



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

Raquel Majeski, Chair
Michelle Collette, Vice Chair
Gordon Candow
Amy Degen
Susan Hughes
Bhaskar Gupta Karpurapu
Deirdre Slavin Mitchell
James Moore
Fran Stanley

Regular Session Minutes

Date/Time: November 18, 2021 at 7 pm
Location: The Center, 163 West Main Street, Groton
Members
in attendance: Raquel Majeski, Susan Hughes, James Moore, Deirdre Slavin-Mitchell, Michelle Collette, Fran Stanley, Amy Degen and Bhaskar Gupta Karpurapu
Others in
attendance: Becky Pine (Chair of the Select Board)
Handouts: ADL No Place for Hate list of communities, MMA 2008 press release, and 2019 ADL press release

Prior to the meeting TV crews from Fox 25 News were on site at The Center. They interviewed a couple of members of the Diversity Task Force. Raquel Majeski called the meeting to order at 7:04 pm. The Fox 25 news crew came into the meeting and videoed the initial portion of the meeting without sound. Raquel Majeski said that the committee will be having a No Place for Hate discussion later in the meeting.

Raquel Majeski said that interpersonal work is so important to the work we are trying to do. That said, she can only represent herself. She is a diversity facilitator by training. She does not want to see quality of the discussion devolve to a binary mode of thought. Pausing to self-reflect and consider one's bias is a good practice because one training or book is not sufficient. Michelle Collette said that it was her impression that when copies of the Racial Healing Handbook (<https://www.newharbinger.com/9781684032709/the-racial-healing-handbook/>) were purchased by the Town, the group moved on its discussions and missed the opportunity to work through the book at the beginning of the Committee's work. By consensus, the group agreed to schedule a Thursday meeting with the topic of the book as the sole agenda item.

Raquel Majeski introduced Becky Pine, who is here from the Select Board to continue discussion of whether to do a forum about the Town Seal. Becky Pine said that as she understood it the Diversity Task Force made a recommendation to the Select Board and it is for the Select Board to implement. Becky Pine said that the Select Board is going to put the matter in front of Spring Town Meeting and it would be helpful if the Diversity Task Force can help to write up education and information about the history of the seal. Deirdre Slavin-Mitchell said that we would be happy to share our thought process but that we are not trying to convince people and it is for people to vote their conscience. James Moore said that the Diversity Task Force has done its job by making this recommendation but that is not to say that we could not assist. It may be better placed in the hands of the community groups since that it is in the community that the decision resides.

Raquel Majeski reminded the group that we discussed preparing a facts page or frequently asked questions list and perhaps post that on the Town's website. If the Committee goes beyond that effort to partnering, then are we put in the place of advocating for the change. Susan Hughes noted that before the last meeting, this Committee had been planning forums to discuss and educate residents. Becky Pine said that the reality is that people are going to vote on this question and if the discussion is just left to Town Meeting, then it is hard to have a full discussion there that does not get sidetracked. Some residents do not read online municipal information. They might benefit from a chart that displays information and a discussion where questions can be asked and answered outside of Town Meeting.

Michelle Collette said that as the senior representative, her age group tends to appreciate and rely on attending meetings and learning about the topic before they get to Town Meeting. She added that this population also tends to turn out for Town Meeting and vote. Michelle Collette said that rule of thumb for Town Meeting articles requires six months of public discussion and lead time before a Town Meeting. With that understanding in mind, public information sessions can be helpful and be used as an opportunity to hear opinions and answer questions.

Raquel Majeski said that if this Committee prepares the facts and attends the forum in order to explain the facts, then we can leave it to the Select Board or others to manage the discussion or advocate as wanted.

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Amy Degen said that she has already approached the Groton Interfaith Council and they are scheduled to take a vote on November 29th regarding possible participation in the discussion. Amy Degen noted that the issue may be more of a matter of the separation of church and state rather than a political discussion which the GIC prefers to avoid. For example, by holding one forum in a house of worship such as the Shirdi Sai temple. As James Moore commented, a forum in a Christian church might be good since the proposal is to remove the words Holy Bible from the Town Seal.

