



Diversity Task Force
Town Hall
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Groton, Massachusetts 01450
selectboard@grotonma.gov

Raquel Majeski, Chair
Michelle Collette, Vice Chair
Amy Degen
Joshua Degen
Susan Hughes
Deirdre Slavin Mitchell
Fran Stanley

Regular Session Minutes

Date: August 5, 2021

Time: 7 pm

Location: Groton Center, 163 West Main Street

Members in attendance: Raquel Majeski, Michelle Collette Joshua Degen, Susan Hughes, Deirdre Slavin Mitchel, Fran Stanley (not sworn in)

Handouts: Agenda, Notes (both documents folded into minutes)

Raquel Majeski called the meeting to order at about 7 pm. Here is this committee's charge:

Study the causes of systemic racism and stereotypes attached to, but not limited to, the following identifiers: age, ability, gender, socioeconomic status, race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation and culture. The committee will meet with local and state stakeholder groups to identify areas that need to be evaluated to determine if they are still appropriate in today's culture. The committee will provide observations and give recommendations to the Select Board and suggest ideas to help to educate the citizens of Groton and make it a more welcoming community.

1. Review Charge and Meeting Expectations

Majeski explained that Lorena Novak, while not sworn in, is resigning from this committee due to other commitments. The Select Board is due to consider the appointment of two new members: Gordon Candow (a re-appointment) and Bhaska Gupta Karpurapu (would be a new member who is affiliated with the Sai Baba Temple). Joshua Degen said that the Town has a policy that requires members to attend 75% of meetings.

Majeski expects that the group will start meeting weekly. Then next meeting will be August 19, 2021 which may take the form of a hybrid model – some participation in person and some remote participation. Note that in person quorum requirements exist regardless of virtual participation by members.

2. Elect a Vice Chair for the Ensuing Year and determine who will take minutes.

Majeski asked the group to elect a Vice Chair who can assist her with coordination of the Diversity Task Force's activities. Also, the group needs to determine who will take minutes. No one volunteered to take on this responsibility. Group members agreed that the chair would be too busy to take minutes. Fran Stanley suggested that minutes could be a rotating duty and that she would take tonight's minutes.

Raquel Majeski nominated Michelle Collette to be Vice Chair. Susan Hughes seconded and the motion carried 5:0 (Stanley not sworn in).

Michelle Collette nominated Raquel Majeski to continue as Chair for an additional year. Deirdre Slavin Mitchell seconded and the motion carried 5:0 (Stanley not sworn in).

3. Update from Various Working Groups

For the Town Image working group, the group discussed next steps and whether a forum should be held for education and discussion of the proposals to change the Town seal and change the name of Redskin Trail. Deirdre Slavin Mitchell stated that a forum would be apt to entrench divisive opinions rather than promote a shared understanding. Slavin Mitchell commented that this is a time for managing the change and she offered to work on a letter to the editor that would explain the process that led to this committee's recommendation to the Select Board that the seal is not inclusive.

Susan Hughes offered to assist with the letter as well as getting information out to online social media. Michelle Collette noted that Michael LaTerz, who serves on the Town's Historical Commission, has drawn up an image of what a changed seal might resemble and this image was published in the *Groton Herald*. Degen noted that the process for changing the seal could take the form of a simple majority vote at Town Meeting.

Also, for the Town Image working group, the committee has already referred the matter of retiring the crusader as the Groton Dunstable Regional School District mascot. Degen pointed out that the Diversity Task Force referral was made to the School Committee before they appointed a Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) committee. Now that the DEI committee has been formed, Degen recommends that this committee re-send a similar letter to the School District with this referral as a reminder for the School Committee.

Michelle Collette moved to refer the matter of retiring the Crusader's mascot to the Groton Dunstable Regional School Committee's appointed Diversity Equity and Inclusion committee. Joshua Degen seconded and the motion carried 5:0 (Stanley not sworn in).

For the Affordable Housing working group, the group discussed next steps after the June 27, 2021 Housing Summit. Stanley said that as a next step, the Trust is thinking of inviting an outside speaker like the head of B'nai B'rith and then inviting other interested committees to that presentation.

Regarding the changing the name of Redskin Trail, the committee has already made this recommendation to the Select Board. Degen said, that under state statute, the Select Board acts as de facto road commissioners. The Select Board could vote to make the change as they were asked to do by some Redskin Trail residents back in 2012. However, a Select Board vote alone will not address the expected financial impact to Redskin Trail residents if the street name is changed. Therefore, Degen suggested that a warrant article could be put before voters at Town Meeting to fund mitigation for the homeowners. Degen estimated that residents may have to change their deeds, drivers' licenses, passport and car registration. There are 14 homes on the street. Should Town Meeting vote to compensate Redskin Trail owners at a cost of \$1,000 per address if the road name changes, then the Select Board could delay their vote on the street name until after passage of the money article at Town Meeting.

Susan Hughes suggested that the Select Board or Town Meeting may want to make a statement known as a land acknowledgement that acknowledges that the land claimed by European settlers in 1655 was taken from its native inhabitants. The group discussed this idea¹.

Deirdre Slavin Mitchell left the meeting at 8 pm.

Regarding the Community Outreach working group, Majeski reviewed several activities that are underway. This committee will continue to partner with community volunteers who are planning an event to recognize the 20th anniversary of 9/11. On August 26, the Groton Public Library is sponsoring the Kevin Harris Project which is a band that will play on Town Field behind the Library. The Kevin Harris Project features music highlighting the Pan-African influence on American music. And finally, Grotonfest is scheduled for October 25, 2021.

4. Approve Minutes: Minutes were not reviewed.

Notes by Fran Stanley

¹ Sample land acknowledgement statement: We are gathered on the unceded land of the () peoples. I ask you to join me in acknowledging the () community, their elders both past and present, as well as future generations.