

Minutes, WT Task Force Against Discrimination, February 1, 2022, 5 p.m. APPROVED March 1, 2022

Present: Alexandra Pratt, Susanna J. Sturgis, Loren Ghiglione, Terry Kriedman, Ted Jochsberger, Brad Cortez

In Omar Johnson's absence, Alexandra called the meeting to order a little after 5.

The January 4 minutes were approved.

Invitation to March 28 Summit on Antisemitism

Terry and Susanna are interested and will register for this as members of the WT Task Force.

Diversity of Town Boards and Committees

Loren sent out to TFAD members the draft of a possible letter to members of town boards and committees. Jen Rand, WT executive secretary, told Loren that no email lists exist for all board & committee members but she could send such a letter to heads of committees for distribution to their members.

He relied on Census categories for racial and ethnic groups. These categories don't include a category for Portuguese/Brazilian, which is very important here on the island. The question arose of how to ask for information related to race, ethnicity, and other factors related to our Diversity Statement.

Participation should be voluntary. Susanna suggested a "prefer not to answer" option for each question. The general feeling was against including such an option.

About sexual orientation, Jen recommended against including a question about it. Susanna said that some would probably be reluctant to answer on a survey that included their names.

Alexandra asked what the point of the survey was. Are we trying to find out the sex, race, age makeup of town boards & committees? Do we need much more than name and email? She suggested giving people the opportunity to self-identify.

Loren responded that the purpose of the survey was to get as many people participating as possible and to get them thinking about the issues.

Susanna suggested two questions: (1) How did you come to be involved in town government? (2) How many boards/committees are you on?

Loren will do a revised draft based on our comments and bring it to our March 1 meeting.

Resources Available Through the Library

Alexandra has added these to our resource list. Most of the programs available, e.g., on anti-racism or LGBTQ issues, cost money. If we decided we want to offer one of them to town employees and/or the public, she would be happy to look for grants to make it possible.

Counterparts in Other Towns?

Susanna reported that this came up at our last meeting, where the general feeling was that the Task Force doesn't have any exact equivalent but that some towns might have something similar. Loren volunteered to ask around. Brad will too. Ted suggested starting with the town administrators.

Resource List Update

Susanna reported that we have compiled quite a few useful resources, enough to post on the town website. Alexandra has already posted procedures for library staff and members of the public if problems come up. We still need that info for town hall, police, fire, EMS, and the school.

YouTube Channel

Susanna has obtained the recording of our November event from the town. Do we want to create a YouTube channel so we can upload that recording? There is no cost for this. We agreed that this was a good idea, and also that for security reasons a link should be required to access the channel, as opposed to having it open for anyone to find. Susanna will set it up.

Announcements

Loren went to the exhibit at the Martha's Vineyard Museum about the plaque that was removed from the Civil War statue. He found it very informative about the history of race and racism on the Vineyard.

Alexandra reported that the American Library Association (ALA) has seen more book challenges in last three months than in the previous three years. These have affected both schools and libraries. There have been no incidents in West Tisbury, but she advised keeping the issue on our radar. Susanna noted that in 1993, two Oak Bluffs men tried to have two of the earliest kids' books about gay and lesbian families banned from the Oak Bluffs School library. Several contentious meetings followed. The books were not removed from the library, thanks in large part to the strong stands taken by the OB School librarian, the student member of the school committee, other Vineyard librarians, and members of the public.

The meeting was adjourned at about 5:45.

Respectfully submitted,

Susanna J. Sturgis
Recorder