

***Groton Diversity Task Force**

Approved Minutes

April 22, 2021

Present: Nii-Ama Akuete, Michelle Collette, Amy Degen. Josh Degen, Deb Dowson, Raquel Majeski, Tim Manugian, Deirdre Slavin-Mitchell, James Moore, Audra Waiters

Absent: Gordon Candow

Also present: Groton Channel

Meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm.

Josh made a motion to approve minutes of April 15, 2021. Seconded by Deirdre. Minutes approved by roll call vote.

Housing Group (Nii-Ama, Deirdre, Audra)

Nii-Ama reported that the working group (Nii-Ama Akuete – DTF, Audra Waiters – DTF, Deirdre Mitchell - DTF, GHA, Carolyn Perkins - AHT, HP and Fran Stanley – HC) had 2 successful meetings and the plans for the Housing Summit have evolved to include not only the opportunity for key stakeholders, namely the Affordable Housing Trust, Groton Housing Authority, Groton Housing Partnership, Planning Board, Council on Aging, Commission on Accessibility, Diversity Task Force, and Select Board to come together and share, but that the summit be used as an opportunity to educate and hear from the community as well. Therefore, the summit would have these components: introductions by each stakeholder group complete with an overview of their respective mandates, a synopsis of the current housing plan, a keynote speaker, and a moderated discussion period. Proposed keynote speaker, Shelly Goehring from the Massachusetts Housing Partnership was contacted and is willing to speak at the summit (final confirmation TBD). The hope is that there is a broad representation in the audience from a range of community members. Nii-Ama stated that they want the summit to result in action items that all stakeholders can take, and perhaps establish an annual event with established benchmarks in between meetings.

Raquel asked if a date had been set, and Nii-Ama said they were aiming for June or July. Josh suggested inviting the Council on Aging and the Commission of Accessibility as attendees. Josh wants accountability and action and Nii-Ama agreed. James wondered why Affordable Housing is so complicated and Deirdre said that Groton had 4 different agencies and even though she had been on the Groton Housing Authority for several years, she had not met with the other agencies until last week. Amy mentioned that the A Better Community organization also has an affordable housing group that is focused on tenants' rights. Michelle agreed that tenants' rights are important to include in the affordable housing discussion, and Nii-Ama said they would have to figure out how best to address it. Deirdre said it might belong at the summit, or could be addressed in another way. Josh that that a recommendation to the Select board to create a by-law that would have oversight would be a good idea since no by-law currently exists. James would

like to see it included in the summit. Deirdre thought it could be done before the summit, and Nii-Ama thought it would be great to highlight it leading up to the summit.

Request to Support Affordable Housing Trust Article at Town Meeting

In considering this request, Raquel reviewed the DTF charge and asked if the DTF's role was to simply give recommendations to the Select Board, or also to stand up and support other community groups and stakeholders? The DTF wrote a letter in support of the AHT in January, and a letter to the Library Trustees. Michelle said we have already gone on record to support the AHT seeking funds from the CPC, and we should vote to support this article as well. Josh worried that taking funds out of town resources before the Housing Summit comes up with a plan would be a mistake. Deborah wondered if the AHT would apply the funds they received to a plan that came out of the summit, and that would be preferable than forgoing any funding for affordable housing for another year. Deirdre reported that the Groton Housing Authority will support the article. Amy wondered if we could state our support with the added condition that the funds be used to support a plan that comes out of the summit. Tim said that funds will be necessary to move forward with any plan that comes out of the summit. Josh stated that he would be more comfortable if there was a provision that the AHT wouldn't expend funds until after the summit. Amy thinks it is reasonable to request that the DTF support affordable housing initiatives in town. Michelle described the real need in town to advance affordable housing. Many members voiced their agreement with speaking in support of the AHT article at town meeting with some contingency such as timing, on the spending of the funds. Raquel suggested that we think of how we could word our support. Nii-Ama would like to ask the AHT about their plans to spend the money. Becky Pine from the AHT was in the audience and asked to speak. She said the funds, if granted would not be allocated until July 1, and there are no project ready plans at the moment to expend the money. Josh said it would be fine to discuss this at our next meeting. Raquel will send out information from Becky and we can invite Becky and Fran Stanley to our next meeting.

Town Image Group (James, Michelle, Deirdre, Tim)

James said they would be ready to presents drafts of the letters they are writing next week.

Community Outreach (Amy, Josh, Raquel)

Josh said he was meeting with the town's IT Director about the website and will give an update next week.

Raquel said the Racial Healing Handbook will be on the agenda for next week.

Adjourned: 8:18pm

Next Meeting: April 29, 7pm. on Zoom.

DD 4/26/2021