

JOHNSON RACIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES  
REMOTE PARTICIPATION VIA ZOOM TELECONFERENCING  
THURSDAY, MAY 6, 2021

**Present:**

Committee Members: Rick Aupperlee, Eric Hutchins, Raven Pfaff, Diane Lehouiller, Sophia Berard

Others: Pam Aupperlee, Scott Meyer, Shayne Spence, Nat Kinney, Kyle Nuse, Brynn Nuse, Cal Stanton, Jackie Stanton, Jasmine Yuris, Jennifer Burton

**Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.**

**1. Call to Order**

Rick called the meeting to order at 6:01. In recognition of Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, he read quotes from Daniel Inouye:

*It's a dream where you live a life that's powerful, one in which you can get married if you want to, raise kids if you want to, get educated to the limit of your capacity, and do what makes you happy, because we all are looking for the good life. We don't want to go through life with just fighting, fighting, fighting.*

*This country has given much, and, in doing so, we have given truth to the ideals we, as a nation, live by. We must continue to uphold this humanitarian tradition.*

Eric said he would like to share a couple of emails he got from community members. He also suggested that he and Rick should report back about the results of their last meeting with the selectboard and maybe get clarification from Nat about how to proceed. He suggested having that come before the review of the 5-point plan and Rick agreed.

**2. Approval of Minutes**

**It was moved and seconded to approve the minutes of April 1, 2021 and the motion was passed.**

**3. Emails from Community Members**

Eric said he received an email from Walter Pomroy. Walter expressed the opinion that increasing diversity is win-win because it can help increase economic growth. He sent three articles that Eric found helpful and important. Eric shared links to the articles in the chat.

Eric said Shayne Spence sent an email with a suggestion. Raven suggested that Shayne speak about his suggestion. Shayne said his idea is for the committee to have an essay contest surrounding Juneteenth. His thought was to focus on 8<sup>th</sup> graders but since Eric is at the high school that opens up the opportunity to do multiple tiers. His idea would be to give students a list of writing prompts to choose from and to fundraise in order to offer prizes. The committee would solicit essays through the schools then read them all and award prizes to the top three. He posted a few potential prompts in the chat.

Rick asked if we would bring this idea to the selectboard or the school board. Shane said he doesn't know that it would have to be brought to either one. The committee wouldn't be asking for any policy change or funding. He would be willing to chip in some money. The Racial Justice Committee might work with members of the selectboard and the school board to get information about the contest out there but the committee would work primarily with educators. The committee could get in touch with social studies teachers and let them know this opportunity exists.

Raven said she likes this idea. She won an essay contest in third grade about what the Stars and Stripes mean to us. That was meaningful to her and to her school. And it seems this is something we have the power to do ourselves, not just recommend to the boards.

Cal asked if any other emails were received. Rick said Nat Kinney sent a pretty extensive article. Nat said he sent a couple of articles. He wanted to talk about community engagement. He said he likes Shayne's idea because it engages the community. One of the articles he sent was a commentary in the Stowe Reporter by Emily Rosenbaum. She talked about the importance of planning commissions, how they often fail to consider people who have been historically marginalized and their importance in correcting some of that. Work done by planning commissions is important to racial equity. The other article was from VTDigger. It was about an annual report that the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission does which tracks progress of various community goals. For the first time this year they started looking at things through the lens of racial equity. They were able to quantify some eye-opening racial disparities, particularly between black and white women living in poverty. Another article was about how national parks are working to fight racism. A lot of African Americans are hesitant to use national parks. That got him thinking about public lands we have in our town. Maybe we could look at how we might work to make sure our public lands are inclusive and safe places for the entire community. In particular he is thinking about kiosks at Journey's End and Beard Park.

