
Attendance:

Anne Bishop, Community Member
Alma Crnalic, Community Member
Lisa Bland, Community Member
Mattea Sexton, Community Member
Dave Ferguson, RCMP Representative
Heather Kidd, West Hants Middle School Liaison
Ashley Connors, Avon View High School Liaison
Karie-Ann Wilkie, Health Board Representative
Kevin Waters, WHRM Employee
Vanessa Lake, WHRM Employee

Regrets:

Charlotte Paul, Glooscap Representative
Domenic Padula, Community Member
Rayvonne Carrington, SPEC Advisory Member
Kayla Leary-Pinch, Councillor
Jim Ivey, Councillor (Alternate)
Mark Phillips, CAO (WHRM)
Katie Rose, HR Manager (WHRM)
Deanna Snair, WHRM Employee
Jessie Drysdale, WHRM Employee
Chris Burns, WHRM Employee

1) Call to Order

At 6:03pm, Anne called the meeting to order.

2) Land Acknowledgements

West Hants Regional Municipality acknowledges that we are in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People and that this land is governed by the treaties of Peace and Friendship signed in 1726. We recognize that we are all treaty people and have responsibilities to this land and to each other. We acknowledge the historic and ongoing racism against this community and our commitment to Truth and Reconciliation by listening, learning, and recognizing our wrongs.

West Hants Regional Municipality recognizes that African Nova Scotians are a distinct people whose history, legacies, and contributions have enriched that part of Mi'kma'ki known as Nova Scotia for over 400 years. West Hants is home to some of the oldest of the 52 historic Black communities in this Province. We acknowledge the historic and ongoing racism against this community and are committed to mending our relationship by listening, learning, and recognizing our wrongs.

3) Attendance

Quorum was achieved. Regrets had been received from Domenic Padula and Charlotte Paul. Mark Phillips, Deanna Snair, Councillor Leary-Pinch and Councillor Ivey were attending another municipal meeting.

4) Approval of the Agenda

Moved by Lisa Bland and seconded by Mattea Sexton that the agenda be approved as circulated. Motion carried unanimously.

5) Declaration of Conflict of Interest

No conflicts were declared.

6) Announcements

There were no announcements.

7) Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

Moved by Lisa Bland and seconded by Alma Crnalic that the minutes of March 10, 2025, be approved as circulated. Motion carried unanimously.

8) Introductions

As it had been a long time since the Committee had met, and there were some new faces around the table, each member introduced themselves. Anne provided three questions for everyone to consider: What work are you doing or projects are you involved in that connect

with the diversity, equity, and inclusion mandate of this Committee? What is something that has happened in that work in the past six months that you are proud of? What is something that you have learned about diversity, equity, and inclusion in the past six months?

Anne is a writer and freelance teacher. She recently sent the fourth edition of her published book on equity to the copy editor. She has been doing considerable historical research on how and why some groups considered themselves superior over others.

Alma has a history in finance and Human Resources and is now an entrepreneur, hoping to open her home-based business soon. She has seen a lot of racism since coming to Nova Scotia, and her daughter has even experienced mockery for her last name at school.

Ashley is one of the Vice-Principals at Avon View High School. Ashley and her colleagues are working on educational components and pro-active material to ensure all forms of discrimination stays out of the school. Many difficult conversations are had with both students and parents.

Dave is the detachment commander for the local RCMP. Community connection is invaluable in his line of work, and the RCMP strives to build relationships with all community groups. They have undertaken many steps to improve these relationships in recent years. He shared that even his son has been in trouble, and parenting is a lifelong learning and teaching opportunity.

Heather is a Grade 8 teacher and Equity Lead for the West Hants Middle School. She has been working on the VIBE program and recently rolled out informative posters on the subject. She and her colleagues are working to triage hateful acts done in the school and to prevent further incidents. The VIBE program has been a tremendous success so far.

Karrie-Ann Wilkie is on the Health Board, representing the Central zone (including West Hants). She spoke of how much things have changed over the years, and not necessarily for the better. The community health plan hopes to address cultural competencies going forward. Karrie-Ann mentioned that applications for the Wellness Fund are due at the end of April, and that West Hants Pride was recently registered with the Registry of Joint Stocks. She is learning a lot from her own daughter about social justice.

Kevin was the staff lead for the Equity plan, was previously the Active Living Coordinator, and currently the Recreation Program Supervisor for the municipality. He learned a great deal while working on the plan, both good and bad, and shared the concerning fact that West Hants is considered a hotspot of white supremacy.

