

Minutes, West Tisbury Diversity Committee Meeting, March 10, 2021 (approved April 6, 2021)

Present: Omar Johnson, Bradley Cortez, Whit Griswold, Terry Kriedman, Loren Ghiglione, Susanna Sturgis

Omar Johnson chaired the meeting. He introduced new member Brad Cortez, a member of the WT Police Department.

Members introduced themselves, including their reasons for wanting to be on the committee.

Omar noted that the committee is expandable and we can all encourage interested people to join, especially younger people and longtime Vineyard residents, including those who have gone through the Vineyard school system.

He suggested the following ground rules for our meetings:

- Raise hand to be recognized to talk
- Observe the requirements of the Open Meeting Law
- Respect others' opinions
- "Address the problem, not the person"
- Omar will speak for the diversity committee in dealings with the press.

Susanna suggested --

- Respect the confidentiality of what is said in meetings. I.e., it's fine to talk about what we've discussed, but avoid attributing statements to particular people, as "So-and-so said . . ."

Everyone was OK with these guidelines.

Referring to the "Diversity Statement from the West Tisbury Board of Selectmen," Omar suggested that these are our main objectives:

1. Achieve workplace diversity and diversity in hiring practices (see the 4th paragraph of the Diversity Statement and the 1st bullet point under "commitment to inclusivity")
2. Practice a community policing model (the 2nd bullet point; the WTPD is already doing this)
3. Provide translation on the town website (the 3rd bullet point; this is already available)
4. Respond to issues as they arise
5. Provide diversity-related training esp. to employees/staff.

Loren asked what kind of training was being offered now. This is a good question! We will look into this, and research trainings that might be available.

Question for further discussion: Is our focus supposed to be on town employees or on the wider community -- or both?

Another question: Do members of the committee have to be West Tisbury residents, or can we include people who, for instance, work in town and are part of the community? The library staff was given as an example of people who are very involved with the community whether they live in town or not.

Omar asked us all to look over the Diversity Statement and email him with comments and questions before our next meeting. "We need a Diversity Statement that's clear to us," he said.

Brad will ask Rev. Cathlin Baker of the First Congregational Church (whose congregation is involved in social justice matters) for recommendations of new members.

Loren will contact the West Tisbury library to invite a library staffer to join us.

After some discussion, we decided to meet on the first Tuesday of each month at 5 p.m. Our next meeting will be Tuesday, April 6.

Respectfully submitted,

Susanna J. Sturgis