

Town of Needham
Select Board
Minutes for Tuesday, July 21, 2020
By Zoom Video Conference
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86020590411>

5:45 p.m. Informal Meeting with Citizens: No Activity.

6:00 p.m. Call to Order:

A meeting of the Select Board was convened by Chair Maurice P. Handel. Those participating were Matthew D. Borrelli, Marianne B. Cooley, Daniel P. Matthews, John A. Bulian, and Town Manager Kate Fitzpatrick. Town staff participating were Dave Davison, Assistant Town Manager/Finance, Katie King, Assistant Town Manager/Operations, Cindi Roy Gonzales, Public Information Officer, and Sandy Cincotta, Support Services Manager. Recording Secretary Mary Hunt recorded the meeting remotely.

Mr. Handel announced this open meeting is being conducted remotely consistent with Governor Baker's Executive Order of March 12, 2020 due to the current state of emergency from the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus. He noted all public gatherings have been suspended as advised and directed by the Commonwealth. And, as such, suspending the requirement of the open meeting law to have all meetings in a public, accessible, physical location while encouraging and allowing members of all public bodies to participate remotely. Mr. Handel stated tonight's meeting will include public comment and that the Needham Select Board and all attendees are convening by Zoom, as posted on the Town's website identifying how the public may join. He said all supporting documents used at this meeting are available on the Town's website www.needhamma.gov.

6:02 p.m. Public Hearing - Eversource Energy Grant of Location: 274 Manning Street
Maureen Carroll, Eversource Energy Representative appeared before the Board requesting permission to install approximately 14 feet of conduit in Manning Street, Needham.

Ms. Fitzpatrick said all paperwork is in order.

Mr. Handel said a resident at 268 Manning Street asked how drainage will be addressed.

Ms. Carroll said work will commence once approval is received from the Select Board and the abutter will be contacted to assure the resident that her concerns will be addressed.

Ms. Fitzpatrick said a question was received (via Zoom chat) asking if Eversource Energy will be repaving the street/sidewalk?

Ms. Carroll said digging and repaving by Eversource Energy will take place in the public way and that the Town decides the amount of paving it wants Eversource Energy to do.

Motion by Mr. Bulian that the Select Board approve and sign a petition from Eversource Energy to install approximately 14 feet of conduit in Manning Street. This work is necessary to provide underground electric service to 274 Manning Street, Needham.

Second: Mr. Borrelli. Unanimously approved 5-0 by roll call vote.

6:06 p.m. Public Hearing - Comcast of Needham, Inc. Grant of Location: 1000 Highland Avenue
Dave Flewelling, Comcast Representative appeared before the Board requesting permission to install conduit starting at Utility Pole No. 7 on Morton Street excavating to place (1) 3” PVC Conduit 322’ +/- to number 1000 Highland Avenue. This work is necessary for new underground service to 1000 Highland Avenue.

Ms. Fitzpatrick indicated all paperwork is in order.

Mr. Handel invited public comment. No comments were heard.

Motion by Mr. Borrelli that the Select Board approve and sign a petition from Comcast of Needham, Inc. to install conduit starting at Utility Pole No. 7 on Morton Street excavating to place (1) 3” PVC Conduit 322’ +/- to number 1000 Highland Avenue. This work is necessary for new underground service to 1000 Highland Avenue.

Second: Mr. Bulian. Unanimously approved 5-0 by roll call vote.

6:08 p.m. Appointments and Consent Agenda:
Motion by Mr. Bulian that the Select Board vote to approve the Appointments and Consent Agenda as presented.

APPOINTMENTS

- 1. Election Workers: See attached.**

CONSENT AGENDA

- 1. Approve minutes from June 23, 2020.**
- 2. Accept the following donations made to the Needham Park and Recreation Commission for Start of Summer Activity Bags: \$35 from Daphne Reichel; \$35 from Kamran Vollenweider; \$35 from Zoe Lucas; \$35 from Rosie Mullen; and \$900 from an anonymous donor.**
- 3. The Needham Cultural Council respectfully requests the approval of the design “Reach” by John Judge to be wrapped in vinyl on the utility box located at Kendrick Street and Third Ave in Needham. Design and location approval requested by Needham Cultural Council. Funding for the box wrap has been generously provided by Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital- Needham.**

4. **Accept a \$6,000 donation made to the Needham Health Department’s Gift of Warmth Program from the Needham Community Council.**
5. **Accept the following donations made to the Needham Community Revitalization Trust Fund: \$1000 from C. Bruce Johnstone and \$100 from Needham Farmers Market Inc.**
6. **In accordance with Section 20B of the Town Charter, and upon the recommendation of the Town Manager and the Personnel Board, adopt a classification and compensation plan (G Schedule) for fiscal year 2021.**
7. **Approve the location for early voting for the September 1, 2020 primary election and the November 3, 2020 general election as Needham Town Hall.**
8. **Accept the following donations made to Needham Youth & Family Services’ Volunteers Around Needham Program: \$50 from the Vettraino family; \$100 from the Jiang/Zhai family; and \$100 from the Lazarevich family.**
9. **Water and Sewer Abatement Order #1293.**
10. **Approve Revision of the Town Manager Evaluation Policy to reflect change to “Select Board.”**

Second: Mr. Borrelli. Unanimously approved 5-0 by roll call vote.

