

Committee Members
Crystal Buckley
Dawn Budde
Lindsey Colelli
Susan Dietrich
Daniel Kerls
Zoe Rheault
Alan White



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TOWN OF MEDWAY
COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

INCLUSION, DIVERSITY, AND EQUITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity Advisory Committee

Minutes of the Meeting

October 2, 2023

**Medway Public Library
26 High Street, Medway, MA 02053
Conference Room**

Meeting was called to order at 7:02 pm by Dawn Budde.

Appearances:

- Members present: Dawn Budde, Lindsey Colelli, Susan Dietrich, Daniel Kerls, Zoe Rheault and Alan White
- Members absent: Crystal Buckley
- Others: Tatevik Holmgren, Member of the Public and Stuthi Balaji, recording secretary

1. Public Comment

- Ms. Budde opened the floor for public comment, there was none.

2. Introduction of the Secretary: Stuthi Balaji introduced herself as the Committee's new recording secretary.

3. Introduction of Allison Potter: Ms. Potter was not present, but Susan Dietrich explained that Ms. Potter is the primary Town Contact.

4. Discussion on how to best rely on Ms. Potter for support:

- Ms. Budde asked if anyone had any ideas on how to rely on Allison as a resource for the IDEA committee's work. Ms. Dietrich suggested that since Ms. Potter is unlikely to attend committee meetings, we can share the minutes of the meeting with her, and as we have new projects to work on, Ms. Potter can make suggestions or point us in the right direction. Kailene Simon from the School Board and Todd Alessandri from the Select Board are liaisons, not members. Ms. Dietrich recommended similarly sharing the minutes with them if the committee needs the Select Board or School Board's input on a project. Ms. Dietrich explained that the IDEA Committee is not a decision-making body, so need to get Select Board or School Board's approval, as needed.
- Mr. White mentioned that since the IDEA Committee has discussed designing training programs for Town employees, it would be pertinent to find out the employee demographic breakdown for Town employees. Mr. White asked if Ms. Potter would be able to provide that information. Ms. Dietrich said that we can ask Ms. Potter first since she is very knowledgeable, and she would point us in the right direction to obtain that information. Mr. White volunteered to follow up with Ms. Potter to obtain that information.

5. Review and Approve Minutes: Daniel Kerls made a motion to approve the minutes of the meeting from September 11, 2023. Ms. Dietrich seconded motion. Approved 6-0.
6. Information from Feedback Survey and updating email address:
 - Ms. Budde mentioned the feedback survey – Ms. Dietrich said that the committee page has a feedback option, when people filled out that form, it went somewhere. However, it is unclear where that information is hosted. Marcus was our designated contact, he was also the one that updated our website. Ms. Dietrich explained that the committee needs to identify a member who will hold that information and share it with us confidentially.
 - Mr. White mentioned that there's also the townofmedway.org email and any emails sent to that account is forwarded to members' individual email addresses. Ms. Dietrich explained that right now it goes to the original committee members, not the new members. Mr. Kerls asked if that would be something that Ms. Potter can help the committee update. Mr. White volunteered to follow up with Ms. Potter and Mr. Kerls will follow up with Marcus about redirecting survey results.
 - Ms. Dietrich asked if someone would like to be in charge of the feedback survey form and maintain the anonymity of the form - this person would have to summarize and provide the information without identifying information so that it doesn't become part of the public record. Ms. Dietrich explained that we can also rearrange the website. Zoe Rheault volunteered to take charge of the anonymous forms.
7. Improving the Town website and brainstorm other changes:
 - Ms. Dietrich proposed adding an accessibility widget to the website, which gives you options for various features such as font sizes, night vision, etc. Mr. White explained that there is a company that offers such translation widget services, where you pay a monthly fee and they run it on the website. You can add alternative text for photos for blind, make fonts accessible to those with dyslexia, etc. Mr. Kerls noted that everything should be written at the 6th grade level to ensure accessibility.
 - Mr. White mentioned that to comply with accessibility standards, the website should allow the user to change font sizes, enabling navigation through the keyboard rather than the mouse – notably, these are a hot topic in web programming and is usually not automatically baked into the website. Mr. White also explained that there are websites available that will scan your site and tell you what you're lacking and need to improve in order to meet accessibility standards.
 - Mr. White asked about the tech person for the town. Mr. Kerls mentioned that Richard Boucher is the Director of IT Services for the Town. Ms. Dietrich explained that as the Tech director for the Town and Schools, Mr. Boucher is extremely busy. He used to have a tech assistant that resigned last year, and the position was not backfilled due to budgetary constraints. Essentially, the better informed the Committee can be, the more likely Mr. Boucher is going to be able to assist.
 - Ms. Rheault pointed out that all the neighboring town websites have translation options, but ours does not. Ms. Dietrich asked if these were on websites that looked like Medway's? Ms. Rheault said that Milford, Holliston, Medfield and Franklin have website that look similar to Medway's website and have enabled the translation widget. Ms. Budde mentioned that it would be best to put the widget on the top of the website. Mr. White explained that most current websites today should not even need to be placed on the website. Rather, it should be running in the background, and is meant to take the onus off the users to actually select translation. Ms. Rheault asked if you would have to enable the background feature or if it is automatic. Mr. White said that you can have the widget or you can have it set to whatever the user has set to their default. You often need to have a site translated by humans for accuracy, but the top five required languages in Medway should be easy to implement without needing employees that translate. One example where this was an issue was for Black history month – the word Black was translated into other languages to mean "Midnight" or "Dark", so we need to be careful and keep an eye on that translation quality.
 - Ms. Dietrich mentioned that the main navigation bar should be more accessible and should be easy to do. Multiple members agreed that having terms like "I'm looking for" or "how do I" or "new resident information" would make the website accessible for everyone.
 - Ms. Dietrich mentioned that we could probably find out how much Medfield is spending on the translation widget – AccessiBee charges \$1500 per year for under 10,000 pages. Mr. White

