Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: April 26, 2022
Location: Via Google Meet

Attendance: Charity O'Neill O'Kane, Trinity Poon, Diana Ganju, Becky Milburn, Carly Smith, Kathleen Reynolds, Kristin Bader, Paige Morris, Michael Pell, Lisa Kent, Emily Kaiblack

Call to order 7:05pm by Trinity Poon

- Pledge of Allegiance recited
- Charity O'Neill O'Kane read over the statement of intention/group norms
- Discussion of School Committee Meeting Presentation 4/27/22:
  There is an issue occurring at the high school and due to the outreach that is occurring the School Committee has asked that DEIAC speak at the next school meeting. Charity wanted to check in with the group regarding the issue prior to the meeting. Charity stated that she will highlight DEIAC's recommendations that were made and how some of those recommendations could have helped in the situation that occurred. Charity also stated that allowing for an educational presentation allowed for the students to understand that this type of behavior would not be tolerated in our schools should have occurred to calm all students. Charity also stated that having a DEI person in place could have also helped with this incident, this was also a recommendation that was made. Charity stated that she will be stating these specific things at the meeting. Lisa Kent stated that making sure that we are clear on our statements within the School Committee. Kristin Bader stated that in the handbook it does state that if an incident occurs outside of school and it affects the school it is in fact a school issue. She also stated that it would be best to say that this is why the work is so important to what we are doing, also that when something like this occurs that there is an expectation and a need that the school administration needs to address this in a clear comprehensive manner to the school community. Kristin also stated that she will try to facilitate different things that can hopefully move things forward, she stated that she is only on the school committee for a few more weeks. Kathleen Reynolds stated that when she read about the incident in the paper she was taken back to our first meeting where Arianna spoke of the racial issues she faced and how it was hard for her to go to school and feel safe. Kathleen spoke of when she taught in another district that during their "knight time" it would be the perfect time to discuss these things, she also stated that having the DEI point person would have helped in this issue, especially after the incident. Charity stated that if there was a protocol that had outlined what was to occur after the incident then it would have been a great teaching moment. Diana Ganju asked what the school committee asked from DEIAC when they asked for us to come and speak? Charity stated that Kristin Bader asked her to come and speak, Kristin stated that when she spoke with others on the committee they thought it was a good idea for someone from the DEIAC to come and speak. Diana Ganju stated that we need to be careful about what we say and what is being done at the top of our school administration, also to say if this was in place this would not have happened. Diana also stated that there should be clear protocols in place. Diana also stated that there was an email that was sent and that there was a brief meeting in the auditorium regarding this issue, at the high school. Email was sent to parents and staff. Diana also stated that school wide there was not something done, but that there were some teachers that were addressing
this with their students. Diana also stated that with the ADL, world of difference students that this type of issue would be a lot for them to take on. She also stated that a reporter interviewed the group and hopefully it will be a positive result. Becky Milburn stated that underscoring and recognizing our work in front of the school committee would be a good idea, she stated that she spoke with many people regarding this issue and it does not appear that the district turned this into a teachable moment...and moving forward the district needs to when possible. Also she mentioned that the ADL guide outlines how to work through moments like this and many other things. Suggested that perhaps we ask the School Committee how best we can assist and move forward. Becky highlighted that there are many ways to educate the community and that it should have been done and done right, she stated that it is what a functioning school community should do. Diana Ganju and Becky Milburn both mentioned handbooks and what types of things should be updated, Diana has a form that she will send out to Charity. Carly Smith stated that at Oak Ridge she had asked about the handbook committee, she stated that there was not a clear answer on when it meets or when it has to be done by. She also stated that there were some changes being made to the handbook, she also stated that making those suggestions about the ADL recommendations for the handbook would be helpful. Diana Ganju stated that she is still concerned that the work we do goes to the school committee and then it goes to administration, which is clogging up the work a bit. Carly Smith stated that there needs to be a clear directive from the school committee and school administration so that the teachers feel comfortable with having conversations and make these connections with their students to support DEI issues within their schools/classrooms, so that teachers and administrators are being backed up. Carly stated that having support when dealing with DEI issues would make the work easier and also help support teachers across the board. Michael Pell stated that with the new superintendent coming in he can see why teachers would be worried about their positions and how doing this would be something to worry about, he also stated that we as teachers could do things in a way that helps the students grow and learn together. Michael Pell also stated that the School Committee was not aware of the situation and that when they found out they were concerned about the fact that they did not know, he also stated that in our school there are people who can help others, and sense what is happening in schools, and that it was hard to find out that way and perhaps Charity should bring it up during the meeting and let her feelings be known. Michael Pell also stated that teachers should go to their principals in order to get direction regarding issues that they feel they need support on. Michael also stated that he is thankful for all the work being done and stated that if there is anything he can do to let him know.

- **Public Forum:** none
- **Any other topics not anticipated**: Charity stated that if anyone would like to join School Committee meeting tomorrow they are welcome.
- **Closing Remarks and Thanks** by Charity O’Neill O’Kane
- Motion to adjourn by Charity O’Neill O’Kane, seconded by Kristin Bader
- Unanimous vote to adjourn at 8:17 pm.
Signed by:

Lisa C. Kent  Secretary