Michelle Collette met with the Town's appointed Historical Commission to discuss the Town Seal. Chair Bob DeGroot asked for feedback. Five members were present. Three of the five members wanted a change to the Town Seal. One person was against the change and the other person said that he was undecided. Michelle Collette added that if you want to bring the discussion to the populace then site one forum at the Lost Lake Fire Station.

Raquel Majeski noted that we have the three locations then of (1) The Center, (2) a house of worship and (3) the Lost Lake Fire Station.

Becky Pine updated the group on the Select Board's discussion this past Monday at their regular meeting. The group discussed bystander training as offered by Hollaback. There are four different modules and the Select Board might do them all. On the agenda next time, Raquel Majeski said that this Committee can further discuss bystander training.

Becky Pine said that the Select Board discussed No Place for Hate and they are continuing that discussion. Becky Pine said that she is going to attend the District Attorney Marian Ryan's taskforce on anti-bias and hate crimes (see <https://www.middlesexda.com/> for Marian Ryan's website).

James Moore reached out to Brian DiGiovanni and Rebecca Thackaberry of the public school's diversity equity and inclusion committee. They are interested cooperating with Groton's committee. They are interested helping with the didactic panels on the Nashua River Rail Trail. James Moore noted that they might make use of Michael Roberts' Groton timeline which documents the thousands of years of native habitation in Groton.

Fran Stanley shared the news that the Town was not accepted to CHAPA's municipal engagement initiative. The Affordable Housing Trust and the Racial and Social Justice Group had partnered to apply to participate in this CHAPA initiative.

Raquel Majeski shared handouts researched by Dawn Dunbar regarding other Massachusetts towns who have formed No Place for Hate groups. One handout had a 2008 press release from the Massachusetts Municipal Association regarding withdrawing from Anti-Defamation League's No Place to Hate program because at the time the ADL, a human rights organization, was opposed recognition of the Armenian genocide. By 2019, the ADL had reversed course and announced that it was now endorsing a Congressional resolution commemorating the Armenian Genocide.

James Moore noted the program's focus on the school environment. He saw that it was problematic as there is so much bad teaching about these subjects. It is a difficult job to do well. Bhaskar Gupta Karpurapu said that a media centered approach might reach the most people. Deirdre Slavin-Mitchell said that teaching is usually talking to someone and trying to explain something to them. We have lost the ability to listen. If we are trying to educate, then we will approach that differently since we are all different. We need to respect and listen to one another. Fran Stanley said that the message was simplistic. The associations with the ADL were complicated and it is not what she wants to do.

Amy Degen said that she brought up No Place for Hate 20 years ago in Groton. The idea was not adopted at that time. Raquel Majeski said that she and Amy Degen are on the community response group.

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Raquel Majeski shared details of a local incident. Two weeks ago, a group of Lawrence Academy students were crossing Main Street at the crosswalk. All of the students were black and some were basketball players which may have caused someone to assume they were older given their height. A truck honked at them and the passenger in the truck pointed at the group and made a hand motion as if they were shooting a gun at them. The young people told Raquel Majeski. The police were contacted and she initiated a campus wide response within a couple of hours. Raquel Majeski said that it helped that Mark Haddad as Town Manager had spoken to them at the start of the school year and welcomed the students to campus. The relationship was established and Raquel Majeski told the students that she informed the Town Manager of this incident which they appreciated.

Raquel Majeski said that if this Committee prepares the facts and attends the forum in order to explain the facts, then we can leave it to the Select Board or others to manage the discussion or advocate as wanted. The town image working group agreed and Susan Hughes along with Michael LaTerz and Greg Fishbone will assist with gathering the information.

Meeting adjourned at 8:35 pm.

Next meeting: December 2, 2021

Notes by Fran Stanley



TOWN OF GROTON

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SELECT BOARD

Rebecca H. Pine, *Chair*
Alison S. Manugian, *Vice Chair*
Peter S. Cunningham, *Clerk*
Joshua A. Degen, *Member*
John F. Reilly, *Member*

Town Manager
Mark W. Haddad

MEMORANDUM

To: *Mark W. Haddad, Town Manager*
From: *Dawn Dunbar, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager*
Subject: *No Place for Hate*
Date: *November 9, 2021*

Based on my research, I found that the Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA) ended its sponsorship, originally dating back to 1999, of the No Place for Hate program in Massachusetts in 2008 due to the "Anti-Defamation League's (ADL) continued ambiguity about the Armenian Genocide and its active opposition to its recognition, reported the Armenian National Committee". Please see the link below to an article which contains the statement released by the MMA on April 8, 2008. <https://asbarez.com/massachusetts-municipal-association-ends-no-place-for-hate-sponsorship/>. The No Place for Hate initiative was restructured by the ADL as a school-based initiative in 2014.

