

Leesburg Diversity Commission
April 14, 2021
Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes

Location: Leesburg Town Hall, Lower Level Conference Room 1

Commissioners Present: Devon Carter (via Webex), Dana Kunzelman (via Webex), Vanessa Maddox (via Webex), Jasmin Martinez-Harris, Linda McCray, Jean-Joseph Poisson (via Webex), Mary Randolph

Commissioners Absent: None

Others Present: Chief Greg Brown, Leesburg Police (via Webex)
Betsy Arnett, Public Information Officer
Officer Michael Drogin, Leesburg Police (via Webex)

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m.

Approval of Agenda:

- The agenda was unanimously approved on a motion by Vice Chair Poisson, seconded by Commissioner Kunzelman.

Approval of Minutes

- The minutes of the March 10, 2021 regular meeting were approved unanimously as presented, on a motion by Commissioner Randolph, seconded by Commissioner Kunzelman.

Petitioners

- None

Commissioner Comments

- **Commissioner Carter** said that he is excited about the upcoming Flower & Garden Festival and looking forward implementing new initiatives.
- **Commissioner Kunzelman** is also looking forward to launching the new social media effort this weekend. She also wants to discuss outreach efforts to make everyone feel welcome and included in Leesburg.
- **Vice Chair Poisson** noted that a local family had brought an October 2020 article in the Washington Post regarding a May 2019 traffic stop in Leesburg to his attention. He stated that it is his hope that the Diversity Commission would find a way to get fully

involved in pushing for positive change.

- **Commissioner Maddox** brought to the commission's attention a current situation involving a small subset of Loudoun residents who are upset with Loudoun County Public Schools' plans to implement equity, civil rights, or social justice education efforts. These people have been harassing members of the Anti-Racist Moms group, of which Commissioner Maddox is a member. She urged the commission to widen the focus beyond the Town of Leesburg and partner with similar organizations to come up with an actionable plan to combat this sort of behavior.
- **Commissioner Martinez-Harris** said that she has also been the recipient of harassment after commenting on an online news article regarding condemnation of white supremacy. She expressed concern that the people who are doing this harassment are our neighbors and noted that there is a systemic problem which needs to be addressed.
- **Commissioner Randolph** expressed her concern and sympathy to Commissioners Maddox and Martinez-Harris, saying it's mind-boggling and sad that this is happening.

Staff Reports

- Ms. Arnett advised that staff from the Planning & Zoning Department will be at the May meeting to discuss the draft Town Plan and get the commission's feedback. She urged commissioners to review the plan in preparation for the discussion. She will send the link, and will be happy to mail anyone who wants one a hard copy.
- Officer Drogin, in response to Vice Chair Poisson's comments, read a statement that the LPD prepared and delivered to the media in October 2020 in response to the article.

Chair Comments

- Chair McCray thanked the commissioners for their comments and noted that while racism and harassment have always existed, it is more visible today due to social media. She asked that commissioners bring ideas to the next meeting on ways that the Diversity Commission can move the ball forward on these issues.

Chief Brown joined the meeting via Webex at this point.

Chief of Police Comments

- Chief Brown noted that he has worked on both sides of law enforcement. He acknowledged that policing at the national level right now has failed to address certain issues when it comes to hiring, training, and accountability, and that it will take time to change a culture that has been in place for decades. At the local level, he personally reviews every complaint made against the Leesburg Police. He is open to the commission's ideas and encouraged them to reach out to him directly. He also advised that incidents of harassment be reported immediately.

New Business

- **Diversity Consortium.** Commissioner Maddox asked that this item be deferred to the next meeting.

Old Business

- **Flower & Garden Festival**

Chair McCray noted that she had sent the booth schedule out and thanked everyone for volunteering. Ms. Arnett will print 200 copies of the demographics graphic designed by Commissioner Kunzelman for handouts and a poster-sized version.

- **Changing the Commission Name:** After some discussion, Commissioner Carter made a motion to recommend to the Town Council that the commission's name be changed to the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Commission. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Kunzelman.

The motion failed on a 3-3-1 vote, with Vice Chair Poisson abstaining.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 8:29 p.m.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, April 14, 2021 at 7 p.m.