Diane said she is not sure how this committee can get the Planning Commission to have diverse people on commission or how we would get people to come to our parks. If we had visuals in our town that showed we are diverse or would welcome diversity, that would help. She hasn't been on our website so she doesn't know if it has things about being diverse. Until we do that kind of thing she thinks it would be hard to fill these kinds of positions. One helpful kind of visual would be having the pride flag and Black Lives Matter flag on the municipal building as she recommended. We need to have discussions and try to change minds. Until then she thinks getting diverse people on committees is going to be hard.

Nat said his suggestion wasn't to get more diverse people on our committees. He agrees on the visuals. He supported the Black Lives Matter banner on the municipal building. That is not going to happen right now. Can we find other opportunities to put those messages out into the community? He suggested using the kiosks at Journey's End and the Beard parcel. The committee could engage with the Conservation Commission and suggest ideas like putting the inclusivity statement on their kiosks and including it in other literature. It could also be on bookmarks at the library and it could be printed and framed for every business. He doesn't know what happened with the inclusivity statement mural. This is the time to make

sure it gets installed at the municipal building. Diane said she just delivered it there. Nat said he is not just talking about getting people on commissions but asking our representatives to the regional planning commission, when doing reports and measuring actions, if they are looking at it with a lens toward racial equity. It is not just about getting black people on the Planning Commission. That is not going to happen until our community is a more welcoming place.

Jackie Stanton said she likes Shayne's idea. She said Eric Hutchins invited 100 students to the Racial Justice Committee meeting last month and none showed up. This was the second time in the last two weeks she heard talk of fundraising when racial justice initiatives were brought up. She is not against it but she doesn't want this committee to have to fundraise for everything. Other committees have budgets. Let's come from a place where we recognize that this is work worth paying for and worth spending tax dollars for.

Jackie thanked Nat for coming to this meeting and for his votes as a selectboard member. The articles he sent are good. She is on the Conservation Commission and she is happy to bring the idea to them of having the inclusivity statement posted and advocate for it. She would also add the anti-racism statement. The idea to offer businesses copies of the statement has been around for a while. Maybe the committee could work with Johnson Works on that. She would hope that a joint town and village committee would have dollars behind it.

Cal Stanton said he wants the committee to be cautious about going down an establishment route. This committee was born out of a real grassroots effort and he wants to make sure it we don't lose that. That is not to say that the committee should be anti-establishment but our establishment has typically not been set up to deal with these issues. He wants to make sure we don't funnel our efforts into the establishment pipeline which will fade into nothing meaningful. He wants to make sure we are doing the work and not getting bogged down with trying to appease the establishment.

Rick said he is in favor of publicly displaying our inclusivity and anti-racism statements but until we can say that we can pay for frames and printing all we can do is look into it. Does anyone have thoughts on how we can pay for these things?

Nat said he wants to offer a slightly different view on fundraising. Every committee in town does some sort of fundraising to some degree. He also thinks a direct contribution from the town is important to support the committee's efforts. The Recreation Committee and the Historical Society do fundraising. The Historical Society is a great example. Their fundraising is great outreach and provides a connection to the community. He and others would be happy to pitch in money. He thinks approaching Johnson Works is a great idea. Some businesses might agree to put up the statement and pay for it.

Shayne said as a new member of the Planning Commission he is happy to have Nat's idea brought into what the Planning Commission considers. He thinks a lot of what Nat talks about will be at the regional level but he thinks there is work that can be done in town.

Kyle said she feels this committee needs a budget. She thinks there needs to be taxpayer funding. The head of the selectboard in Hardwick reached out to her when she was still on the selectboard because he was impressed with our town's commitment to racial justice. He said Hardwick has \$3,000 allocated to their racial justice committee. She feels the committee should be taxpayer funded and should have money available in the range of \$3-5K. She thinks it needs to be a line item in the town and village budgets.

Kyle said any time there are public displays of symbolism like flags or education there is a real weight that comes with it being backed up by the municipal government. When she was president of Johnson Works she casually brought up the idea of businesses putting up pledges or symbolism in their windows and the backlash was incredible. She thinks that is a pipe dream right now. If it comes from our local government, that holds a lot of weight. She would encourage contributions of money and displays of symbolism from our government.