Vanessa is the planning assistant for the municipality. Their work doesn't necessarily involve diversity, but being non-binary, their presence in the office is a constant reminder to co-workers that the queer community exists and can't be ignored.

Mattea is a university student studying English and Sociology. She was recently involved in the Acadia Liberation for Gaza, a 16-hour sit-in protest. She has learned first-hand the power of the collective.

Lisa is a nurse who recently returned to school for her master's degree. She is currently focused on menstrual and reproductive health for African Nova Scotians. She is a Girl Guide Leader, Valley Regional Representative and Vice-Chair for the Council on African Canadian Education, and she recently published an op-ed on the Nursing Code of Ethics with questions to ask candidates during elections.

The Committee discussed how learning never stops, and we must all do our part. There has been much progress in the world of social justice, but there are still harsh realities we must all face and work toward a better future for all.

9) Review of the Five Pillars of the Committee's Work

During the first few meetings of this Committee, they decided on five "pillars" to guide their actions and mandate. Anne reviewed these pillars for the sake of new members.

1) Symbolic actions. This includes items such as raising diverse flags, printing stickers, the recently painted Pride crosswalk in Windsor, and other positive images of diversity.

2) Public Education. This includes educating the public on diversity, equity, and inclusion, and changing public attitudes towards these topics. This can be done with education sessions, workshops, open discussion and sharing knowledge and reference material.

3) Internal Education. This involves learning more as a Committee in topics related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. This is also done through education sessions, workshops, open discussions and sharing knowledge. Guest speakers with personal and professional experience may be brought in. The Committee may also engage in thank-tank style activities.

4) Policy and Practice. Consultation with the municipality to help apply an equity lens to the policies and practices of Council, staff, and related services like policing. Where are the shortfalls, what can be done better, adding a diverse opinion, etc.

5) Structural Equity. This pillar considers many of the community concerns expressed in the 2022 RAD Report. This focuses on changes to the structure of the municipality to be more diverse, inclusive and equitable by suggesting changes not necessarily related to policies. This address concerns related to transportation access, housing, community centres, health services, etc.

10) Unfinished Business

a) Children's Book project

Domenic was leading this project. It is about having children's literature on diversity, equity and inclusion readily available in public spaces. This is already being done in some municipal spaces, but the hope is to expand it even further.

b) Re-interpreting the Haliburton plaque at the Community Centre

During the October meeting, the plaque celebrating Thomas Chandler Haliburton at the Community Centre was discussed. Anne took on the task of reviewing the literature on re-interpreting historical monuments in a way that preserves the history while also providing context. She will distribute her findings to the Committee. Expanding this initiative to the rest of the municipality was discussed, as it was something mentioned in the Equity, Anti-Racism, and Accessibility Strategy Plan. Anne mentioned that Parks Canada has been reviewing various plaques throughout the Country and have the budget to review about 300 a year. Community consultation is a valuable part of the process.

Lisa recalled that the Planning & Heritage Advisory Committee had discussed consistent signage in the past. Vanessa will review the minutes and send out the relevant information.

c) Internal Education presentation on African Nova Scotian History

Sheldon States was originally going to give a presentation to the Committee on African Nova Scotian history in January, but due to a busy schedule, it has not happened yet. The hope is to bring him in after the schools close for the summer.

11) New Business

a) West Hants Equity Plan

The West Hants Equity, Anti-Racism, and Accessibility Strategy plan has been publicly released on the municipality's website. Everyone congratulated Kevin and the consultants from Davis Pier for the amazing work they've accomplished. This plan was a huge undertaking and is a great step forward for equity within the municipality.

Kevin explained that there are 26 strategic actions approved by Council, and several recommended sub-actions listed in the appendix. WHRM's plan is set for 10 years and is to be reviewed every 3 years. Each action has a different timeline. There are several actions where the Diverse and Inclusive Communities Committee is named the primary lead, and more where they are co-lead, or the action is within their mandate. Lisa volunteered to compile a list of the actions directly tied to the Committee. Kevin noted that the actions are not listed in order of priority.

Anne hopes to speak with Michel Bourgeois, the Chair of the Accessibility Committee, to discuss the projects that fall under both their mandates. This may become a regular meeting.

The Committee discussed ways to improve the relationship between the municipality and equity-denied communities. The municipality having a presence at events would be a great start.

12) Next Meeting Date / Adjournment

The next meeting date is scheduled for May 12, 2025, at 6:00pm. The location has yet to be determined. Information will be sent out when it is available. With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:28pm.