

Minutes, WT Task Force Against Discrimination, July 20, 2021

APPROVED August 3, 2021

Present: Omar Johnson, Susanna Sturgis, Alexandra Pratt, Bradley Cortez, Loren Ghiglione

This meeting took place in a downstairs conference room at the West Tisbury library. It was our very first in-person meeting.

Omar called the meeting to order a little after 5 p.m.

The **minutes for our June 1 meeting** were approved. *[SJS note: A copy was sent to the town clerk for filing on July 26.]*

Omar recommended that we all look at the links that Cathlin shared at the June meeting and report back on our thoughts at our next meeting, on August 3 (venue to be announced). Are there ideas here that we can follow up on? These links were mentioned in the June 1 minutes: this one from the [Race Equity Advisory Committee](#) in Bainbridge Island, WA; and the “[Racial Conflict Guide for Municipalities](#)” from the Community Relations Service of the U.S. Department of Justice, which identifies the sorts of things that create tension and suggested ordinances to deal with them. This seems to be from January 1991. Susanna found the more recent “[Responding to Racial Tension in Your City: A Municipal Action Guide](#)” from the National League of Cities.

Omar suggested developing a resource list and posting it on the town website, or even creating our own website. Susanna added that a resource list could be compiled into a booklet or other handout to be passed out at our fall event. She noted that creating a website on WordPress or a comparable platform is not hard. The challenge is to keep it updated.

Another possibility is to create a page on Facebook. It too would need to be updated. Also not everyone is on Facebook, and those who are don't necessarily visit it regularly. It's a good idea to employ multiple means of getting the word out and making it easy for people to reach us.

Omar raised the importance of getting young people involved. He wants us to keep this in mind going forward.

Planning for Fall Event

Loren noted that the schools are teaching the U.S.'s racial history. Possibly a panel could be organized?

Elaine Weintraub (retired MVRHS teacher and a co-founder of the African American Heritage Trail) and Lynn Ditchfield (retired MVRHS Spanish teacher who has developed “Borders to Bridges,” a curriculum focused on immigration that is now being tested in Vineyard schools. Immigration as a topic involves many of the issues that we're concerned with.

Brad has spoken with Mary Boyd at the West Tisbury School about racism and related issues, such as sexuality and fairness.

Alexandra reported that the library has featured programs run by [Wee the People](#), a Boston-based organization that focuses on children ages 4–12 as well as parents and educators.

Important question: Who's the target audience for this event? Town employees or the wider community? Whatever Covid-related restrictions are in place this fall may have an impact on this. The general preference was for an open-to-all event. It's an opportunity to introduce ourselves to the community, get feedback on what's needed or would be useful, and recruit new members.

It's important to get the Brazilian community involved. Brad's wife Vani is Brazilian American and very involved in the community.

Possible venues: the library, the West Tisbury School, the Charter School, the Ag Hall (Brad will ask Garrison Vieira of the WTPD who's also on the MV Ag Society board about this), the Grange. Other ideas?

When? General sense was that after September but before Thanksgiving would be best.

Program ideas: It was suggested that we "start small" rather than try to take on too much all at once.

Some kind of interactive exercise would help get attendees involved, as opposed to just listening. Alexandra, Cathlin, and Jill De La Hunt (of the We Stand Together / Estamos Todos Juntos Racial Justice and Human Dignity committee) might have some ideas about this. Jill is an experienced workshop leader.

A short film might be a good way to prompt discussion. The Point Made Learning film "[I'm Not Racist . . . Am I?](#)" was suggested -- however, it's an hour and a half long so would probably need to be a program in itself.

One purpose of the event could be to introduce people to available resources for resolving disputes, learning more (books, films, discussion groups, etc.).

PR: Loren raised the question of how to promote the event in a way that gets people interested. Is the bigger challenge too many people or too few?

Lambert's Cove Restrictions discussion

This was on the agenda but didn't happen because the individual who wanted to bring it up didn't appear.

Other Business

Do we want to propose to the selectboard that the town observe Indigenous Peoples Day on the date generally designated Columbus Day? This year it's October 11. Loren has been involved in similar efforts in the past.

Possible new members: Quinn Savard, director of Island Children's School; Caroline & Daniel Mayhew and Jill De La Hunt, all three of whom are active in the WST/ETJ Racial Justice and Human Dignity committee.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:49 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Susanna J. Sturgis
Recorder