**Minutes**

**May 10, 2021**

**DEI Advisory Committee Meeting**

**Prepared by Denise massingale-Lamb**

**Attendance**

**Gillann Blunschi**

**Martin Mohaber**

**Denise Massingale-lamb**

**Chris Radziki**

**Samantha Nestor**

**Jasper Richardson**

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**Guests**

**Denise Harvey**

**Steve Ezzes**

**Helen Brody**

**Mararet Wirthenbuerg**

**Anthony**

**Lisa**

Meeting was called to order by Chair Gillann Blunschi at 7:36pm (Seconded by Martin Mohaber)

Agenda items reordered upon motion from Martin and second from Gillann.

Gillann reviewed mission of DEI and thanked guests for attending.

**Item 6 - Recommendations to BOS**

Committee voted to support recommendations made by Walter Simpson concerning:

1. After following discussion, Committee voted to recommend to BOS creation of **Independent Civilian Review Board, including studies of best practices of CRBs, surrounding town CRBs, and role of police commission** (Moved by GB seconded by DML)

Samantha noted she would not offer comments on motions/matters BOS would be voting on, in order to eliminate the possibility of having to recuse herself from BOS vote.

**Discussion**

Jasper advised Committee he has not received any documentation/information he requested at Police Commission meeting last week, nor has he received any communication from the Commission.

Denise suggested a letter be sent from DEI to Police Commission asking for docs Jasper requested.

Helen Brody stated she was uncomfortable with creation of Civilian Review Board because of reactive position of CRBs. She stated the sequence of events was not portrayed correctly, based on her conversations with some members of the Police Commission. She said members were very accommodating regarding the incident and she felt a CRB would be like a “vigilante” committee. She said a lot of things fell through the cracks, but Police Commission cannot be held responsible because of Covid and other things.

She suggested an Advisory Committee could set standards, with guidance from DEI Committee.

Gillann stated we want to make sure police are being policed, and a study will let us know of best practices.

[Person] pointed out an Advisory Committee is not very different than CRB. DEI is looking for full immediate investigation by a third party.

Tony asked/suggested that Police Commission should be conducting its own internal review based on what happened - what fell through the cracks.

He wanted to know whether DEI has had any conversations with Police Commission concerning any internal review.

[Person] asked whether a CRB is effective method of policing police. Jasper pointed out disparity in police giving speeding tickets in Weston, and reiterated its need to have an internal and external review of Police Commission and its actions. “There should be accountability. This has happened before and it can happen again because of bias and systemic racism.”

Steve Ezzes recommended DEI call for a review of the event before making recommendations to BOS about Civilian Review Board or about Police Engagement Program to the BOS.

“There needs to be a determination of the role of the Police Commission overall.” He wants to know the role and responsibilities of the Police Commission. “What do they do?”

He stated that negotiation of collective bargaining agreement is not one of their responsibilities. He and Baldwin do that negotiation. Police Commission has modest presence in negotiation. It’s not a full time job for a seven member Police Board.

Irrelevant since it only happens every three years.

He suggested DEI’s first step should be to call for a study to determine what Police Commission’s role is in overseeing police in Weston, and 1. whether a police commission needs to exist, 2 whether there should be some form of oversight and educational aspects, and, if they need to exist, to be more effective.

Denise Harvey suggested a further look at the role and responsibilities of the Police Commission. Wants to know extent of oversight.

Shara K. wants policy review based on protocol of police investigations and hierarchy of Police Department and Police Commission.

Gillann said DEI would look into role and responsibilities of Police Commission.

Walter Simpson stated that follow though on part of Police Department and Police Commission should not be assumed, as was suggested by guest in meeting. “It took all of this for Police Commission to pay attention.” He reiterated the need for an independant CRB.

Martin noted Police Commission actions and inactions have caused a loss of faith from large section of community. “This was a huge blunder.”

He suggested that WIS fund established for Social Justice and education may have funds to support some of efforts.

Helen wondered what was communication between Police Department and Commission. She asked who at dispatch was responsible. Thought there was better training for dispatchers.

1. After following discussion, **DEI voted to recommend to the BOS, the establishment of a Police Engagement Program** (Gillann moved, seconded by Martin, Denise abstained)

**Discussion**

Program offers residents to see what police officers do, and shows their humanity. Allows police opportunity to meet members of communities.

