

TOWN OF WELLESLEY



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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF GENERAL GOVERNMENT

### **Wellesley DEI Task Force Completes First Phase of Work**

### **Select Board to Support a Community Anti-Racism and Anti-Bias Resolution and \$100K Funding for Town Equity Audit**

**December 21, 2022 (Wellesley, MA)** – “A year of reflective work,” “Honest conversations,” “Important steps in Wellesley’s desire to be recognized for its welcoming community culture.” These are a few of the reflections from members of the [Town of Wellesley’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion \(DEI\) Task Force](#) which just wrapped up Phase I of its work.

As a result of this work, the task force is seeking support at Annual Town Meeting for a community anti-bias and anti-racism resolution that is both aspirational and practical. The resolution is a commitment to creating a more welcoming and inclusive community; a pledge to dismantle institutional racism and bias and to improve diverse representation; and a charge to transform institutions, policies and procedures. The proposal also includes a request for \$100,000 from the Town to fund an equity audit that will help the community understand current conditions related specifically to DEI, create a roadmap for future initiatives, and establish a baseline for measuring progress.

At its meeting on December 20, the Wellesley Select Board voted to support this proposed resolution and equity audit, an endorsement that is key to moving DEI work forward in our community.

The 21-member volunteer task force, created in November 2021, met regularly for the past 12-months guided by Town Executive Director Meghan Jop, Assistant Executive Director Amy Frigulietti, and independent DEI consultant Lisa Smith-McQueenie, to complete four identified action steps aimed at making Wellesley a more inclusive and equitable community:

- Create a vision statement for DEI in Wellesley;
- Develop a mission statement for racial equity in Wellesley;
- Develop and identify a framework and work plan supporting the goals of the task force;
- Establish community guiding principles and practices to support anti-bias, nondiscriminatory, and anti-racist behaviors and attitudes.

“Our task force volunteers bring a broad range of identities, perspectives, and life experiences to this work. While there was significant interest among task force members to address not only issues of race, but also gender, ethnicity, national origin, and disability, we agreed racial equity would be the group’s primary focus in Phase I. The resulting vision statement reflects the task force’s interest in broader DEI work while the mission statement is focused primarily on racial equity,” said Frigulietti.

In an initial presentation to the Wellesley Select Board on December 6, task force members shared information from the [Phase I Report](#), offering insight into the deliberate work accomplished so far and recommendations for the work needed to continue to move forward. “Things are better but there’s still so much more to do,” said Task Force member Donna Stoddard, a Wellesley resident and Associate Dean of Faculty at Babson College.

Presentation highlights included reports from DEI Task Force subcommittees that worked on topics that the group determined are key to making progress on racial equity.

**Institutional Structures Subcommittee** assessed town government and the town workforce through a DEI lens, exploring opportunities to bring DEI work to Town Meeting, Town boards and committees, and the Town workforce through educational trainings, mentoring, facilitated discussions, and intentional recruitment.

**Proposed Structure Post-Task Force Subcommittee** researched DEI efforts in other communities, met with DEI leadership experts, and held informal interviews with Wellesley residents and staff, gathering data on best practices and investigating what DEI structure might work for Wellesley.

**Community Outreach & Engagement Subcommittee** brainstormed ways to convey the substance and significance of the work the task force is doing through public meetings and announcements, DEI ambassadors, partnerships, and relationship building with community members and organizations.

**Resolution Subcommittee** drafted an anti-racism and anti-bias resolution for the Wellesley community. Part of this resolution is a pledge to do the work needed to reflect and honor the diversity of the community, and part of it is a request for Town Meeting to fund an equity audit to help undertake this work. This subcommittee realized that Wellesley needed a metrics-based study to help provide a roadmap for the work ahead. As a result, a fifth group, the **Equity Audit Subcommittee**, was formed. This group researched equity audits in other communities and recommended that Wellesley conduct a broad audit to identify equity deficits in the community, establish a baseline for measuring progress, and to help guide future initiatives.

“As with every project in Wellesley, we want to undertake this work thoroughly and thoughtfully. While this equity audit represents a significant investment in resources, it is akin to other studies, providing us with the opportunity to look at all aspects of equity and get a complete snapshot of Wellesley today, and allowing us to leverage and build upon other DEI work that’s been done in the past, such as the Wellesley Public Schools Racial Equity Climate Assessment, the NRC’s ADA audit, and even the Town Unified Plan,” said task force member Paul Merry, a civil rights attorney, member of the World of Wellesley board, and Wellesley Town Meeting member. Details about this work and the findings of these subcommittees are available on the [DEI webpages on the Town of Wellesley website](#).

#### **Next Steps: Support for Resolution and Funding for Equity Audit**

For the DEI Task Force, completing Phase I work is just the beginning. In addition to sharing its work and recommendations with the Select Board, the task force will meet with the Advisory Committee on January 18, 2023 and is also reaching out to other boards and committees, civic groups, school organizations, faith groups, and residents to educate, discuss and gather input. The goal is to build support for the proposal to 2023 Annual Town Meeting, which begins on March 27, 2023. This proposal will include both the resolution language and the funding request for the equity audit.

“We’ve finished Phase I and are already heading into Phase II. This is difficult work, involving emotional issues, and we can’t waste any time,” said task force member Lina Musayev, a Town Meeting member, World of Wellesley board member, and chair of the WOW Anti-Racism Action Committee who led the Resolution subcommittee. “We’re optimistic that things will get better. The resolution idea has its roots in our community. We need to expand those roots, and we need funding for the data that will help us forge a path forward.”

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