6:09 p.m.

Unite Against Racism Initiative Listening Session (Open to Public):

Mr. Handel said tonight’s discussion is the initial step for the Town in developing appropriate and effective responses to any policies or public actions resulting in discrimination or abuse affecting black people and other people of color who live, attend school, or work in Needham, including people passing through the community. He said his opening remarks are his and that other Board members will speak after hearing from the public. He said he and the Board believes Needham aspires to be a diverse and welcoming community, and that there continue to be both public and private efforts to achieving the goal. He said “obviously, there is more to be done.”

Mr. Handel acknowledged the news story published last night detailing an alleged incident occurring in Needham on January 25, 2020. He said given current tensions and heightened awareness around issues of race, discrimination, and policing, it is imperative everyone understands the facts before reaching any conclusions. He said Needham takes all allegations in the report seriously and has begun a thorough investigation to determine the truth and will provide additional details of the investigation as they become available. He corrected an error in a letter sent yesterday, saying the Police Chief, John Schlitter was not on the scene of the alleged incident. Mr. Handel said the report will be released on Needham’s website tomorrow, July 22, 2020.

Mr. Handel said the deaths of black Americans by white police officers around the country is a tragedy we struggle to comprehend, we are horrified by those events, and we certainly do not want similar events to happen in Needham. He said the men and women of the Needham Police Department work hard each and every day to protect our community. He said if Needham police officers act in ways contrary

to the high standards of the department, they will be held accountable. Mr. Handel said at the same time it is also important that we support those that may be asked to put their lives on the line to protect and serve everyone.

Mr. Handel said the Select Board and Town Manager will have an opportunity to speak after members of the public. He asked that public comment be brief, noting additional written testimony may be submitted to the Select Board via otm@needhamma.gov. He said the Board realizes some people do not wish to share their personal experiences in a public forum, noting tonight's session is just one way the Select Board can better understand how people experience racism. He invited the public to share their thoughts and experiences with the Select Board by email or by phone.

Mr. Handel invited public comment beginning with people who indicated they wished to speak in advance of the meeting, then will open discussion up to other people who can raise their hands in the participant's tab at the bottom of the Zoom screen. He asked speakers to refrain from calling out people by name.

Ms. Fitzpatrick thanked the public for their participation in this session. She said in light of global events and heightened awareness of systemic racism and injustice, it is important that Needham take the time to identify ways to improve policies, practices, and to start thinking how the Town can insure that Needham is truly an anti-racist community. She said the conversations are not taken lightly, and that everyone brings a unique experience and emotion to the table. Ms. Fitzpatrick recommends the Board embark on the "Unite Against Racism" initiative and that this is the first session of ongoing work. She said before coming up with solutions, we must understand the problems and challenges that exist in the community. Ms. Fitzpatrick recognized the meeting format is not the most appropriate for everyone who wants to share experiences, noting recommendations will be made to the Board as to how communications can be improved. She said many residents have asked about Town policies and procedures around the issue, noting the Needham's Unite Against Racism initiative webpage contains many questions and answers. She noted the many organizations in Needham that exist or have been newly created who are working on the issue of equality, saying she looks forward to working with all the groups.

Mr. Handel invited public comment starting with people who indicated, prior to the meeting, that they wished to speak.

David Summergrad, 62 Green Street, Needham Diversity Initiative member said courage and trust are required for people to speak during this session, especially if they feel vulnerable or have experienced bias or trauma in Needham. He said tonight is a critical moment in establishing safety and trust for people to come forward to speak about their lived experiences. Mr. Summergrad spoke about the "iceberg theory," noting the personal stories shared tonight represent a tiny fraction of incidents that have occurred in town and in schools. He quoted Beverly Daniel

Tatum, saying racism exists in Needham and elsewhere, and we need to listen and learn in order to grapple with what has occurred and continues to occur. Mr. Summergrad said the stories cannot be dismissed or be casually treated, noting the test for Needham will be to see how the Town reacts to the difficult stories heard tonight and in the future. He said he is hopeful in the capacity of the community to be transparent, face imperfections, and create substantive change. He noted Needham can be a leader against racism.

