force**

March 25, 2021

Approved April 1, 2021

Present: Nii-Ama Akuete, Gordon Candow, Michelle Collette, Deb Dowson, Amy Degen
Josh Degen, Raquel Majeski

Also present: Groton Channel

Absent: Tim Manugian, James Moore, Deirdre Slavin-Mitchell, Audra Waiters

Meeting was called to order at 7:03 pm.

Michelle Colette made a motion to approve minutes of March 11, 2021. Seconded by Josh Degen. Minutes approved by roll call vote.

Discussion of Partnering with Racial Justice Group to sponsor Debby Irving Program:

Raquel – suggested it was a great entry point to racial justice work, but would like to see it as the first step in a larger framework of ongoing programs

Ni-Ama – would have preferred if other organizations doing this work had been considered but acknowledged there were advantages for a person with the same background and experience as the audience, to present this topic and would support it going forward.

Deb- would have preferred a program that appealed to a wider audience, and she wondered what the amount of the Diversity Fund was and whether this was the only program we could afford to sponsor.

Josh – Was in favor of sponsoring the program but not using Diversity Funds. Josh reported that the Fund was a gift of \$15,000 from Lawrence Academy given to the Select Board who chose to earmark it for a Diversity Fund.

Michelle- Wondered if the amount of the RJG request was to match Trust Commissioners' Funds for the program. The total cost of the program is \$4,000, but we don't know how much the RJG is seeking from the Diversity Fund.

Decided: To table the vote on sponsoring the program until we know how much the RJG is requesting in terms of financial support.

Town Image

Michelle shared notes from the recent Town Image meeting and reported that Police Chief Luth approved of the draft policy they had sent him to review.

The group identified Redskin Trail as the most egregious street name and will focus their energies on seeing if it can be changed. There is a precedent for changing street names in town, as it was done in the past as an issue of public safety, and the group will research to find out how

that was accomplished. Josh said that in the past, some residents of Redskin Trail had requested that the name be changed, but other residents didn't want it changed, so it didn't happen. There is a sense that given current sensibilities, this is a good time to revisit the issue.

The working group also decided to make a recommendation to the school committee that they consider changing the school's mascot.

Housing Group:

Josh reported on a discussion at the Select Board meeting of a warrant article concerning the Affordable Housing Trust seeking \$150,000 from the Community Preservation Committee Fund. Josh doesn't support the article because there is no cohesive and coordinated plan for housing. The Housing Summit would hopefully achieve this.

In planning for the Summit the working group will consider the following questions in order to present a plan to the Select Board.

Who should lead? Who should co-sponsor? Who should participate? Who should moderate?

What is the agenda? Who is keynote speaker? (a speaker from Mass Dept. of Housing & Community Development was suggested).

Raquel will invite Becky Pine (Affordable Housing Trust) and Fran Stanley (Housing Coordinator for the Town of Groton) to a future meeting to help draft an agenda for the Housing Summit.

Other:

Gordon Candow: Responded to a question from the community on "Groton Matters" as to whether the police are trained to work with people with mental health issues and autism.

Gordon is himself is an educator with ALEC (Autism and Law Enforcement Education Coalition) and trains members of the police force and the community at large.

Raquel: Will assign reading from the Racial Healing Handbook at the next meeting. Books are still available to be picked up at the senior center.

Adjourned: 8:13pm

Next Meeting: April 1, 7pm. on Zoom.

DD 3/28/2021