As you will see from the attached chart, I have included brief information on each committee/group I could find, with the majority of them being located on the Cape and South Shore communities. Some are town sponsored appointed committees and some are community sponsored committees. Within the chart, I have also included links to each groups page for future reference.

In 2016, it was proposed by a former Selectman, that the Town of Groton become a No Place for Hate Community. Due to the fact there was no program to join as mentioned above, this initiative ultimately led to the 2017 Spring Town Meeting article requesting support to install "All Are Welcome" granite markers at the major entrances into the Town of Groton. As you are aware, this was supported by a majority vote of the Town Meeting and the markers have since been installed.

NO PLACE FOR HATE IN MASSACHUSETTS
11/09/2021

TOWN/CITY	COMMITTEE INFORMATION	LINK TO COMMITTEE
Salem, MA	<p>No Place for Hate Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dedicated to promoting acceptance if diversity and combating discrimination - 17 Member Town Committee 	<p>https://www.salem.com/no-place-for-hate-committee</p>
New Bedford, MA	<p>Together at the Table (formally No Place for Hate):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aims to reduce bias and to increase appreciation for diversity and to build communities of respect 	<p>https://www.newbedford-ma.gov/community-services/divisions/human-services/place-hate/</p>
Falmouth, MA	<p>No Place of Hate-Falmouth:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community organization whose purpose is to build bridges, combat bias based on race, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, and religion, and promote respect for all people through advocacy and education. 	<p>http://www.npfhfalmouth.org/</p>
Barnstable, MA	<p>No Place for Hare Barnstable Steering Group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consists of community members from many organizations - Mission statement declares that the program values diversity and supports civil rights for all people. 	<p>No website. Found an article on the Barnstable Patriot from October 18/19, 2019</p>
Duxbury, MA	<p>Duxbury Interfaith Council No Place for Hate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Offers community resources to counteract incidents of bigotry, racism, and ignorance and to promote respect for people of all backgrounds 	<p>http://www.duxburyinterfaithcouncil.org/duxbury-no-place-for-hate.html</p>
Marblehead, MA	<p>Task Force Against Discrimination:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 9 members Town Committee - Goal is to maintain a community where all individuals are welcome regardless of race, religion, sexual orientation or ethnic background. 	<p>https://www.marblehead.org/task-force-against-discrimination</p>
Hull, MA	<p>No Place for Hate Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 7 member steering committee and 3 members committee - Required to sponsor a minimum of four activities r programs that spread the message of tolerance and understanding in the community 	<p>https://www.town.hull.ma.us/no-place-hate-committee</p>

NO PLACE FOR HATE IN MASSACHUSETTS
11/09/2021

TOWN/CITY	COMMITTEE INFORMATION	LINK TO COMMITTEE
Plymouth, MA	<p>No Place for Hate Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Celebrate differences and react to incidents that may threaten or isolate individuals or groups based solely on visible or invisible differences 	<p>http://www.plymouthnoplacementforhate.org/</p>
Marshfield, MA	<p>No Place for Hate Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Completely non-profit grass roots group that was formed in August 2001. Receive grant funding from the Henry Mauer Foundation of the North Community Church and a charitable donation from the Marshfield United Methodist Church. 	<p>http://marshfield.net/npfh.html</p>
Norwell, MA	<p>All Are Welcome Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 7 member Town Committee dedicated to providing support and education related to diversity, acceptance, discrimination and other forms of prejudices. Committee looks to celebrate the differences of citizens and to protect the promise of equal justice and civil rights for all members of community. 	<p>https://www.townofnorwell.net/all-are-welcome-committee</p>
Worcester, MA	<p>Coalition Against Bias & Hate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The City Manager's Community Coalition Against Bias and Hate, formed in 2000, is a partnership of concerned individuals, including representatives from the City of Worcester Office on Human Rights, the City of Worcester Humans Rights Commission, the Worcester Police Department, the Worcester Public Schools, other city officials and representatives from city and state agencies, institutions of higher learning and community and faith-based groups, committed to fostering a community of justice, where acts of prejudice and hate will not be tolerated. 	<p>http://www.worcesterma.gov/human-rights/coalition-against-bias-hate</p>