Rick said he thinks the village inclusivity statement on the village green was done by Great Big Graphics for about \$80. Raven said we can do it on a color printer if anyone has a color printer.

Jackie said the idea of having those statements available for businesses was brought up a couple of years ago and not seized on by anyone. The idea of a "Hate has no home here" sign at the municipal building was brought to the board and got no traction. We have our work cut out for us but we have to keep moving.

Eric said he is glad Nat clarified that he is not looking for diverse members on committees. Based on recent conversations at the selectboard and trustee board meetings he doesn't feel like this is a welcoming place for people of color and couldn't recommend it as a safe place to serve on town committees. He said Nat had mentioned that when it comes to putting up signage we have to move on and wait a couple of election cycles for that. He couldn't disagree more. The selectboard and the trustees appointed this committee to carry out racial justice initiatives and the boards don't want to back the initiatives. He thinks we should continue to press the idea. The community conversations around Black Lives Matter, etc. are one of the best things that have come out of this committee. They have gotten people to be honest about what they are thinking. Our goal is to figure out what kind of public messaging we can get. Black Lives Matter means a certain thing to us. To some other people it means something different. In order to get those signs up we need to tell people what it means when we put the signs up, that it means we need to go farther with racial justice. Black Lives Matter means that black people are being treated disproportionately badly nationwide and we don't want to be part of that. He would bet that for the majority of people of color who are thinking of moving here, their first information about Johnson would come from the internet and if they did a search now the results would not make them feel welcome here. He thinks the controversy around signage is not a matter of being on opposite sides of an issue. It is a matter of vocabulary and education. He thinks we should keep having the conversation. He will move later on this evening to ask the boards again to put up the same signage previously requested.

Rick said the original proposal brought to the selectboard and trustees was one in which community members were not thinking politically. They were thinking of it as a humanitarian act. They believed the inclusivity statement and anti-racism statement would empower leadership to put their best foot forward to create a climate of caring and concern and it wouldn't be a political thing. These conversations that are controversial don't have to be political. They can be humanitarian and based on principle, as opposed to politics.

Raven said she got upset reading the minutes of the selectboard and trustee board meetings because it is a humanitarian movement and they thought it was political. Racial justice is not political. It would be nice to break down the idea that it is political, because it is not. It was upsetting and concerning that allocating funds toward this was seen as a politically charged action. It was concerning that our local government had that thought. We are not a politically charged group.

Nat said he heard Eric say that the committee is not going to stop pressing forward for racial equity. Eric said he thinks this issue has resulted in healthy conversations and he thinks we should continue to press the issue. Nat said he agrees with him. In relation to the Black Lives Matter banner on the municipal building, the current composition of the selectboard doesn't seem to be amenable to that idea. The committee can keep proposing it but it's not going to happen soon, so while doing that we can also be putting out other messages.

Eric said he thinks there are misconceptions about the word "political." Our selectboard and trustees were elected and appointed. At every meeting they vote on things that are all political – tax increases and decreases, road paving, whether dogs should be put away or not. That is all politics. Racial justice issues are divisive and controversial, and of course political because we are talking about division of resources. Everything the board does is political. . The selectboard doesn't dodge those decisions because they are political, but they are not controversial or divisive. It can do the same with racial justice issues. These issues have been made divisive by media narratives and politicians. There is mixed messaging about what these things mean. Our job as a racial justice committee is to educate and to continue these conversations. He thinks as more people talk to board members about what this means the board members will change their minds. It is not very controversial or divisive or a slight to some part of the population to put up this signage. It is just outreach to people in society who have been marginalized. It is not a threat and not a negative on our community. One of the things this committee was charged with was public displays.

