



Diversity Task Group

Date: Monday, December 9, 2019
Time: 6:45-9:00pm
Location: Jefferson Cutter House, 611 Massachusetts Ave, Lower Level

Minutes

Attendance: Katell Guellec, Chris DiMeo, Barbara Thornton, Jane Lynch, Michaiah Healy, Maren Larken, Kelly Lynema, Brooks Harrelson, Jo Ann Preston, Lynette Culverhouse, Rajeev Soneja, Louise Bopkin (by phone), Mona Mandel, Robin Gottlieb

1. Introductions: *Rajeev was chosen for time-keeper, Michaiah was chosen to keep the minutes*
 - a. Name and ice-breaker: What quality do you most value in a friend? (15 minutes). *"You spot it. You got it."*
2. Approval of November minutes (2 minutes)
Amendment of name from Superintendents District Advisory Group to the Superintendents Diversity Advisory Committee
3. Update from Maren (10 minutes)
<https://arlingtonmadtg.org/2019/12/11/unmarked-graves-project/>

As part of her internship she is conducting a culminating project on the unmarked grave in the old burial ground behind First Parish Church. In a progressive community as Arlington, it is easy to ignore the slavery that took place here. But this project is a striking reminder.

Medford students took on a similar project, dedicating a plaque to enslaved people buried in a mass grave.

Enslaved people were seen as property so it is difficult to find death certificates and the identity of people enslaved. Men were often freed, so most likely the graves were of women and children.

Maren has looked at the census leading up the revolutionary war and at the known enslaved people living in Menotomy.

https://www.wbur.org/news/2019/06/09/salem-street-burying-ground-unmarked-graves-slavery-medford-history_
<https://arlingtonhistorical.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Buried-Secrets.pdf>
<https://www.wbur.org/radioboston/2018/12/11/metfern-cemetery-fernald-metropolitan-state-hospital>

It was suggested that Maren puts the research she has done on the DTG blog and that she set up a go fund me campaign to ceremonialize the lives in the unmarked grave. First Parish has an endowment for enslaved people. Diane Turress at FP and Richard Duffy, a local historian were also mentioned as people to partner with.

4. Town Updates

- a. Running for town government (5 minutes)--
Special thanks to Jordan Weinstein for culling this information and bringing it to the attention of DTG.

Each of the 21 precincts in Arlington have 4 Town Meeting seats opening in 2020. There are also two Select Board seats up for grabs, one Board of Assessors seat, one Town Clerk seat, and three School Committee seats opening. All this makes 2020 a great time to get involved in local politics.

*It is quite easy to run for any of these offices: Town Meeting only requires 10 signatures of registered voters in your precinct. The other offices only require 50 signatures from registered voters regardless of where they live in Arlington. Then, to get elected all you need to do is get your friends and family to show up and vote for you on Sat. April 4, 2020. Town Meeting is really an easy lift: meetings begin April 27, 2020 and run only for 4-6 weeks, meeting Mon & Wed eves from 8-11pm. **Nomination papers need to be picked up by Feb. 10 and returned by Feb. 18, 2020 for all offices.***

This link will give you most of the information you will need to run for Town Meeting or any other office.

https://docs.google.com/document/d/10777_bblpisNH_IHgPDJuXullz_MJaBkcNKz6rFiPU5k/edit?usp=sharing

- b. Town-wide housing forum: Does DTG want to co-sponsor? (15 minutes)

Barbara Thornton introduced herself as being in the prenatal stage of becoming a task group under Envision Arlington. She was trained as a city planner. She recommends reading "The Color of Law" to understand zoning. Barbara is proposing 3 Community Education Forums in 2020:

- *Forum 1- Is there a housing problem in Arlington ? speaker Richard Rothsetin.*
- *Forum 2-Arlington and "Redlining", What's the Story?- understanding zoning and the creation of districts to protect the wealthy and restrict bank loans.*

- *Forum 3-Housing Developer: Devil or Angel?- understanding federal loans, budget, risks, problems, and opportunities.*

In Arlington there are no plans to amend the zoning, but if you are interested in helping our community discuss our values, and are interested in helping to develop these forums, please email Barbara Thornton. She is working with other groups like Sustainable Arlington and other informal groups.

5. Arlington Fights Racism Update (20 minutes)

a. Creating Safe Community November 17 event with VISIONS

This event was a response to the APD lieutenants articles, and as a result a petition was created, the petition was approved by DTG, it was presented to the Selectboard with over 1,000 signatures. Town Manager reached out, a community Forum was put together by Arlington Fights Racism and DTG. It was held at First Parish for effected peoples who felt discrimination in town and by leadership. The forum was financially supported through APD. Rick Pinderhughes was hired from Visions Inc to be the facilitator of the discussion. Joe Curro was present as a representative of the Selectboard, 4-5 members of the AHRC were also participants. It was well attended. The group was separated into 4 different groups. It was a positive event. Comments are being processed, de-individualized and categorized.