Massachusetts Municipal Association Ends 'No Place for Hate' Sponsorship

by Asbarez Staff

April 8, 2008

in News (<https://asbarez.com/massachusetts-municipal-association-ends-no-place-for-hate-sponsorship/>)

WATERTOWN, Mass.—The Massachusetts Municipal Association Tuesday voted to ends its sponsorship of the No Place for Hate program due to the Anti Defamation League's continued ambiguity about the Armenian Genocide and its active opposition to its recognition, reported the Armenian National Committee.

The action by the nonprofit, nonpartisan association of Massachusetts cities and towns comes after at least 12 Massachusetts communities have already withdrawn from the NPFH program concluding that their constituents' human rights needs are best served by dissociating themselves from the ADL, an organization that engages in the worst form of hate speech: genocide denial.

In a statement released Tuesday the MMA affirmed that, "the inconsistency between the National ADL's position on the Armenian Genocide and the human rights principles underlying NPFH is a matter of great concern to MMA Board members and the municipalities they represent. The MMA feels strongly that it is imperative to speak with absolute clarity on genocide and that, due to the NPFH program's association with the National ADL, the Association will no longer be a sponsor of the program."

"The MMA made the right decision today, sending a clear signal that the ADL simply cannot be entrusted with the task of promoting tolerance and diversity in communities while it engages in the ultimate form of hate speech: genocide denial," stated Sharistan Melkonian of the Armenian National Committee.

Background

The MMA originally endorsed the NPFH program providing the impetus for many communities to adopt the program. Last September, however, the MMA acknowledged the ADL's inability to adhere to the simple yet necessary standards required of a human rights organization and called on the ADL to unambiguously recognize the Armenian Genocide and support congressional affirmation of the Armenian Genocide.

The ADL has for many years refused to acknowledge that the systematic massacre of 1.5 million Armenia's between 1915 and 1923 was genocide. To make matters worse, the ADL has actively engaged in efforts to oppose Congressional affirmation of the Armenian Genocide.

Only after intense pressure which started in Watertown, Massachusetts earlier this summer did the national ADL issue a "Statement on the Armenian Genocide" on August 21, 2007.

Referring to the events of 1915-1918, the statement declared, "The consequences of those actions were indeed tantamount to genocide." Aside from the fact that the Armenian Genocide began in 1915 and continued through 1923, the statement was not a full, unequivocal acknowledgement of the Armenian Genocide.

Not only was the qualifier "tantamount" inappropriate, but the use of the word "consequences" was seen by many as an attempt to circumvent the international legal definition of genocide by avoiding any language that would imply intent, a crucial aspect of the 1948 UN Genocide Convention definition.

The ADL convened its national meeting in New York City in early November at which time the issue of the Armenian Genocide was discussed.

Upon conclusion, a one sentence press statement was issued that "The National Commission of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) today, at its annual meeting, decided to take no further action on the issue of the Armenian genocide." http://www.adl.org/PresRele/Mise_00/5162_00.htm

For complete information about the ADL controversy surrounding the Armenian Genocide visit www.noplacefordenial.com

Statement by the Massachusetts Municipal Association

April 8, 2008

MASSACHUSETTS MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION

The Massachusetts Municipal Association firmly believes that in order to build and sustain strong and vibrant communities throughout the Commonwealth, it is essential to promote and protect basic human rights, mutual understanding, and reconciliation.

In a resolution adopted on September 11, 2007, the MMA Board of Directors stated that the terrible crimes committed against the Armenian people by the Ottoman Empire in 1915 must be recognized as genocide. In its resolution, the MMA applauded the New England Regional Director and New England Regional Executive Committee of the ADL for unequivocally recognizing the Armenian Genocide. The MMA further called on the National ADL to adopt the position of the New England Region at the ADL's National Commission meeting in November and to support the Congressional Resolution on the Armenian Genocide.