Ross Donald, 25 Chambers Street said he lives among people of many colors, but more interesting are the different cultures including Chinese American, Ukrainian Russian American, Trinidadian Americans, and Scottish American. He said the residents of subsidized housing are poor, older, sometimes sick or unhealthy, or otherwise challenged. He said many people do not have easy access to a car. Mr. Donald said most of his neighbors are grateful for the housing, help, and support they receive. He noted a stigma can be attached, as many are bewildered as to how they got there, what they have lost along the way, and their changing future prospects. He spoke about the stress people feel, people who look to their government, and those who are receiving services who feel stigmatized, disengaged, left out, and left behind. He commented on resentment, discrimination, social tension, and a variety of animosities that erupt in unexpected ways. He commented on the racial resentment and animosity as it relates to the issue of gardening at the housing complex. Mr. Donald said the opportunity to bring people together with common interests was bungled, noting he would like to see gardens for all, especially in light of the pandemic. He applauded the anti-discrimination task force and other social groups responding to the challenges of discrimination in the past.

Rebecca Young, 1072 Highland Avenue, Needham Diversity Initiative member and supporter of the Human Rights Committee said Needham must be a town united against racism and tonight is an important first step. She said she is worried for her black and brown friends and neighbors, as they are tired of having to share their painful stories in the midst of a deeply disturbing time in our country. Ms. Young commented on the lack of representation in Town leadership and schools, and that she is deeply disturbed about the rising and overt racist acts happening in the country and community. She noted the attention is due to the painful realities of racism within ourselves, in the town, and within the systems. Ms. Young relayed an incident some may not have heard of involving a 55-year old male Needham resident occurring in Newton in early July in which the unnamed man shouted racist remarks at a group of teens and children protesting for Black Lives Matter outside Newton City Hall. She said the man's actions of revving his car engine and driving aggressively could have endangered protesters. She said she is ashamed the legal system protects the man's identity and is disturbed by these kinds of incidents where black lives are not valued. She said these actions must be condemned by our leadership and the people with these views and behaviors must not be protected. Ms. Young said people must ask themselves why they have not heard of this incident, where the man was charged, but never named, and not arrested. Ms.

Young concluded she is committed to Needham being an inclusive community for everyone. She said some people are leaving the Town and schools because Needham is not doing its work fast enough. She said policies and procedures must be reviewed, and that those at the table must not only give “lip service” to Unite Against Racism, but to take action. Ms. Young said she looks forward to all the next steps, saying Needham’s leaders are not alone in the work, but must help lead the Town.

Jennifer Howard-Schroder, 65 Mount Vernon Avenue spoke about a 2017 meeting of the Needham Human Rights Committee held at Town Hall, where parents explained how their children and families were being impacted by the class placement practices employed in the Needham middle school. She said the practice essentially used a child’s perceived race as a primary factor in creating school clusters. Ms. Howard-Schroder said the bravery of the parents led to a district-wide equity audit identifying strengths and weaknesses in the school system. She said a vast, coordinated effort began, not only to improve district efforts to engage families of color within its community, but also to ignite a willingness to acknowledge when things aren’t going right, regardless of intention. She said she is grateful to the families who stepped forward to make the schools better for her three white children, when it would have probably been less costly to them personally to just pack up and leave Needham. She said she is also grateful to the families as their stories revealed to her a major “blind spot” she had personally about race equity in the community. Ms. Howard-Schroder said she is ashamed to admit that prior to hearing the accounts about class placement and process, she had three children go through middle school without even once considering why there were not more children of color in their clusters. She said it never occurred to her to question or second guess how the clusters were assembled, assuming the administration had her children’s best interest in mind. She said because her children are white, in a majority white school district, in a world where whiteness is the default of many social institutions, she was never forced to ask herself whether her children were experiencing anything that could disadvantage them in the long run. She said this is white privilege and an example of white supremacy that exists in Needham, more subtle than racist slurs or swastikas painted on a bathroom wall, but with no less impact on our ability to be a truly inclusive and equitable community. Ms. Howard-Schroder commented on the efforts of “Lived Experiences,” where stories are being collected by community members from friends and neighbors who have experienced racism in Needham. She said coming forward to share their experiences comes with great personal risk, but they do so in order to move us all forward. She said the community owes it to them, not only to listen, but to start from a place of believing in gratitude. Ms. Howard-Schroder said as an advisory committee to the Select Board, the Needham Human Rights Committee recommends four ideas be considered as part of Needham’s “Unite Against Racism” initiative: (1) fast track the launch event previously scheduled for March 2020, to bring leaders from the community together to identify incidents of bias and hate and determine appropriate responses aimed at building sustaining community resilience (2) empower the Needham Human Rights Committee to be a

central, widely recognized Town body, to serve as a repository for reports of hate and bias against those who work and live in Needham with the goal of establishing a transparent process for such reports to be heard, validated, and acted upon, (3) consider a town equity audit similar to the one conducted by the Needham Public Schools (4) reach out to organizers of the “Lived Experiences” project for opportunities to listen and learn, and to solicit other ways to create safe spaces for Needhamites to talk candidly about what is happening in Town. She urged the Select Board to host regular, recurring, smaller, intimate meetings offering opportunities for discussion, so the community begins to embrace difficult conversations which are as important as town traffic, zoning, and business development.