Shayne said the reason he brought forward the idea of fundraising is that it lets the committee do something without worrying about whether the selectboard approves or disapproves it. He believes the committee should be advocating for a budget and for public displays but with the current composition of the board that will take time. His advice is for the committee to look at things that are in its power to do and do those things and to have on the back burner things that the committee needs to push elected officials to do. He is willing to put in money and he thinks a lot of others would as well.

Sophia said getting kids involved is huge. She likes the essay idea. She has heard from Lisa Crews that she and Na have talked about getting kids involved in racial justice. She wonders

if there is anything that wants to bring up about that. Her recollection is that Mike Dunham was essential in getting the inclusivity statement passed, along with Glo Weibel. Mike stood up and said that we should compromise and include “reject” as well as all the positive words. It helped the inclusivity statement pass. She feels we can keep pushing for the previous proposals and try other things and not put all our eggs in one basket.

Nat said he is not telling the committee not to continue pressing with Black Lives Matter. He is here to talk about other ideas that can be done. At the April selectboard meeting Eric asked, “What did you create this committee for if you don't want us to do this?” The selectboard needs to be able to answer this question. He thought about what the committee could do. One idea is working with the Recreation Committee. He had a couple of thoughts and talked to Lisa about some different things that could happen.

Jackie said it was reported in the paper by Sue Lovering that Mike Dunham proposed the compromise but it was not him. It was Glo Weibel who proposed it and Mike Dunham got the credit for it. Sophia said she did mention Glo too. It was Glo who helped to bring Mike around. Mike, being in a position of power, spoke and got the credit. Jackie said some people still don't feel good about that statement and still don't feel good about the “reject” line in it.

Jackie said she sent a lot of emails to Rick and Eric that haven't been addressed yet. Eric said she sent a lot of resources and references. He suggested that other committee members share their email addresses with Jackie so she can share that type of information with them.

Jackie said she sent emails to Rick and Eric because she mistakenly thought Eric was the vice chair. She asked them to distribute the information to the rest of the committee. What is the best procedure to send ideas and proposals to the committee?

Eric said the committee can't start a discussion on an email chain because that is a violation of open meeting law. If Jackie is sharing resources she wants the whole committee to see, he suggests that she get the email addresses of everyone on the committee. He is currently inundated by email and can't promise that everything he receives will get forwarded.

Rick said he was not sure what the correct procedure was with regard to group email. He thought discussion tonight was the best way to move forward on the information emailed out. He is glad Jackie came to the meeting and continues to share her passion with the committee. Her energy and inside is motivation to keep this going.

Sophia suggested that Jackie talk about the emails she sent. Jackie said there was a lot that she had hoped to discuss but she feels the energy is dragging and the committee should probably move forward with its agenda.

Cal said he wants to make sure we are deferring to the people who have been to the meetings. Let's put Nat's and Shayne's ideas in the queue but let's make sure that we are also deferring to people who have been involved for a long time.

Kyle said group emails do not violate open meeting law. What does violate it is if someone uses "reply all".

Kyle said it is 2021. Why are women and people of color always at the end of the line? It is frustrating and exhausting that she and Jackie have to bring this up. We need to listen to women and people of color and bring them to the forefront. She asked that the committee please make sure that people who reach out our validated, heard and responded to. Sophia said she couldn't agree more. She apologized to Jackie for having her emails go by the wayside.

Shayne said if the committee wants to do something for Juneteenth it should be decided at this meeting.

Sophia invited Eric to weigh in. Eric said the committee hasn't been able to do anything else without the permission of the selectboard or trustees. He doesn't know why this would not need their approval. He thinks the idea that we should get funding from the village and town is good. It doesn't send the positive message we want to send when we rely on donations. The timeline for Shayne's proposal seems tight. This committee wouldn't have another meeting until the beginning of June. We would have to have money before we started to advertise the essay contest. June 11 is the last day of school. This might be better targeted towards summer programming, which is being planned. Staff and students are feeling wrung out right now. The contest might not have the impact and participation we would like. There is barely four weeks remaining in the school year. He thinks an essay contest with the town's name on it would need approval. The board might think it is controversial. Would anyone in the school district be able to enter our towns contest, including students from other towns?

