

**York Committee to Combat Racism and Bias Minutes**  
**PD Training Room**  
**December 11, 2024, 5pm EST**

**In attendance:** John Ranco, Anne Bancroft, Victoria Simon, Archie Jones, Catherine Bonner

Guests: Peter Joseph (York Town Manager), Kathryn LaGasse (Assistant Town Manager and HR Director), Kendra Amaral (Kittery Town Manager) and Bruce Mallory (Kittery DEI Co-Chair)

**Land acknowledgement:** (examples of possibilities for use by the York Select Board)

We acknowledge that we are on the traditional land of the Wabanaki Federation, who have stewarded this land for generations. We pay our respects to their elders, past and present, and recognize their ongoing connection to this land.

- National Environmental Education Foundation

We gratefully acknowledge the Native Peoples on whose ancestral homelands we gather, as well as the diverse and vibrant Native communities who make their home here today.

- NMAI Land Acknowledgment (National Museum of the American Indian)

The University of Maine recognizes that it is located on Marsh Island in the homeland of the Penobscot Nation, where issues of water and territorial rights, and encroachment upon sacred sites, are ongoing. Penobscot homeland is connected to the other Wabanaki Tribal Nations — the Passamaquoddy, Maliseet, and Mi'kmaq — through kinship, alliances and diplomacy.

- University of Maine Land Acknowledgement, crafted in relationship

**ACTION ITEM:** Victoria will reach out to

[Indigenous New Hampshire Collaborative Collective – Public Education & Social Activism](#)

Denise Pouliot [tigerly@tds.net](mailto:tigerly@tds.net)

– native group in Seacoast area – to be in conversation to develop a statement.

Note: In Kittery, the Tribal flag will hang with American flag.

**Review minutes from November**      approved

**New business**      **5:00-6:00**

The bulk of our meeting was a conversation with Kittery DEI Team members: – to share and clarify how their participation is impacting the town’s commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion.

#### **NOTES:**

Most interested in how Kittery DEI is organized – what are the benefits:

- Started as a Council initiative – Ad Hoc committee – start a conversation about how Kittery is welcoming to diverse populations. Do people have access to being a part of Kittery?
- Reps from multiple committees – housing/climate action/school/council/library/community center/planning board/- all working on policies and programs are part of the conversation – at-large members; first thing was a review of the Comp Plan – working on education opportunities – bringing more members of Kittery together . . .
- Event at Community Center with police departments, school districts, to learn about hate activity and about ways to respond. How do you notify law enforcement? Free speech issues?
- Student representation Civil Rights Team are members.
- Kittery tends to be very action oriented (because Kendra is) – updated web-site to be accessible for reading and hearing disabilities; playground modifications – more resilient surfaces, etc.; celebration calendar – town hall/library collaborate to celebrate . . .
- Working with amateur historian who changed July 4<sup>th</sup> to include letter requesting freedom (Prince Whipple) - - (educational mission – untold histories)
- Meet Once/month department heads **always** come. How has that affected the DEI success . . . how do members of the community “see themselves” in the environments – making the work “day to day” in the various town work. Another dimension is attending to visitors – what are their experiences?
- On the horizon – the ways in which PD and community support folks who feel threatened by upcoming immigration threats and LGBTQ – how can Kittery make sure those folks feel safe, understood, seen and respected.
- Pushback? (most from social media) Anonymous letters re flag – multi-email exchange about the library doing Pride crafts – Town Manager have her back –
- IN order to get more input – consulting firm (Aina) has interviewed @ 30 folks and now focus groups – asking what do they see as strengths of Kittery, what are the challenges; what could the town do in the future to be more welcoming . . . will have a draft in early February –
- Town Council – institutionalize the work in town policies and procedures –

- Changing the name of the Committee – strings tied to funding – what could it be renamed? 2 points of view – “brave and belligerent” v. “lightning rod” – does it need more strategic thinking? Ongoing conversation –
- The Sentinel who still like hard copy – e-alert program – two community FB/Instagram/channel 22 bulletin/flyering/ -
- There is a Kittery Communications Director – important role
- Departments do their own training – have not done organization wide training yet – staff training will be in the report.

Overall **Big wins:** Kittery is at the operation level – taking the conversations into the decisions. Developing programming where these priorities are embedded. Language in the Comprehensive Plan that will reflect the observations – very concrete steps. Housing and zoning ordinances support DEI – a shift is happening. Portsmouth is active about this. Planning Board member has learned about “protecting the character” of the community – recognizing the “coding” involved in our language.

Operationally, where do you see seasonal workforce living – is it a housing issue? Big issue in Kittery, as well – gather in the spring to talk about housing options . . .

Overall **Big challenges?** Communication and outreach. Baby steps – having a table at the farmer’s market; at the Block Party – awareness; ready to manage pushback – committee itself representative of the work.

#### **Review actions, follow up, and outstanding items from previous meetings**

- Committee Recruitment – on hold while considering changes to structure
- Spreadsheet/repository of trainings across the government
- Invitations for 2025 meetings:
  - York HS Civil Rights Team - Extend invitation
  - Re: accessibility
- January 8 – ZOOM Meeting <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84967058050>