

City of



Gary Christenson, Mayor

Racial Equity Commission

City Hall, 215 Pleasant Street, Malden

Conference Room #105

Thursday, March 23, 2024, 6pm-8pm

Members of the Commission may choose to participate in the meeting remotely and members of the public who wish to attend remotely can do so by using the following information:

MINUTES

1. Roll Call and Meeting Agenda Improvements

Councilor McDonald led a meeting with a roll call of attendees, with some members expected to join later. The meeting discussed the recent return of Abraham, as well as the whereabouts of several other individuals. Councilor McDonald approved the minutes for the February 7th town hall meeting and emphasized the need to clarify the meeting's agenda, correct a reference to "agenda" in the minutes, and include a SWOT analysis report. The meeting also addressed scheduling issues for upcoming public meetings on March 6th and February 7th outcomes, with Kashawna agreeing to make necessary changes following Abraham's query. Additionally, a discrepancy in the timeline for the "Newton Business" segment was acknowledged, and Councilor McDonald committed to verifying why some attendees didn't receive the meeting invitation.

2. Commission Timeline and Stakeholders Analysis

Councilor McDonald proposed a timeline and strategies for the Commission, aiming to have recommendations submitted to the Council by December. The plan involves analyzing the SWOT analysis and the stakeholders list from the first public meeting, forming working groups to tackle specific issues, and revising these into a comprehensive set of recommendations by December. He also suggested a facilitated prioritization process to help the team focus on the most pressing areas. The team agreed to this approach, with the intention of presenting their findings at the next public meeting in July. Councilor McDonald presented a stakeholders list, which was a four-page document, and clarified that this document was still a working one, as he was still in the process of meeting with HCH and making adjustments.

3. SWOT Analysis and Collaborative Prioritization Strategy

Dr. Barros presented the various working groups that emerged from the SWOT analysis, emphasizing the need for collaboration between the language access and communication groups. She proposed a strategy for prioritizing 12 issues and involving the community and executive sponsors from various departments and community groups. The idea of dissolving the committee groups after finalizing their current tasks but continuing the work on a community-based level, was also discussed. The conversation ended with Councilor McDonald acknowledging that the next structure and implementation plan for their work still needed to be determined.

4. Team Meeting Focus Areas Discussion

Councilor McDonald led a discussion where committee members were asked to vote on several areas to focus on for their team meeting. Councilor McDonald provided a link to a Google Doc with twelve options and asked the team to indicate their preferences by adding an 'X' next to their choices. The team members were able to see each other's votes in real time. The topics that received the most votes were community building, migrant needs, and public safety.

5. Language Access and Community Building in Malden

The team focused on the importance of language access and community building in Malden. They discussed the need for diverse business recognition, open dialogues on various topics, and the potential for community building to address issues like small business development and language access needs. The discussion highlighted the necessity for increased community engagement, particularly from underrepresented groups, to foster a more vibrant and inclusive community. The team agreed on the importance of community building and language access as integral parts of their work, and the need for a comprehensive language access strategy. They acknowledged the complexities involved in making people feel welcome and included, and the necessity of further exploration and work to effectively incorporate these elements into their programs.

6. Supporting Youth Initiatives and Challenges

Nate emphasized the importance of supporting youth initiatives, particularly those focused on providing resources, enrichment opportunities, and vocational training pathways for young people. He highlighted the challenges faced by youth, including mental health issues, substance use, and the need for parental support, especially for 16–18-year-olds. He also suggested a more comprehensive, multi-generational approach to support initiatives to better address the unique needs of young people.

7. Strategies for Affordable Housing and Rental Properties

Councilor McDonald emphasized the importance of affordable housing and proposed a community stakeholder-driven strategy to address the issue. He suggested focusing on increasing the percentage of affordable housing and highlighted initiatives like a condo buyback program. The team also discussed the need to increase awareness of existing resources, such as the housing stability office, and the importance of education classes for potential homeowners. Issues related to rental properties, particularly in light of the pandemic, were also identified as a key area of focus, with an emphasis on the need for a registry of landlords to facilitate effective engagement.

8. Supporting Small Businesses and Teacher Retention

The team discussed the importance of supporting and developing small businesses, with a focus on providing resources to new and immigrant entrepreneurs. The team also addressed the challenge of recruiting and retaining a diverse and qualified workforce, particularly teachers, in schools. Councilor McDonald proposed strategies to attract and train young people interested in teaching, while also suggesting the creation of alternative professional tracks to help teachers transition into new roles. The need for better support mechanisms to prevent burnout and encourage teacher retention was also emphasized.

9. Forming Police Community Advisory Council and Restorative Justice Circles

Councilor McDonald and Kashawna discussed the formation of a new Police Community Advisory Council in Public Safety and the potential for restorative justice circles. They highlighted the importance of building better relationships between law enforcement and the community, particularly with regards to youth and those who have come into contact with the law. Kashawna proposed education and awareness programs related to DEI in public safety, emphasizing the need for cultural awareness and sensitivity for effective interaction with diverse communities. The team agreed on the importance of understanding and sensitivity in policing for the benefit of public safety and harmonious community relations. They identified several areas of focus for their work, including outreach and welcoming for immigrants, pathways for recruitment and leadership development, support for youth, and affordable housing and development.

Next Steps

1. Kashawna will share the Swot analysis and stakeholders list with the team for review and feedback.
2. Each team member will identify 3-4 priority areas from the stakeholders list to discuss in the next meeting.

3. Kashawna will share the Racial Equity Toolkit with the team to help guide their work and focus on equity in their initiatives.
4. Kashawna will take the areas identified in the meeting (outreach and welcoming for immigrants, pathways for recruitment and workforce development, support for youth, community and business connection, affordable housing and development, public safety and accessibility) to the next meeting with HCH to show them the stakeholders and discuss the focus areas.