mentioned that Google translate cost is minimal for a website of our size (depends on # of languages, the format of the document, etc).

- Ms. Budde stated that our website is very hard to navigate. Mr. Kerls agreed that trying to find specific information on the website is really difficult. Ms. Dietrich mentioned that permits and bylaws are also complicated to find, should be made more accessible. Ms. Dietrich mentioned that we could go out and ask townspeople what they're having trouble with and see if we can borrow ideas from other towns.
- Mr. White mentioned that thinking about forms is important too - HTML format versus PDF. A best practice might be that any new forms that are created are created as webforms.
- Mr. Kerls explained that we never asked about our website in our focus groups, but would be interesting to see what people would say. Ms. Rheault said that asking people about the website and generally about accessibility in Town would be a good idea, so that we can address all issues. Ms. Dietrich said maybe we leave the questions more open ended – what about people that don't even use the website and call town hall directly – can find out from administrators in Town Hall to see what the common questions they get are. The Town can save money if we can reduce the time that Town employees are spending on answering basic questions and offering information. Ms. Budde said that this would also help mitigate misinformation. Mr. Kerls said that most people don't provide links to the Town's website. For example, on Friends of Medway, people just offer different opinions and information, without linking the website.
- Ms. Holmgren suggested that the Committee could find out how many non-native English speaking kids are in the schools and how many of their guardians are unable to speak English – what are the languages they do speak? How would the committee find this information? Ms. Dietrich suggested that the Committee can ask housing board, school board, or the new apartment building in Town since they would all know about residents asking for language or accessibility services. Ms. Dietrich volunteered to follow up with them to figure out the top languages needed.
- Ms. Dietrich summarized that the translation and accessibility widgets are highest priority. Content recommendations will come after conducting some research surveys. Ms. Budde volunteered to call around to other towns and ask how much they pay for their widgets and translation services.
- Mr. White said that when he speaks to Mr. Boucher, he will ask for the contact info for the webhost and figure out what features are available and/or enabled.
- Ms. Dietrich explained that we need to figure out the best way to contact the community about the best way to organize the website. Need to find out from the community and admin staff from Town hall. Mr. Kerls recommended that we test scenarios.
- Ms. Budde mentioned that she'll find something on the website once and then try to find it again and is unsuccessful. Mr. White said that one thing that's been helpful is having an open ended "how do I" and it will give you better search results. The most searched items can also indicate what people are typing into the bar. Mr. White said that someone would have the ability to pull that information.
- Ms. Dietrich mentioned that the Committee willing to do the legwork, but we need to be touchpoints. Mr. White asked if high school kids are able to assist with the technology updates since Mr. Boucher doesn't have additional support? Ms. Dietrich mentioned that there are internship programs through the High School (lead the way: medical, engineering, etc) and suggested contacting Dr. Murray at the High School to get that program off the ground – opportunity for seniors with free periods, etc.
- Mr. Kerls mentioned that when the Committee previously did the high school focus group, they were motivated to help through the Town. Ms. Dietrich mentioned that this is brand new work, so not a lot of management happening on the website, this would be a new opportunity. Working with students on websites, having them move it into the sandbox area without making actual changes are important.
- Mr. White mentioned that having the website be accessible on mobile devices are super helpful. The mobile version is horrible, lots of errors, can't find the same tabs.
- Ms. Budde agreed that getting the website accessible for people to read is a good starting point for the Committee and that members could dive into content changes later.