Amy Baron, 33 Virginia Road read a statement on behalf of a friend and Metco parent whose child has been with her son since kindergarten, and now both are rising juniors at Needham High School: “While I’m reflecting during our turbulent time, I’ve chosen to center my attention on the positive side. Moving forward, my contribution to the Unite Against Racism initiative is to educate our children and educate our friends. After George Floyd’s murder, I had an anxiety attack. Even while I’m writing this, I’m crying. I want to thank a Needham resident parent for reaching out to me (Ms. Baron). During the month of May my son asked if he could visit his friend in Needham. As a mom of a black young man, I was very scared to send or take my son to Needham. Believe it or not, I was not afraid of my son getting Covid, but I was very afraid of him being mistreated. I hid my fear and took him. When we got to my son’s friend’s house, all the fear melted away. To my surprise, in a window on the house was a sign that read ‘Racism is Taught.’ That sign alone decreased my anxiety and gives me hope. That is why I strongly believe that we as parents need to get the courage to raise the new generation free of the ignorance of racism.”

Amelia Klein, 23 MacIntosh Avenue, member of the Human Rights Committee said the committee can play a strategic role in reaching out to the community on issues of racial justice. She said the committee is a resource and refuge for Town residents who choose to tell their stories about racial injustice. Ms. Klein commented the committee serves as a “buffer zone” and intermediary between town leaders and residents. She said the strengths of the committee are essential in helping Needham become a welcoming and inclusive community. She noted members of the committee have strong community connections, closely affiliated with numerous organizations, groups, and individuals including the Needham Public Schools, clergy associations, Needham Diversity Initiative, parent organizations, Housing Authority, Council on Aging, to name a few. Ms. Klein said members know the pulse of the community and many groups inform the committee on issues and seek support and guidance in addressing human right’s issues. She said members are human right’s activists who are informed and committed, approaching their work with an apolitical perspective, focusing on universal human rights. She noted the diversity of members and the Town’s encouragement to seek members (appointed by the Select Board) from diverse

backgrounds to serve on the committee. Ms. Klein spoke about critical actions initiated in the community to address human right's issues, including supporting parents of color which culminated in an equity report. She said the committee collaborates with Town officials, school leadership, and Housing Authority officials. Ms. Klein said as the Town moves forward on this important initiative, connecting with members of the community who experience racial injustice is critical. She concluded saying she stands in solidarity with others committed to helping Needham become a welcoming and inclusive community. She suggested the Town display Black Lives Matter, Hate Has No Home Here, Needham Pride, and other relevant signs on the Town Common.

Mr. Handel commented Denise Garlick, State Representative is attending the Zoom session.

Dr. Nichole Argo Ben Itzhak introduced the "Lived Experiences" project in hopes it can complement efforts already begun. She said "Lived Experiences" is a data collection initiative created to document the range and depth of local experiences with racism and identity-based prejudice. She spoke about the survey questionnaire, developed by a group of diverse Needham residents with expertise in psychology, coaching, behavioral economics, social work, and anthropology. She said the goal of the project was to create a trustworthy and anonymous platform where people could feel safe writing about their experiences and do so in their own time and on their own terms. She said the goal of the project is to inform public discussion, as well as school and Town policy as it relates to diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism. She said she believes data will suggest patterns regarding who is targeted in Needham, as well as how and where. She said the data will provide insight into ways in which Needham can become more inclusive. Dr. Argo Ben Itzhak said the plan is to make data results of the survey public quarterly or trimester basis over the next year. Dr. Argo Ben Itzhak commented on the new survey and the first official committee meeting held last night, saying outreach has just begun. She noted 20 stories have been received, saying she believes there are many more stories within the community. She described several stories from black, Jewish, east Asian, South Asian individuals, those involving a school authority figure, students, and incidents occurring at stores, restaurants, or with public officials, police, residents, or neighbors. Dr. Argo Ben Itzhak said stories range from micro aggression to physical abuse and include forms of procedural and programmatic bias. She gave examples of micro aggression, written or verbal aggressions, and racist slurs, swastika's, and physical and potential physical harm. She spoke about institutional processes including school enrollment or law enforcement. Dr. Argo Ben Itzhak quoted a high school student who expressed difficulty speaking up for fear of being called a race-baiting black person said "Needless to say, growing up as a minority in Needham is not easy. I feel like I did not get the privilege to experience what it was like to be brought up and educated in an affluent community. Instead, I was more of an outsider observing, and rarely did anyone let me forget it." She concluded the stories of the "Lived Experiences" project already show a lived universe of experiences beginning to emerge, varying by the type of