Shayne asked Nat's thoughts about whether the selectboard has to weigh in or if the committee has authority to do this themselves. Nat said he would not think it would need selectboard approval. Eric asked why not. What would be the criteria? Nat said that is a good question. It doesn't require funding. He doesn't have any other criteria. Shayne said it doesn't require funding or policy change and doesn't require any paid time from town employees. He thinks those three things mean the selectboard and trustees would not have anything they could do to stop this other than to disband the committee. The committee is not proposing to put anything up on municipal property.

Diane said we would have to raise funds, decide where to offer the contest, collect the essays, bring them to the committee and have committee members judge them. School gets out before Juneteenth. It seems like it would be pretty rushed.

Shayne said he was planning on being part of advertising and finding funds. If the committee is not interested he will wait for next year or try to find some other way to do it.

Jackie said some other ideas related to Juneteenth have been mentioned. Portia had talked about a unity walk and there was talk of tying that into Juneteenth. She agrees with Eric about the timeline.

Eric moved to ask the village trustees and the selectboard for \$200 each to sponsor a racial justice essay contest in Lamoille North School District to take place during summer programming.

Jackie said she knows there is a lot of COVID money for summer programming. She wonders if there will be funds there to fund an initiative like this instead of using town and village money. Eric said COVID money coming into the school district is being distributed by the mandated recovery team. They are supposed to make their plan available for public comment but input into that plan from the public or even from teachers has not occurred yet. With all the federal strings tied to that money, handing money out to students based on arbitrary measures may not qualify.

Rick said he supports the motion. A member of the public brought a worthy proposal. He thinks the next step is to see how we can get it funded.

Kyle said she supports it to but she thinks board members will ask questions like how the committee came up with that number and how the money will be used. Is it prize money for first, second and third place entrants? They will want specifics.

Eric said it would be prize money to first, second and third place – enough money to motivate kids to put time into it. At our next meeting we could decide on the questions and criteria.

Sophia asked if we could kick the contest off on Juneteenth so it connects to Juneteenth as Shayne intended but doesn't limit us as to time.

Eric said he doesn't think we should put a lot of thought into anything until it is approved. Once we have support and funding then we can get into planning. To spend a lot of time discussing an idea and then having voted down is disheartening.

Diane said she likes the longer timeline. She thinks that is a good idea.

Raven said she likes this idea. It would be nice if we could appeal to kids who are in school now. Eric said he thinks we can do that after the next meeting and can reiterate the information when the summer program starts up in July.

**The motion was passed.**

**4. *Results of Recommendations to the Boards***

Eric said he brought the committee's recommendations to the last selectboard meeting. Nat made a motion to hang a Black Lives Matter banner on the municipal building. There was no second and no discussion. It was disheartening to him. He at least anticipated a second and some discussion. Some board members said they were in favor of Black Lives Matter but not on municipal property. If he had been able to discuss it he had arguments he could have presented. Just raising a banner felt like a low bar to him. If we can't even do that, what is it we are tasked with doing? Are we empowered to make actual change or is this just a place to put loud people to quiet them down for a while? What is the purpose of this committee and



what kinds of motion should we be making? He thanked Nat for reaching out with ideas. But he hasn't heard from other members of the selectboard or trustees about what the committee should be doing.

Sophia said she wonders if we need to revisit the 5-point plan from the boards and the VLCT Municipal Engagement for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion document that was sent out. Jackie said VLCT has a committee now too. Sophia said she wonders if it would be a good bouncing off place for the committee for everyone to read that document and bring it to the attention of the selectboard and trustees and make sure they are on board with it. We haven't talked about the document in these meetings. That might be a good recentering of the intention of this committee.

Kyle said both town and village are members of VLCT. That holds a lot of weight. She would suggest that the committee remind the selectboard and trustees that this is a recommendation by VLCT. VLCT is being very proactive with racial and social justice. She would support Sophia's idea.

