

January 14, 2021 meeting of the CDICR Patterns of Racism Working Group (minutes as amended)

Working Group Members in Attendance:

Irving Allen, Bonnie Bastien, Malcolm Cawthorne (meeting facilitator), Arthur Conquest, Lloyd Gellineau (Chief Diversity Officer from ODICR – non-voting member), Joan Lancourt, Bob Lepson (note taker), Donelle O’Neal, Luciana Schachnik, Kea van der Ziel, Grace Watson, Anne Weaver

Members of the public also in attendance

Carla Benka, Ryan Black, Lee Cooke Childs, Raul Fernandez, Ellen Perrin, Wamwega Shaw, John VanScoyoc

Intro

All members introduced themselves with the reasons why this work is important to them

Reviewed Mission Statement draft - goals of this working group

Draft: This Task Force will collect and document research and chronicle the many racist incidents that have happened to residents, employees, and visitors here in town. The committee will outline the racist systems that have been put in place (intentional or unintentional) and remain in place today. The focus of the committee will be on identifying and showing the connecting themes and patterns among and between the various incidents and systems. Patterns continue no matter who is in “power,” and Brookline hasn’t been good at seeing the whole picture; incidents are treated as one-offs, and we need to ‘connect the dots.’

The Task Force will then report back to the CDICR and probably to the SB, and others as well as other appropriate bodies. The hope is that the group will produce a report which will contain specific recommendations for change, and may lead to a warrant article(s) or other recommendations.

Comments ranged from:

“How do we find these *patterns*?”

Look for repetition. Find and chronicle examples. Macro and micro. The more the better. Then we can weed out what we don’t need.

A report won’t be a panacea; Racism is deeply embedded in this town; Examples like not hiring Adrian Mims and Al Fortune; We keep sweeping these incidents (and patterns) under the rug; We shouldn’t allow it to happen.

Accountability is critical; Something must be done other than just give a report;

Look closely at the Town Budget; Look back at the history of Marijuana arrests; maybe consider drafting a warrant article(s) as part of what this committee ultimately does.

We must find a way to effect change.

Questions ranged from:

How will we gather data? Where will we get the info? Do reports exist? For this to happen, people need to feel safe and not fear retaliation.

There was a discussion of:

When we start pushing buttons, things happen. Systemic racism and white supremacy here in town resists change to protect the “brand” of Brookline. We could hear from legal or others that could affect us personally. Be prepared for pushback.

The report is just one tool. We have people from all parts of town. We need to pool and document what we already know and what we discover. Need to aggregate what we know but nobody has put on paper in one place. We will need to make it public. A report is an organizing tool. Communicate not just to the SB but to all of our networks.

We need to think about these incidents in a different way. Think oral history, not attempt to prove a case in a court of law. We want to show a pattern or patterns.

Public comment:

Longtime resident until he recently moved his family out of Brookline due to experiences they encountered while here.

People are excited about doing this work. View this committee as identifying the “truth” part of “truth and reconciliation.” Maybe we should even think of reparations and changing the existing structures. Full support from Raul as an individual and as a member of the Select Board.

Maybe meet weekly for now.

Think about things - where are we going to start? How do we manage and maintain the info? Where will it sit??

Next meeting is Thursday the 21st at noon.