mistreatment and harm, who is targeted, who is targeting, and the identity basis upon which the mistreatment is happening. Dr. Argo Ben Itzhak said there is more information from the stories to be shared including how the experiences have made people feel, how it changed them, what they wished would have happened, and what type of changes they would like to see in Needham. She said she looks forward to sharing data with a much larger response number in September and welcomed any additional outreach efforts and circulation of the link to the survey. Ms. Fitzpatrick said the survey link and other information will be available on the Unite Against Racism webpage on the Town's website.

Natasha Espada, 1681 Central Avenue, Permanent Public Building Committee member, previous Town Meeting Member, and Green Communities Committee member said the listening session is very important and thanked the Select Board for the opportunity to speak. Ms. Espada said the conversation is as uncomfortable for her as it is for you. She said most people who have had these experiences are putting themselves and their families at risk when they speak about them. Ms. Espada said she is Puerto Rican, an architect, and founding principal of Studio Enee Architect, a woman and minority owned architectural firm in Needham. She said she is the 2020 president of the Boston Society of Architects and first Latina president of the BSA. She said since 2018 she has been co-chair of the Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Harassment Task Force for the BSA, working in a field where women are 50/50 in architecture schools, but only 17% of registered architects are women, and 3% are minorities. Ms. Espada said she has spoken at many meetings representing women, minorities, and black architects in the profession. Ms. Espada told the Board of her upbringing in Puerto Rico, Miami, and Japan, saying she has been exposed to many different cultures. Ms. Espada said she and her husband chose to live in Needham because of the schools and the community for raising a family. She said she has many good friends in Needham, but said Needham is a very white town. She said she is both Puerto Rican and Italian, not black, saying her son was the target of racial slur in school. She commented she is appalled knowing there are repeatedly swastika's and racial slurs in the school bathrooms. Ms. Espada said she never brought it up for fear of additional discrimination against her family. She said she told her children it is not the only time they would have to deal with it, and to stand up for themselves. Ms. Espada said aside from the vice-principal at the high school, she said she cannot remember seeing any black teachers in any of the schools, and very few minorities as teachers or in leadership. She noted even four language teachers, where there is opportunity for diversity, have not been a very diverse group. She commented on her time as a member of the Diversity Summit, where she said the group was passionate about the cause, but not very diverse. She said while there are many active Latina groups in Needham and a large group of Asians, she said she does not see them sitting on any boards or in any leadership positions representing the Town. She suggested the Board engage these groups in discussion. Ms. Espada said she only knows two black and mixed-race families in Needham, noting some of them have experienced racism in Needham. Ms. Espada said as a member of the PPBC, she works with an amazing group of colleagues who are incredibly respectful and

supportive, for which she is grateful. She said she is grateful to Jerry Wasserman and Michael Greis who sponsored her for the board position on the PPBC. She said George Kent “took her under his wing,” making her feel very included. However, she said she is the only woman, minority, and architect. She suggested the town review its policies for the formation of nominating and elected boards and committees, and their governance to make sure of the correct disciplines and diversity. Ms. Espada said for Needham to change, there must be structural changes and goals for equity, diversity, and inclusion, and consideration of diverse candidates for employment at all levels and jobs, including Town Hall and in the schools. Ms. Espada commented that when boards and committees are formed, and nominations are submitted there is representation from different groups as a possibility. She commented on equity goals in all RFP’s. While she said it does not mean to only strive to hire or elect minorities in Needham, it simply means that they have the same chance and opportunity for jobs and promotions as everyone else. She recognized that with few minorities in Needham, there may not be as big a pool of candidates for positions. In comparing the similar situation to architects at the BSA, Ms. Espada said it has been determined to actively recruit from other parts of the state or country, and to start teaching about architecture in schools. She noted the costs associated with living in Boston, suggesting Needham must have more affordable housing for the middle class. She noted Needham meets the minimum state requirements of affordable housing but continues to tear down houses to build multi-million-dollar homes. She said there must be a balance. She said the discussion about race is not about excluding whites, but about including everyone. Ms. Espada said the topic is difficult to discuss, especially for white people. She said most white people are only feeling uncomfortable now, while most minorities and black people have felt uncomfortable most of their lives. She said if Needham is to be a more diverse and inclusive community, some barriers must be dismantled that currently exclude minorities and blacks at every level of the community. She recommends the creation of a group of many voices to define barriers, set goals, and start supporting change.

