

Minutes, West Tisbury TFAD Meeting, July 20, 2022

APPROVED on August 2, 2022

Present: Omar Johnson, Susanna Sturgis, Terry Kriedman, Brad Cortez, Loren Ghiglione, Alexandra Pratt, Jennelle Gadowski

The July 5 minutes were approved.

NOTE: This was a Zoom meeting, and we had technical problems: the audio of two members wasn't working.

How to Increase Diversity on Town Boards and Committees

We discussed how best to make use of the information in Loren's survey, particularly the responses to the two-ended questions: "Are there ways the town of West Tisbury or its Task Force might encourage greater inclusion in the make-up of town bodies?" and "Is there anyone that you feel would make a good board or committee member? If so, briefly explain why."

We agreed that these points were worth following up on:

- Meet with NAACP, Wampanoag, Brazilian groups/Brazilian Facebook. (Susanna already has connections to the NAACP and the Racial Justice Committee of We Stand Together; Brad will pursue connections with Brazilian community with help of his wife.)
- Hold forum along the lines of "What Makes West Tisbury Tick" with accompanying handout.
- Encourage current board and committee members to reach out to possibly interested friends, acquaintances, etc. (It seems several already do this.)
- Advertise openings in the newspapers.
- Make better use of social media, particularly Facebook, where there are already multiple Vineyard-focused groups, some of them very large.
- Make the town website more user-friendly and give more prominence to openings and board activity.
- Emphasize getting more young people involved.

Ideas for getting more youth involved, e.g., MVRHS students. Omar will find out if we can approach schools directly. The issue was raised that many high school students leave the island after graduation; could they be effective board/committee members if they were only around for a year or two? Internships were suggested as a possibility for interested students. Having a "rotating seat" might be possible with some boards/committees. *[SJS note: Some school committees may already do this in order to have a student member.]*

The possibility was raised of having Portuguese interpreters at meetings.

Jennelle noted that there are two tribes on Martha's Vineyard, the Aquinnah and the Chappaquiddick Wampanoag. She urged use of the land acknowledgment statement at the beginning of meetings to make us more mindful of the history of the land we're living on.

Brad cited Wendy Nierenberg's comment #2 on the survey that it's hard to know which boards/committees need more members; some are fine with what they've got. Terry and Brad both noted Wendy's comment #3: "same people have the same positions in perpetuity and that new people might feel reluctant to apply or express interest."

Susanna pointed out that insider/outsider splits are real and probably inevitable in groups of all sizes. "Outsiders" often perceive organizations as closed even when the current members believe they're open to new members. The challenge is coming up with effective ways to deal with it.

Some suggestions for doing outreach:

- put out regular newsletter promoting specific openings, existence of website
- work through religious communities
- recruit activist young people at demonstrations and rallies
- cold-call possibly interested residents. Ginny Jones noted that the Planning Board recruited Matt Merry this way.

Alexandra noted that applications for library jobs come mostly from people already living here, and those who live elsewhere are deterred by the unavailability of affordable housing. This doesn't seem to be unique to the library.

One survey respondent raised the possibility of a tax credit for town service. We're not sure how this would work. The town currently has a program whereby eligible seniors and disabled veterans can do work exchange for part of their property tax bills.

Jen Rand's memo to Loren, summary of points and recommendations:

- contact the people who were recommended in the survey to see if they're interested and give their names to selectboard
- meet with NAACP, Wampanoag Tribe, etc.
- advertising is too expensive
- regular advertising of open positions, e.g., in spring in fall? Hasn't been tried.
- use posters on public bulletin boards
- pessimistic about "what makes WT tick" program possibilities
- outreach to high school

Our Aug. 2 meeting will take place via Zoom.

The meeting adjourned at ca. 6 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Susanna J. Sturgis
Recorder