



Diversity Equity Inclusion Justice and Belonging (DEIJB) Committee  
Draft Meeting Minutes  
September 30, 2024  
City Council Chambers  
37 Green Street  
5:00 PM

**1. Call to Order**

Mayor Champlin called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM in the absence of Chairperson Ahni Malachi.

**2. Roll Call**

Present: Vijay Bhujel, Mayor Byron Champlin, Amy Girouard-Crush, Karen Juall, Becky Kennedy (Merrimack Valley High School Ex-Officio Member), Clement Kigugu, Councilor Jennifer Kretovic, Cara Meeker (Concord School District Ex-Officio Member), Alison Murphy, Zoey Murphy, Rabbi Robin Nafshi, Ghana Sharma, Noemi Wierwille, Sheila Zakre, and City Clerk Janice Bonenfant.

Excused: Moe Djabelarbi, Ahni Malachi, Councilor Ali Sekou, and Usha Shrestha.

**3. Meeting Overview by Mayor Champlin**

Mayor Champlin noted that this meeting will be largely organizational.

**4. Comments by Committee Chair**

Mayor Champlin read the following letter from Chairperson Malachi regarding her absence.

“Hello friends and colleagues,

I am very excited this first meeting of the DEIJB Subcommittee is taking place! As such, please accept my humble apologies for not being with you in person this evening. Let me share a bit about my situation with you.

This summer, I suffered an uncommon but not rare type of heart attack known as a "spontaneous coronary artery dissection," shortened to SCAD. All of the words simply mean, I had a dissection or tear in one of my coronary (heart) arteries.

SCAD heart attacks occur more frequently in women than men, as much as 90% more. There are international groups and studies taking place to study the cause of SCAD, however, there are no clear answers as to the cause or ways to avoid the prevalence of SCAD among women. There are no dietary, clear hereditary, or other confirmed medical links at this time, but work is continuing to uncover information.

As far as my body is concerned, I simply had a heart attack. I have been away from all of my obligations outside of learning to rest (which hasn't been as easy as it sounds) and healing. The tear or dissection heals on its own. There is usually no surgery or stints suggested to fix the tear, just good old-fashioned rest. Through conversations with my now expanded medical team, I should be able to return to my duties and other obligations soon. Sorry folks, you won't be able to get rid of me that easily!

I decided SCAD is a very important medical message to share with you all, which is why I am sharing something that I would not ordinarily share in such a public forum. The more awareness people have, the better care can be taken of their loved ones should this commonly uncommon heart attack happen. Please, go immediately to the hospital if you think you might be having a heart attack. By all means, do not do what I did and drive yourself. Yes, all of the medical professionals have given me the side eye for that one. If something doesn't feel quite right, go. It could save your life. Better to be wrong than the alternative... It's important to remember, that women often have very different symptoms than men.

With that said, I am excited to work with all of you to move the subcommittee forward. I plan to do so by listening, actually hearing what is said, and communicating with all involved. As such, I hold a clear expectation we will all be respectful with each other - especially when we disagree.

Thank you to each of you for being here, and for allowing me to share "how I spent my summer" story with you. Looking forward to seeing you in person soon.

Be well all,  
Ahni Malachi  
Chair, DEIJB Subcommittee”

## **5. Introductions**

Noemi Wierwille described her professional career in education and educational equity and her volunteerism for an organization that benefit children and families.

Zoey Murphy described her professional career in social work and previous employment in early intervention. She represents Ward Five on the Recreation and Parks Advisory Committee and volunteers her time for Project STORY and the SPARC program at the Citywide Community Center.

Cara Meeker is a Concord School Board member representing Wards Five – Seven. She volunteers in the community and described her volunteerism for LGBTQ forward organizations.

Sheila Zakre is an attorney and is also legally blind. Her interest is to bring the disability perspective to the conversation of diversity and inclusion.

Amy Girouard-Crush is a social worker by trade and provides mental health services to senior citizens and individuals with disabilities. She described being the parent of a child with a disability who has had a wonderful experience in Concord School District.

Councilor Kretovic described her tenure as a City Councilor as well as her professional experience as a payroll and human resources technology specialist. Her hope is to listen, learn, and advocate as a City Councilor.

City Clerk Janice Bonenfant introduced herself as the City Clerk and a Concord resident.

Mayor Champlin described his experience attending a rural high school, his residency in many diverse communities, and his mission-work in Nicaragua. Mayor Champlin discussed his participation in Lincoln Financial Group's LGBTQ business resource group and his experience as the grandparent of a child on the autism spectrum. Mayor Champlin expressed his hope for consensus-building and broad community participation.

Rabbi Robin Nafshi, Rabbi at Concord's Temple Beth Jacob, described her family which includes her wife, who is the synagogue's Cantor, and their adopted child who she described as ethnically Mexican. Rabbi Nafshi also discussed her work in mental health as well as addressing safety.

Vijay Bhujel noted that he is originally from Bhutan and became a US citizen in 2019. He discussed his hope for being a welcoming community.

Ghana Sharma noted that he is also originally from Bhutan. He added that he has experience being a refugee and is now a US citizen. He noted that this is his sixteenth year as an educator in Concord School District and spoke about his volunteerism for various organizations.

Karen Juall is a retired early childcare and child educator. She noted her experience with Head Start and described living with the exclusion of the importance of early childhood years. She described herself as an advocate for marginalized groups but especially children. In her retirement, Ms. Juall has been teaching adults and assisting individuals with obtaining their US citizenship.

Alison Murphy described her family which includes her wife and teenagers. Alison and her wife own a downtown business and echoed Rabbi Nafshi's discussion of safety.

Clement Kigugu, Executive Director of Overcomers Refugee Services, described his professional work helping victims of war, genocide, and HIV. He noted that he was raised in the Congo and described his work bringing people together. He described building up the community.

Becky Kennedy, System of Care Coordinator for Merrimack Valley School District, described her background in school counseling. The System of Care Coordinator involves behavioral health and wellness.

Mayor Champlin thanked everyone for their sharing.

## **6. Other Business**

Mayor Champlin noted that a facilitated process will be most beneficial for approaching issues and provided an update. Mayor Champlin noted that members of City Council worked with the City Manager and City staff to create a Request for Quotation (RFQ) which was dispersed in late May 2024. Three facilitating firms, all outside of New Hampshire, sent proposals. The RFQ was then re-sent and a New Hampshire firm then provided a proposal in addition to the original three.

Mayor Champlin then noted that the proposals were reviewed by the core DEIJB committee members comprised of Mayor Champlin, Councilor Kretovic, and Councilor Sekou. They generated questions for candidates. City staff was instructed to conduct an assessment of the candidates, and a final selection will be made shortly on a facilitating firm.

Although there was not a public hearing, Mayor Champlin welcomed public comment on the aspirations of the committee.

Zandra Rice-Hawkins, former Ward Ten City Councilor, discussed the three listening sessions held by the committee in 2023. She expressed her hope that the committee move into a policy and/or implementation phase.

The process of becoming a Welcoming Community was discussed.

Jessica Livingston, co-chair of the Concord Multicultural Festival, provided information about being a Welcoming Committee

## **7. Adjournment**

At 5:56 PM, and there being no additional business, Councilor Kretovic moved to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Sheila Zakre and passed with no dissenting votes.

*A true copy: I attest:*

*Janice Bonenfant  
City Clerk*