Jackie said she has been following that VLCT committee. It is a lot stronger than what we have here. One of the emails she sent had information about what the Middlebury selectboard is doing. They have a statement and a committee with three selectboard members on it. They want to increase their committee to potentially include town staff and citizens. VLCT has a wonderful template and other towns have templates and are doing better work. Their boards are more engaged in the work. She thinks it is a great idea to look to other boards for inspiration and validation.

Jackie thanked Eric for presenting to the selectboard. She said she wishes more committee members would come to board meetings. She wishes Raven had come to the trustee board meeting. That was the place where fundraising was first brought up. She asked Raven if she is following the village trustee board meetings. Raven said she is reading the minutes but she did not attend. Jackie said she thinks people from the Racial Justice Committee should show up to meetings. Kyle agreed. She said it is very important that members of this committee are present at trustee board and selectboard meetings.

**5. *Review and Discuss Progress on the 5-Point Plan***

Rick asked if Diane has heard anything more from the VTrans contact person. Diane said no; she thought Meredith was handling that. She hasn't heard anything more. Rick said he doesn't think the pole in front of Sterling Market is necessarily the only one that the banner could be hung from. He has seen at least two or three more of that type of pole and wire arrangement in the village. He is pretty sure there is more than one option.

Raven said that banner will be used by REAL in June for a Juneteenth event. It would be nice to have a time frame from the people making decisions about when we would put the banner up. Diane asked if REAL is just using it for one day. Raven said she is not sure. Jackie said she thinks we were hoping it would be in Johnson in June. Raven said she thinks REAL was waiting for an answer from Johnson. Diane asked if Raven can find out when REAL is going to use the banner. On Monday she will ask the trustee board for specific date we can get the

banner up or at least get the information to the state. She will get information on the different steps.

Eric said the discussion tonight has wandered from topic to topic. He feels in the future we need to prepare agendas with action items and discuss one item at a time.

Sophia said she thinks the committee needs to streamline communication. It is up to the chair to send out an agenda. She didn't get one. There should be an email with the agenda and other pertinent emails from the public sent out at least 24 hours before the meeting. The agenda is a little vague and allows for this meandering. She suggests copying the format of the selectboard agendas. She thinks we need more structure to meetings. For instance, specific recommendations could be listed under "Review Recommendations." She offered to help Rick with agendas. Rick said he supports her suggestions. He looks forward to sharing emails that he receives in the future.

Eric said the committee can construct an agenda in a group email. The agenda might even have suggested language for a motion. Maybe rather than put it all on Rick's shoulders the committee as a group could discuss what should be on the agenda for the upcoming meeting. Sophia noted that the work of coming up with the selectboard agenda doesn't all fall on Eric Osgood's shoulders. Brian Story develops the agenda, right? Nat said yes.

Sophia said as long as we don't use "reply all" an email can go out from Rick and committee members can reply singly to him and suggest items for the agenda. Nat said that would be a good process.

Kyle said if emails are just sent to Rick they need to be sent on to everyone. It is part of the chair's duty to send things along. Rick said he was a little concerned about the procedural aspect of it. He appreciates the advice about not using "reply all." Going forward he is taking the feedback and as things come in he will send them out to committee members.

Jackie said the board tasked her to get in touch with human rights commissioner Bor Yang. She sent her communications to Eric and Rick. Bor Yang's office is not doing trainings right now. They will start again in the summer and Jackie hopes to connect with her in the summer. Diane was going to get in touch with Peace and Justice. Diane said she thought it was Portia that was going to get in touch with Peace and Justice. Jackie said she recalls that Portia had reached out to them and they wanted her to narrow the focus more. They list all their workshops on their website. The cost for one of their workshops will be very high. One we have discussed is Seeing and Disrupting Racism.