Program was highly recommended by Gillann and Shara who attended a PEP.

3. After following discussion, **DEI voted to recommend BOS support and establish an ordinance that sets forth penalties for misuse of 911 and support study initiated by DEI, to that end.** (Motion by GB, seconded by DML)

**Discussion**

Gillann explained there is a bill pending in Hartford that penalizes misuse of 911 calls - including calls indicating racial bias, animus profiling.

Members of DEI supported establishment of local town of Weston ordinance.

Steve Ezzes asked who would enforce and what would penalties be. “Who would make determination of misuse.” He suggested recommendations be as specific as possible.

It was clarified by Jasper and Gillann this proposal needs to be researched.

Helen said this was “a tipping point for country, an inflection point that could be positive. Look for procedural things that were not handled well. Community awareness is important. [this ordinance] will add to sense of positive energy. So many people were upset by treatment of Walter.”

It was clarified by , bill in Harford is Class B Misdemeanor, with penalty up to 6 months in jail and $1,000 fine.

Denise Harvey suggested good faith/bad faith considerations for violations.

Per se violation suggested by Denise ML..

Racial profiling not acceptable in Weston. Town ordinance wanted. It was pointed out that Westport ordinance overwhelmingly focused on alarms. Jasper reiterated need for research and suggested connecting with advocates in neighboring towns.

Steve suggested DEI reach out to town attorney and ask how he would go about doing study. Margaret suggested that Ed, the town attorney, help with research on this.

Helen suggested “mounting massive education campaign so that people know boundaries. Educational engagement will only have positive results.” Educate prior to penalty.

Helen and Steve were “volunteered” to help with research.

Martin called for transparency.

**4. After following discussion, DEI voted to Recommend BOS Support and Establish Regular Anti Bias/Anti Racism Training for Town Boards and Commissions, Town Residents, including Students and Staff) with Funding (**Moved by GB seconded by DML)

**Discussion**

It was suggested by Lisa that schools and students be included in training. Tony asked that BOE be included in training - as early as this summer. He stated that he wanted to work together with DEI to accomplish training sessions for Board members.

Denise Harvey reiterated the importance of training. Suggested challenge would be reaching out to people in town who are not on Boards or Commission.

Margaret suggested involvement by DEI in other Boards and Commissions.

Samantha shared how Freedom of Information Act works and attendance opportunities.

Steve Ezzes reiterated his support for anti bias training for all town residents, not only for Boards and Commissions.

7. After the following discussion, **DEI voted to recommend BOS Hire Independent Third Party to Immediately Investigate Actions of Police Department and Police Commission concerning their actions with Walter Simpson’s Nov. 19, 2019 In Interaction with the Weston Police Department, and Subsequent Interaction with the Police Department and Police Commission about the Incident and Subsequent Investigation.** (GB moved, MM seconded)

**Discussion**

Martin pointed out that DEI should get all data from this and have in one place.

Helen was surprised to hear Jasper had received nothing from Police Commission.

Helen said she spoke with two commissioners who thought matter was being handled by the chairman. Wants complete picture. Wants to hear from Polce Commissioners. Wanted DEI to be able to examine documents.

Steve Ezzes suggested Jasper should put his request in writing and not expect it overnight.

Walter has not received information about officer that was inaccurate.

Martin questioned whether it would take a lawsuit against the police department to get information provided in a timely fashion.

Martin suggested that Racial Justice Education Fund may have funds to support DEI and BOS efforts.

Discussion ensued re what third party means and who must pay forThird party

Steve felt third party should be acceptable to DEI Committee, and that town should pay for it. Sends proper signal.

Right thing to do. Someone trusted by all parties.

Margaret shared that the police have a union and to anticipate them getting lawyered up and that this will be on front page of NYT for weeks.

Denise asked that DEI reserve right to amend Motions. Martin agreed.

**Upcoming**

George Floyd Memorial coming up. A special meeting will be called to further discuss matters set forth in this meeting.

Sam reported one candidate has been interviewed, and encouraged volunteers to seek out members of DEI Committee.

Gillann thanked guests for attending.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:57. (Motion by GB, seconded by MM)