Dr. Olutoyin Fayemi, 119 Barrett Street said he is no stranger being surrounded by faces that look very different from his own. He said several times a year in Needham he experiences an extremely unpleasant interaction, sometimes making him want to move out of Needham. He said he has been followed home and had the police called on him because someone didn’t believe the house, he had keys to was his, despite a neighbor saying it was his house. He said he realizes there may not be much the Town can do to improve his personal experience but spoke about how his children have been affected. He commented his son was never recommended for accelerated or advanced courses, noting if it wasn’t for their own advocacy, his education would have stalled. He stated by the end of senior year, his son was taking all AP or accelerated courses, getting A’s in most classes. He said he pulled his daughter out of Needham schools in 7th grade, due to routine interactions with people telling her she wasn’t good enough because she was bi-racial and didn’t belong. He said she is now in private school. Dr. Fayemi recommended everyone learn about the past, especially children. He said there is

no Black History Month, noting his children know nothing about slavery, the civil war, reconstruction, civil rights, or red lining etc. Dr. Fayemi said by ignoring the past we will only continue what we have been doing.

Beth Pinals, 415 South Street commented on a recent “At My Neighbor’s Table” event attended by hundreds of people. She said many people in Needham are interested in the conversation. Ms. Pinals said as a psychologist focusing on wellness, diversity, and equity, she works in Needham with teenagers. She said the “Lived Experiences” project is a very appropriate venue for people to safely share their narratives. Over the last 14 years working with teens in Needham, she said she has heard black students talk about kindergarten and first grade experiences and how their parents give them “the talk,” about their safety because of the color of their skin and that they need to be careful in some way, and that it is not a reflection of their value or worth as a person. Dr. Pinals said some students enter school fearful and confused, with their self-esteem possibly already tainted. She commented on swastika’s, graffiti, and why some students are singled out in classroom discussions to talk about slavery where they are treated as the sole representative of their race. She concurred with Ms. Espada, saying people need to learn about red lining, white flight, and history to counteract racism now. She said some students feel like they are treated as invisible with their names being mixed up, or citizen’s and faculty confuse them with one another, people assuming all black students are Metco students. Dr. Pinals said she has repeatedly heard very specific stories of going into particular stores on early release days and being stopped as the one student of color being followed or accused of something. She recommended training for law enforcement, store owners, and store employees, and a town-wide equity audit. She said adults are models for children, and that people continue to say “we’re tired” and “we’ve worked so hard at this.” Dr. Pinals said she views this time as a hopeful opportunity to listen to each other and collaborate on policy revision and structural changes.

Bill Paulson, 147 Lindbergh Avenue said he has heard of racism in Town, but always thought Needham was a welcoming community. He said since the George Floyd murder, he has participated in a couple of events including one at Needham High School, which he said he was outstanding. Mr. Paulson relayed the story of a young man who graduated from Needham High School who said when he was 11 years old he experienced racism in Needham for the first time during an early release day when he went to Walgreen’s and was grabbed by a man who proceeded to dump his backpack out on the floor, finding the student did not steal anything. Mr. Paulson said the story is incredible that it happened, but it is not an isolated one. He noted many stories were told on the hill during the recent event. Mr. Paulson said he supports the “Lived Experiences Project” as people need to know what incidents are happening. He commented on a multi-cultural event, sponsored by the Rotary Club, held at the Eliot School where people could learn about other cultures and celebrate differences. He said everyone should be acknowledged for who they are and celebrated. He said students are looking to the adults to make the situation better, as it is clearly a problem that is not unique to Needham. He

suggested a yearly diversity curriculum review in addition to English, math, and science. He said parents must explain and work with their children. He said he is hopeful for a continuing dialogue.

Mr. Handel said a participant asked if the Police Department was represented at this meeting? He said members of the Police Department were present and listening.

Albert Schram, 211 Rosemary Street said the open meeting law allows for the gallery to be present, so everyone can know and see who is participating. Mr. Handel said it is difficult to see everyone in the Zoom format.

Lilly Marcelin, Newton resident and founder of the “Resilient Sisterhood Project” told the Select Board of an incident she experienced in Needham, where a woman lobbed racial rants and tropes, and was harassing her. Ms. Marcelin said the older woman did not show any sense of wisdom, kindness, or respect towards her, noting ugly racial words were said to her. She said she walked away but remains disturbed thinking about what could have happened and what the subsequent outcome would have been if the police had gotten involved. She said if the incident happened and common sense did not prevail, someone could get hurt or worse. She said she chose not to go to the police to relay what happened, thanking the Board for allowing her the opportunity to tell her story.