Jackie said Portia and Diane did a nice job getting notices about this committee's meetings out to the newspaper and to Sue Lovering. The village posted a notice on their Facebook page but the town never did. Portia wrote a fantastic piece in the News & Citizen. Jackie's only regret was that she did not identify herself as a member of Johnson's Racial Justice Committee. She thought promoting this group was part of the reason for getting things in the paper. She would hope maybe this committee would put Portia's piece on Front Porch Forum

and on the village and town pages. Bor Yang doesn't have any workshops other than the one she already did. We had discussed repeating that one.

Nat said when Eric spoke at the selectboard meeting in April he asked what the selectboard wanted this committee to do and why it set the committee up. He thought that was a great question. He has been thinking about some ideas – not trying to displace any ideas that have already been put out there, just putting more out for the committee's consideration. A column in the News & Citizen is a great way to engage with a wider audience. It would be wonderful to see more in the newspaper from this committee or from people in Johnson. The committee could work with the Historical Society on programming and exhibits. Library bookmarks would get into a lot of people's hands. Maybe the committee could partner with the library on a speaker series on BIPOC writers. Maybe there could be a Studio Center partnership as well. He thinks there is a huge opportunity with the Johnson Recreation Committee. He is particularly thinking about coaches. What awareness do coaches have about issues of racial equity and what tools do they have when they an act of intolerance happens? If an act of intolerance happens, is it recognized and responded to properly? Do coaches have the resources they need to be able to respond to an issue? He spoke with Lisa about that. The entire front lobby of the municipal building is begging for some group to make the space into something wonderful. Our inclusivity statement is going to go there and there are opportunities as far as what will surround it.

Raven said there was a recommendation of someone interested in speaking with the Racial Justice Committee about racial equity – a pastor named Deanna Stephens. She has contact information. She would like to hear thoughts of Johnson residents about their experiences in Johnson and what they would like to see.

Jackie asked if Deanna Stephens contacted Raven or if she knows her personally. Raven said it was a recommendation made to Meredith to be brought to the committee. Meredith asked her to bring the request to the committee.

Diane said she looked up Deanna Stephens. She is an ordained minister. She doesn't see anywhere that she has done any kind of racial justice speaking. She thinks maybe if Meredith gets information like that she should ask the community member to come to a committee meeting.

Jackie said at the last trustee board meeting Will and BJ voted no on the board watching the Xusana Davis lecture. BJ had said he had 3 hours a week of racial justice training at his work so Jackie asked him what training he had because the committee is looking for ideas. She got the information. His workplace uses an organization out of New York. She thinks hopefully this committee would use organizations from Vermont. This organization seemed more geared toward corporations and workplace culture. But she can send information to the committee.

Raven said she looked at the link on Deanna Stephens and feel she is not what we are looking for. Eric said he doesn't think we should dismiss a woman of color who lives in Vermont as someone who has something of value for the group. Maybe we should inquire what she

might offer. A big blind spot of these meetings is that we don't have people of color speaking at them. Jackie suggested inviting her to the meeting. Rick said when someone from the community comes forward like in this case, he thinks the first response should be that these are public meetings.

Rick said he thinks there is a misperception that this is just a small group of people who have a certain idea. Somehow we need to create a different perception other than the false narrative that this is a small group of people with agendas. He said he saw in the chat a question about him meeting with the Historical Society. The UVM library has been closed due to COVID and he is waiting to hear back from a librarian there before meeting with them. He thinks there are clippings and photos at the UVM library related to a former Johnson United Church minister who promoted the Vermont Harlem Project. The Historical Society also has some material that he thinks was donated by the minister's son.

Raven apologized for saying something closed-minded. Jackie said the website with info on Deanna Stephens was a turnoff for her. It is very religious. She would not like to consider this person further unless they have something else to offer related to racial justice. Eric said he thinks in the name of inclusivity someone's religious belief shouldn't disqualify them from speaking to the committee. Jackie said this is a racial justice committee. We need to be focused. Cal said he thinks it is important not to give special privilege to anyone but just invite interested people to meetings.