8. Future Agenda Items

- Ms. Colelli mentioned that we should look into making the Signs around town multi lingual
- Ms. Dietrich mentioned that we should look into commonly used forms and see if they are available in other languages. Massachusetts forms are available in other languages. The food pantry has

translated all of their forms into Spanish, which covers most of the customers. We start with Google translate, then speak to native speakers that help with translation. Especially major services that residents need to access in Town.

- Ms. Rheault mentioned discussing how to do outreach for the community.
 - Mr. White mentioned that keeping open ended questions is definitely a good idea – focus groups are dated. School board was doing surveys with thumbs up or down and open-ended questions, that's a good way to get a pulse. That'll help the Committee narrow down to specific questions for future surveys. What are the top difficulties in using the website, things that target new residents – we can then focus on emerging demographics as well.
 - Ms. Budde asked what the original questions were from the original survey. Ms. Dietrich mentioned that the original survey is on the website. The questions were specific to the community, demographic information, some of it was specific to whether residents had a positive or negative experience with life in Town. The Committee asked the same open-ended question to all the groups, and everyone said they don't know whom they need to talk to in order to get answers for questions they have. That was surprising even to the Town. This is a huge gap that we need to overcome. It's hard to learn about Town services through osmosis, you have to know the right people or where to look. So we are trying to bridge that gap and it's proven to be difficult.
 - Ms. Holmgren mentioned that she doesn't own a car or drive and her mom doesn't know how to drive – if there is a senior resident, not fluent in English and can't get around, then how do they access the necessary information or get around? The Town has an influx of new residents, resulting in a demographic change.
 - Ms. Dietrich mentioned that transportation is a huge barrier that has come up. Ms. Holmgren explained that this barrier keeps her from volunteering around Town as well. She noted that everyone has blind spots, when you're an English speaker and have resources, then people tend not to notice when others are struggling.
 - Mr. White mentioned that if we are talking about new efforts, administrators at schools are first line of resources, so what resources are we giving them? Hotspots where we can make things more accessible. Partnering with Town offices, churches, community spaces, might be helpful. Effort to build a database previously – might want to think about that again.
 - Ms. Budde mentioned similar accessibility issues with lack of sidewalks. Unsafe for kids waiting for school buses on Holliston street, Lovering, Village street, etc. Poor visibility for cross walks.
 - Ms. Holmgren mentioned that it's important to think of blind spots and be more considerate. Such as walkability for kids getting to school bus stops – it is evident that accessibility was not a primary consideration when bus stop routes were decided. She expressed that she was very excited by the formation of this committee for that very reason, and that the Committee had the potential to improve accessibility around Town. Although she acknowledged that this is not easy to do, training can help everyone be more mindful and empathetic.
 - Ms. Dietrich mentioned that these issues came up during the master plan, along with all the things we discussed today. Ms. Budde mentioned that she hopes we get a wider reach with our surveys.
 - Mr. White mentioned that one of the challenges from the school equity committee was that since the town is predominantly white and English speaking, it's difficult to get the minority to speak up. The voices in the margin is going to get wiped out by the majority. We need to apply more weight to the minority voices. Mr. White asked the Committee to think about how we can get that buy in from residents that need these services.
9. Future Meeting Schedule: The Committee meets first Monday of every month – the next meeting will be on November 6, 2023, at 7pm, in the same Conference room at the Medway Public Library.
10. Motion to adjourn by Ms. Dietrich, seconded by Mr. Kerls, Approved 6-0.