Mr. Handel asked for comments from the Select Board.

Mr. Borrelli thanked everyone for their attendance and for the emails received. He said having grown up in Needham, he has always felt it to be a welcoming town. He commented he feels the Town has been proactive as much as we can to try and show we are inclusive, but said it is clear that other people do not see it that way. He said the Select Board’s job is to listen to the community in order to be better. Mr. Borrelli said he wants to hear more of the first-hand stories, as they are powerful and can be used to advance ourselves. He noted the second or third hand stories are difficult to corroborate or get an understanding of what happened. He suggested an anonymous way for people to report their first-hand stories, as the whole purpose is to listen to the public. He said he looks forward to further discussion, concurring with Mr. Handel that he believes the Needham Police Department is very welcoming. He noted he wants people to understand that they can file a report if necessary.

Mr. Bulian thanked the participants and said it is a very important time. He said among all comments, there needs to be a cultural change, perhaps implemented in the schools. He said early diversity education is a way of making the systemic and cultural change happen. He said he looks forward to further conversation. He commented on a story in today’s Boston Globe, concluding discussion needs to continue and that the Town’s leaders need to be active and engaged participants with the people in Needham to change the culture. He said change starts at home.

Ms. Cooley thanked the participants, echoing comments that Zoom is not the best format for having the discussion, and an uncomfortable conversation in many dimensions. She said as a leader of the Town, she believes Needham has a desire to be anti-racist and equitable. She said the steps to make the vision a reality are ones she is committed to and hopes and feels her colleagues are committed as well. Ms. Cooley commented on learning the stories, understanding what available levers are within town government, and that we are a government of people that includes everyone. She said she believes the Board does not deny the responsibility, it is “more than just us, it’s really all of us coming together to make a difference and to make a change.” Ms. Cooley said she looks forward to hearing the stories from the “Lived Experiences” project. She concurred with a speaker who said the topic is as important as budgets and zoning. She said it must be recognized that people are being asked to step forward, take actions, and serve the town, noting it was highlighted that not many town boards or committees are not particularly diverse. She said when she served as chair of the Select Board, she worked hard to source candidates who were not the typical mold of many of the boards and committees, but she can only work from the pool of people who apply, noting the hard work to advertise committee openings, the hard work to bring new people in to committees, and that she is grateful for the people who stepped forward. Ms. Cooley noted many people were motivated after the 2016 election, and she hopes this year will be another year that will prompt people to be motivated to step up and serve the Town. Ms. Cooley recognized people are often asked to provide unpaid service and support in many other areas to step forward and serve, i.e. people of color and women who are often doing that work, but this is another place where those voices have not often been heard. She encouraged people to join in the work being done for the Town, as it is important for those voices and perspectives to be at the table. Ms. Cooley concluded if you are not stepping forward in the first place, it is hard to get there. She said she is hopeful people will step forward. Ms. Cooley said the work is not only for within the schools, it is the work of all of us including parents, senior citizen’s, everyone. She said there is a lot of work we can do, quoting Maya Angelou, “Do the best you can until you know better, and when you know better, do better.”

Mr. Matthews said racial equity is a critical issue of our time. He said we are facing pandemic challenges, a challenged economy, a bitterly divided electorate, and environmental catastrophes not far in the future. He said the issue is not new, but what is new both nationally and in Needham, is there is a greater interest than he has ever seen in his lifetime. He commented on his time at Needham High School when Dr. Martin Luther King was killed, which was also the first year of the Metco program. He acknowledged there were great hopes at that time and it was expected we would be in a better place long before now. Mr. Matthews said the issue has come to a head because of public safety and police enforcement issues nationwide, which are matters of life and death. He said while we want a good country and good town, viewed through the lens of people who are not treated fairly or equitably in our society, including black people who for over hundreds of years the system

has not worked. He said the issue is something we need to try to move forward in a real way. Mr. Matthews said the conversation is helpful, but there is a long way to go, noting it isn't just about law enforcement, but every element of society from employment, education, and ordinary interactions. He concluded progress has been made, but not nearly enough and that this is a time of great challenge and great opportunity.

Mr. Handel thanked the participants and said this is the beginning of our work.

Ms. Fitzpatrick echoed Ms. Cooley, thanking everyone for their patience in our new reality of meeting by webinar. She said everyone is doing the best they can. She said the meeting will be recorded and available on the Town's YouTube channel. She said future meetings will allow for more participants.

7:40 p.m.