Raven said she will see if the village and town Facebook pages will keep posting notices about this committee's meetings. The village posted a notice. The town said they needed to discuss it and nothing happened.

#### **6. *Review Recommendations***

Rick said we need to follow up on the progress of getting approval for flying the banner over Main Street and we have a new motion to request that the trustees and selectboard appropriate funds for the essay contest.

Eric said Nat clarified that nothing about the banner needs to go before the selectboard. Diane said she thinks it is only up to the village because the poles belong to the village. Nat said that is his understanding but it might be good to check with Brian Story in case he is wrong. The banner will be on village poles and over a state right of way, not a town right of way. Diane said she will check with Brian Story.

Jackie said probably by the next meeting the date to put up the banner should be solidified. Raven said she got a message from someone in REAL that no dates have been decided yet for REAL's use of the banner.

Jackie suggested maybe the committee could make its own banner. It could be used for other purposes as well. Eric said that is a good idea. If people think a Black Lives Matter flag is too controversial, maybe other symbols of racial justice could hang that don't have those implications.

Eric moved to recommend that the selectboard and the trustees reconsider hanging a Black Lives Matter banner on the municipal building in light of the committee's discussion and reflection on the board's logic.

Nat said he would encourage the committee to try having some one-on-one conversations with board members. It is often worthwhile to engage with someone directly. If the committee wants to reintroduce this they should go ahead but he is not going to continue bringing it up at selectboard meetings if he is going to be the only one supporting it.

Eric said he will call selectboard members and talk to them.

Jackie said she hopes Nat will keep bringing it up. Nat said we can't just keep continuing to have the conversation at selectboard meetings if it is going nowhere. There is a lot on the selectboard's plate. He does not want to continue having the same conversation in selectboard meetings if it is not going anywhere. That is not productive time for the board and it is not helping this cause go forward. Jackie said there wasn't even a second on the motion. We were just hoping for discussion. Nat said there has been more discussion on racial justice than a lot of other issues. The board has had a lot of discussion about racial justice issues.

Eric said what Nat is saying is compelling. Maybe we should give ourselves time to talk to selectboard members and ask community members to talk to them. Maybe we should hold off on recommending this again. Nat said there are a lot of ways forward other than hitting that same button over again. Eric said he thinks we will bring the issue up again but maybe not at the next meeting. Jackie said bringing these issues up over and over again has gotten us results. That is how we got the inclusivity statement and how this committee was formed – by revisiting the issues over and over again.

Rick said he thinks it is important that the public be a part of the process. If a motion doesn't get a second and there is no discussion the public has no idea what we are trying to put across. People who have different ideas should be encouraged to come to meetings and share their ideas. He doesn't want to be in conversations off the record with people he has entrusted leadership positions to.

Eric withdrew his motion.

Diane said she thinks it is important for people to talk individually to selectboard and trustee board members and to the community at large. When we report to the selectboard and trustees she thinks it is a good idea to tell them what we are going to be discussing and to tell them that we are going to ask them to reconsider hanging the Black Lives Matter flag and pride flag. We can let them know that conversation is going to come up again. We need to have permission to put things on kiosks and work with the Recreation Committee right?

Eric said the selectboard wants to know what we are up to and he will relay a great deal of this conversation and how we feel about the last vote. He will probably ask if they have other suggestions about public messaging.

Nat said he thinks the Racial Justice Committee can engage other committees directly and doesn't need board permission. Eric asked what the formal process for that would be. Nat said to email the chair of those committees and say that the Racial Justice Committee wants to make proposals.

Diane asked if Raven would be willing to report to the trustees instead of her doing it since she is on the trustee board. Raven said she can do it if Diane can give her some guidance. She will plan to go to both the next selectboard and the next trustee board meeting. Eric said he can't go to the next selectboard meeting.

**7. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:21.

*Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths*

UNAPPROVED