

Minutes, West Tisbury Diversity Task Force, April 6, 2021 (approved May 11, 2021)

Present: Omar Johnson, Susanna J. Sturgis, Loren Ghiglione, Terry Kriedman, Alexandra Pratt, Rev. Cathlin Baker, Whit Griswold, Brad Cortez, Angela Luckey

Omar welcomed new members Alexandra Pratt and Rev. Cathlin Baker, and we all introduced ourselves.

Minutes: Susanna noted that this was the first meeting she'd done minutes for under the Open Meeting Law and suggested that in future she be able to record each meeting and check her written notes against that. This was agreed to.

The minutes from the March 10, 2021, meeting were approved. Susanna will submit a copy to town clerk Tara Whiting-Wells for the record.

Open Meeting Law (OML): Omar discussed this with Tara to clarify some dos and don'ts. The only things we should be discussing via email are setting agendas and agenda topics. Discussion needs to be saved for our meetings because the meetings are announced in advance and open to the public. Omar suggested sticking to a "strict understanding" of the OML. This was generally agreed. General agreement.

New Member Introductions:

- Alexandra Pratt is the director of the West Tisbury library. The library has done some trainings on diversity issues; she would be happy to make details available to the group.
- Rev. Cathlin Baker is the minister at the First Congregational Church in West Tisbury. She wants to find out what commitment is involved and noted that other church members might be interested. Racial justice is a priority for the congregation.

Size of the Group: Omar suggested capping it at about 8 people. Loren noted that we're already at 7. He asked what communities aren't included yet, e.g., Wampanoag, Brazilian. Brad suggested an optimum size of about 10–12 with a cap of about 15. He noted that his wife is Brazilian and well connected in the Brazilian community.

Noni Madison was mentioned as a possible member. Cathlin noted that Noni was busy with family but would it be possible for her and Noni to "job-share", e.g., take turns coming to meetings? She also noted that she will be going on sabbatical for 3 months in the fall.

Angela Luckey joined the group about 20 minutes in. She is involved in various environmental issues, including the WT Conservation Commission and Mill Brook study group. She asked if this was an island-wide group or just the town. Omar replied that we were established by the West Tisbury selectboard and are rooted in WT but he expects that we'll be involved in activities island-wide.

Cathlin noted that the Island Housing Trust wants to do more around racial equity so we might want to reach out to someone with that background.

After discussion, Omar suggested keeping a tentative cap at 10–12 but making efforts to reach out to people who would add diversity and connection to the group.

Diversity Statement: Omar asked how we felt about the current wording of the Diversity Statement. Another question is What is our name? The Diversity Statement creates a “Task Force Against Discrimination,” but the group has also been referred to as the Diversity Task Force and the Diversity Committee.

Omar noted that the selectboard’s original Diversity Statement makes our mission statement pretty clear. It’s up to us to decide what to focus on. Susanna said that the original mandate is fairly general and she’s all in favor of consulting the selectboard if we have questions about their intent.

On the subject of words, Cathlin quoted a useful formulation:

Diversity is a fact
Inclusion is an act
Belonging is a pact

For next meeting: Look at diversity statement, suggest modifications, and send suggestions to Omar. We’re restricted by the OML from discussing it via email between meetings. Susanna asked if it would be possible to form a subcommittee to review ideas and come up with a proposal for next meeting. Omar will ask Tara if this is OK under the OML. Since we only meet once a month, it would be helpful to be able to speed things up. Meanwhile we should continue to reach out to potential members of the group.

Loren followed up on Alexandra’s and Cathlin’s earlier mention of trainings. Alexandra reported that last year the library had a federal grant to use to promote social justice issues and civic participation. They used part of it for education and training around LGBTQ issues, for the school and for the public. They also hosted a screening of the film *I’m Not Racist . . . Am I?* followed by a two-hour conversation with 50-60 members of the public. (More about the film [here](#).) She could help look into grant possibilities for comparable programs if we’re interested.

Loren asked about the town’s current procedures for dealing with complaints about discrimination, etc. Omar said that West Tisbury, being a small town, doesn’t have a designated department or official to deal with these questions. It would be good to clarify this.

Cathlin said that the church is setting up systems to deal with these issues.

Our next meeting will be on Tuesday, May 4. [SJS note: It was held on May 11.]

Respectfully submitted,

Susanna J. Sturgis
Recorder