Town Manager:

Kate Fitzpatrick, Town Manager appeared before the Board with four items to discuss:

1. Accept and Refer Zoning

Ms. Fitzpatrick said the Planning Board, at its meeting on July 7, 2020, voted to place the following articles on the warrant for the October 2020 Special Town Meeting: (1) Amend Zoning By-Law - Avery Square Overlay District; and (2) Amend Zoning By-Law - Map Change to Avery Square Overlay District. Ms. Fitzpatrick recommended the Board accept the proposed amendments and refer them to the Planning Board for its review, hearing, and report. The Board's action in this matter is not discretionary.

**Motion by Mr. Bulian that the Board vote to accept the proposed zoning articles (1) Amend Zoning By-Law – Avery Square Overlay District and (2) Amend Zoning By-Law – Map Change to Avery Square Overlay District for referral to the Planning Board for its review, hearing, and report.
Second: Mr. Borrelli. Unanimously approved 5-0 by roll call vote.**

2. Liquor License Fees for Calendar Year 2021

Ms. Fitzpatrick recommended that the Board reduce liquor license fees for restaurants for calendar year 2021 in recognition of the significant disruption in the food service industry.

On Premise Alcoholic Beverage	Current	Proposed
Innholders	\$4,525	\$2,262
Restaurants – 100 seats or more – All Alcoholic	\$4,025	\$2,012
Restaurants – fewer than 100 seats - Wine /Malt	\$1,500	\$750
Clubs	\$510	\$255

Motion by Mr. Bulian that the Board vote to adopt a new liquor license fee schedule for calendar year 2021 as follows:

On Premise Alcoholic Beverage	Current	Proposed
Innholders	\$4,525	\$2,262
Restaurants – 100 seats or more – All Alcoholic	\$4,025	\$2,012
Restaurants – fewer than 100 seats - Wine/Malt	\$1,500	\$750
Clubs	\$510	\$255

Second: Mr. Borrelli. Unanimously approved 5-0 by roll call vote.

Mr. Borrelli said reducing fees is a good way to give relief to restaurants.

Mr. Handel thanked Ms. Cooley for her work as chair of the committee spearheading ways to help local businesses.

3. Special Town Meeting Planning

Ms. Fitzpatrick discussed potential warrant articles for the Special Town Meeting in October. She said there are a number of critical articles that make it necessary to hold the Special Town Meeting. She said at the next Select Board meeting recommendations will be made about the venue, and that the draft warrant will be refined and presented in August.

Ms. Cooley commented on the spring Town Meeting held at Memorial Park, saying a number of things happened that she hopes will be carried forward i.e. pre-recorded presentations, and question and answers on the Town website. The Board concurred with Ms. Cooley, saying there are ways to keep Town Meeting moving.

4. Town Manager Report

Katie King, Assistant Town Manager said Phase 3, Step 1 of the state reopening is underway, with people feeling as if normal, pre-Covid life is resuming, but with safety precautions. She gave examples of what the Needham Public Health and the Park and Recreation Department are doing to prioritize the balance of Covid-19 and reopening, i.e. permit requests, working with the school superintendent for reopening schools, ongoing surveillance/contact tracing, re-opening the pools at Rosemary Recreation Complex, summer programs, field use, and open playgrounds. She noted two vacant but critical positions to fill including an Emergency Management Program Administrator and Public Health Nurse.

Ms. Fitzpatrick reported Theodora Eaton, Town Clerk and her staff are working hard preparing for the September 1, 2020 primary and the November 3, 2020 general election. She commented on the availability of voting by mail, early voting, and in-person voting. She said more information can be found on the Town's website.

8:00 p.m. Board Discussion:

1. Proposed Revision to Regulations for the Sale of Alcoholic Beverages

The Board discussed a proposed revision to the Regulation for the Sale of Alcoholic Beverages including a new Section X. Violations - Determination of Penalties. Mr. Bulian said licensees can be noticed in writing as to Town guidelines, should they choose not to follow the liquor law and regulations, i.e. the sale of alcohol to minors. Ms. Cooley said the revisions are reasonable and hopes to never see any of the licensees in violation of the law.

2. Plastic Check-out Bags Statement Status

The Board discussed the status of the Plastic Check-out Bags Statement given recently revised guidance from the Commonwealth relative to plastic reusable bags during the COVID-19 State of Emergency. Ms. Fitzpatrick recommends writing a letter to retail establishments recognizing they may use up the stock of bags purchased, then return to compliance of using recyclable bags.

3. Committee Reports

No Committee Reports were made.

8:10 p.m.

Adjourn:

Motion by Mr. Borrelli that the Select Board vote to adjourn the Select Board meeting on Tuesday, July 21, 2020.

Second: Mr. Bulian. Unanimously approved 5-0 by roll call vote.

A list of all documents used at this Select Board meeting are available at:

<http://www.needhamma.gov/Archive.aspx?AMID=99&Type=&ADID=>