The MMA Board of Directors expresses its strong disapproval that the National ADL did not use the opportunity of its November meeting to clarify and strengthen its earlier statement's concerning recognition of the Armenian Genocide. The Board believes that unequivocal recognition of the Armenian Genocide is both a matter of basic justice to its victims as well as essential to efforts to prevent future genocides.

Since 1999, the MMA has been an official sponsor of the No Place for Hate (NPFH) program offered by the New England Region of the ADL. The NPFH program is intended to assist municipalities in Massachusetts to combat bias and promote tolerance. By helping to reduce acts of violence and discrimination, NPFH has brought important tangible benefits to the cities and towns which have chosen to participate in the program. It stands as a worthy monument to the good works of the man who inspired its creation, the late Leonard Zakim.

The inconsistency between the National ADL's position on the Armenian Genocide and the human rights principles underlying NPFH is a matter of great concern to MMA Board members and the municipalities they represent. The MMA feels strongly that it is imperative to speak with absolute clarity on genocide and that, due to the NPFH program's association with the National ADL, the Association will no longer be a sponsor of the program.

While these issues will continue to be discussed by municipalities and concerned individuals, the NPFH program has changed. The New England Region of the ADL recently announced that the NPFH program is moving to a community-based model. The program will be available as a resource to community and civic groups but will no longer seek local government sponsorship or certify cities and towns as NPFH communities. For Massachusetts municipalities that seek a program specifically designed for local governments to promote tolerance, combat racism and discrimination, and facilitate community building, the MMA commends the National League of Cities Inclusive Communities program, which can be accessed via the NLC's website (www.nlc.org). The NLC's program includes 190 cities and towns in 40 states and provides an ever-expanding toolbox for municipal officials.



2019

ADL Endorses Congressional Resolution Commemorating the Armenian Genocide

New York, NY, October 28, 2019 ... ADL (the Anti-Defamation League) today endorsed a bipartisan House resolution that recognizes the Armenian Genocide and urges Members of Congress to ensure its passage.

H. Res. 296, which states that the U.S. officially recognizes the Armenian Genocide and encourages education and public understanding on the issue, will likely be voted on by the House this week. ADL also endorses and encourages action on S. Res. 150, the resolution's identical bipartisan companion measure in the Senate.

The genocide, which saw some 1.5 million Armenians killed by the Ottoman Empire during the first World War, began with the ruling government arresting and executing several hundred Armenian intellectuals. After that, Armenian families were removed from their homes and sent on death marches. The Armenian people were subjected to deportation, expropriation, abduction, torture, massacre and starvation.

"This historic Congressional resolution, while long overdue, is an important step toward raising awareness and educating the American public about the horrific genocide committed by the Ottoman Empire against Armenians during the early part of the 1900s," said Jonathan Greenblatt, ADL CEO. "The 20th century saw the worst episodes of genocide in recorded human history, beginning with the Armenian Genocide, through the Holocaust and all the

way to the atrocities in Bosnia and Rwanda. Indeed, historians note that Hitler viewed the Armenian Genocide and the world's indifference toward it as inspiration to launch his own genocidal campaign across Europe. We believe that remembering and educating about any genocide – Armenian, the Holocaust, Bosnia, Rwanda, and others – is a necessary tool to prevent future tragedies and begins with recognition.

"We hope that this resolution will facilitate a constructive dialogue, and we encourage the Turkish government to introduce additional safeguards for protecting Turkey's Armenian citizens and other religious minorities. ADL's founding mission of securing justice and fair treatment not only for Jews but for all people requires us to speak out on behalf of other vulnerable groups, and this is why ADL launched a Task Force on Middle East Minorities this past year."

ADL is the world's leading anti-hate organization. Founded in 1913 in response to an escalating climate of antisemitism and bigotry, its timeless mission is to protect the Jewish people and to secure justice and fair treatment for all. Today, ADL continues to fight all forms of hate with the same vigor and passion. A global leader in exposing extremism, delivering anti-bias education, and fighting hate online, ADL is the first call when acts of antisemitism occur. ADL's ultimate goal is a world in which no group or individual suffers from bias, discrimination or hate.