- *Arlington Fights Racism group (AFR) began as a result of the failure to reach out to harmed communities. The forum was a great model for what we want to happen within town to create a safer community. Plans for another forum in either late February/March are being discussed.*
- *AFR went from being accused as being divisive to then being thanked publically by the Selectboard and leadership and wanting to be in communication. It's been a boatload of work to shift the culture of this town.*

b. Next steps

- *In the process of confronting C4RJ.-A strong letter was written to C4RJ outlining the damage done in our community-
<https://www.arlingtonfightsracism.com/2019/12/05/drax-letter-to-communities-for-restorative-justice/>*
- *The model that Visions created was good. Yet even within one of the working groups, there was still a desire to protect the police. That was surprising.*
- *C4RJ has been positive with their work with single victims, but they've come off track as they've widened their scope to communities affected.*
- *We should get whoever holds the purse to look into and talking to C4RJ about the ongoing damage that has been done to the community by their process.*
- *Folks can write Letters to the Editor in the Advocate (1 per person/month)*
- *Many people of color aren't ready to have the conversation.*

6. School Updates (25 minutes)

- a. Rod MacNeal coming to DTG Jan 13: How do we want to structure that meeting? Questions we have?
- What are Mr. MacNeal's diversity initiatives and how can DTG/DIGS engage?
 - What are some of the issues that have come out of analyzing the MCAS data of AA students in APS are doing lower than the state average of every other student?
 - What are schools doing to engage parents?
 - Students are separated into two different math tracks in 8th grade. It's really difficult to elevate to get into the upper track. *How can that be effected?*
 - Teachers have been charged with reading *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain* as part of their professional development. How does that affect the teaching and prep of the class for MCAS? -different teaching methods on test preparation and test bias.
 - Has there been any data collected about African American students/families that have left APS?

b. School Committee to consider holiday schedule

We currently have 40 approved religious holidays. The School committee is considering whether to replace or remove 3 religious holidays- Good Friday, Rosh Hashanah, and Yom Kippur. The Committee wants community feedback. The Jewish community feels singled out due to all the racial and religious attacks they've recently experienced as a community in Arlington.

c. Brooks: District AEF Grant!!

Brooks looked into what the bullying curriculum was in APS and was told it's 1 presentation a year, with the message of "stand up to bullies". A message that is problematic. Brooks spoke to students at a Rainbow event about Active Bystanding Training to see if it would be of interest as an activity in their after school clubs. They said YES! Brooks got a meeting with Sarah Burd- Director of Social Emotional Learning, Mr. MacNeal- Assistant Superintendent of APS, and Cindy Bouvier Director of Wellness , and got an Arlington Education Foundation grant to have Active Bystanding Training be part of ALL the afterschool club activities in AHS and OMS. They want this to become a sustainable program and are developing a mentorship structure (adult + HS, HS + MS). The plan is to have 6-12 trainers every 2 years, and have folks regularly being engaged with the Train the Trainer program. Quabbin has now developed an elementary version of the training. And there are plans to train parents from the DIGs. WE ARE SO PROUD OF YOUR VISION, PLANNING, & PERSEVERANCE BROOKS!

Maren and Brooks will connect about doing a diversity related survey for all the after school clubs. And getting Best Buddies Peer Leadership started in OMS.

They'd like to have folks engaging with this type of curriculum instead of after school/in-home suspensions. DIGs in OMS are taking this project on.

7. Goals for the year- update from small committee (10 minutes)
A small group met to work on how to set goals for the year. Since DTG is an open meeting and open to the public, the group changes each meeting. What would make us feel successful at the end of the year? What would make each meeting feel successful? We are at a pivotal stage in Arlington, where we need to have clarity about our goals and what we stand for. DTG has had one focus for each year to bring awareness around issues of diversity. We need to decide if we want to set goals for DTG. Repeated areas in our work have been:
- *government/civic partnerships,*
 - *community engagement,*
 - *creation of Town Warrants,*
 - *participation in community events,*
 - *and supporting DIGS.*

Could we have these as ongoing goals with one overarching theme each year?

If people come to DTG with an idea, we can support that work if it falls in line with the work we do.

We used to send out minutes to about 60 faith organizations and then organized joint events with other groups. FIND that email list!!

Proposal: DTG votes on IMMIGRATION or other overarching theme for 2020. People take on related tasks. Have ongoing issues to discuss that we are focused on- DIGS, Community events, Town Warrants, Government Civic Partnerships, Community Engagement.

8. New business
Upcoming Events: DTG's will meet 2nd Mondays of the month in 2020
January 13, February 10, March 9, April 13, May 11, June 8
School Committee meeting to discuss school holidays.

Upcoming Meetings

DTG, Jefferson Cutter House Gallery, lower level, 6:45pm
Monday: January 13th