

TOWN OF SPRINGFIELD
SPRINGFIELD DECLARATION OF INCLUSION COMMITTEE

Springfield Town Library
Main Street, Springfield, VT 05156
Tuesday, August 22nd, 2023, 5:30 p.m.

1. Call to Order: the meeting was called to order by Chair patrice jones at 5:31 p.m.

- **Present in person:** Caroline Comley, Walter Martone, Char Osterlund, Chair patrice jones, Sue Dowdell, Dan Bannan
- **Not present:** Brandon Gulnik and Charis Boke, who is currently on leave of absence.

2. Additions / Subtractions to the Agenda: none

3. Public Comment: no public present

4. Announcements:

Sue has a new children's librarian starting 9/5. Library card sign up month is September.

5. Approval of Minutes: July 25th, 2023

No changes were made. Char Osterlund moved and Dan seconded that we accept the minutes as written. Unanimous with Sue abstaining as she was not present.

6. New Business

a. Amended Equity Screening Tool (addition of transparency)

Discussed and reviewed the amendment to the screening tool, completed by patrice. A passage about transparency was added. Walter Martone moved to approve and Sue Dowdell seconded that we accept the amendment as written. Unanimous.

b. Accessibility of town committees

Discussed the accessibility of town committees. The sustainability committee is not listed on the town website, but it is on the questionnaire. It was suggested that the town website should include a page listing all committees, information about the committee, and who is eligible to join. Walter noted that these descriptions already exist (purpose statements) and would just need to be put on the website along with the appointed office questionnaire, and a note about the number of vacancies. Char suggested they consider adding a separate page with information about how to get involved in boards and committees. This is not a recommendation we want to make right now. Char also suggested having a town committee openings page, requirements (if any) and a link to the appointed office questionnaire. Discussed possible placement on the town website.

Three recommendations will be made to the selectboard:

- 1) Add committee purpose statements, openings (if any), requirements (if any), and link to appointment questionnaire to town website for each committee

- 2) Add sustainability committee to list of town committees
- 3) Add list of committee openings to town website

patrice proposed and Sue seconded the three recommendations. Unanimous. patrice will write to Jeff Mobus and copy Walter Martone.

patrice raised the question of “unofficial” town committees like the downtown committee. Walter expressed that this is not a concern, as they are not official and do not have any decision making power. Concerns were raised at the last meeting about the main street committee and lack of minutes/transparency/diversity. As per Sue’s recollection, the historical purpose of the downtown committee was to keep the businesses downtown informed about goings on downtown. They did not make decisions and there were no appointments. patrice was told by Jeff Mobus that the committee existed to advise the town manager. Char Osterlund proposed a remedy: post as an informational meeting that all are welcome to attend, not just businesses. Walter Martone expressed that the purpose would become muddled and the committee would likely dissolve. Caroline Comley suggested posting minutes and seeking information about who is involved in the committee. Char Osterlund will look into how to get more diversity within town committees. patrice suggested inviting the head of the tenant association to meetings, not just the head of housing authority, to get more diverse perspectives. Sue Dowdell suggested inviting Jeff to the next meeting and asking him any questions directly. Caroline Comley, Char Osterlund and Dan Bannan agreed.

c. SSD Equity Audit results

Results of the equity audit for Springfield School District were discussed. Char Osterlund attended the school board meeting where the results were reviewed by Sherri Nichols. At that meeting, questions were asked by school board members about following through on initiatives. The board had some recommendations for follow through, such as starting an inclusion committee. patrice asked if there was anything in the report that suggested unmet needs that the town itself could fill. Nothing stood out. Char Osterlund suggested adding a member of the town’s inclusion committee to the schools inclusion committee. Char Osterlund or Caroline Comley could possibly attend.

7. Old Business

a. Ongoing Housing-Related Work

i. Review of zoning policies with an equity lens

Dan Bannan presented his findings. The vast majority of the document had to do with building regulations. On its face, there is nothing non inclusive or inequitable about it, except that zoning regulations tend to increase cost, and restrict developments that would typically be geared towards low-moderate income people. For example, in the past some towns have used their regulations to keep out low-moderate income folks. Nothing like that exists in Springfield’s zoning policies. State law indicates that no ordinance should have the effect of excluding low-moderate housing. The Governor signed a housing bill this summer that addressed most of Dan’s questions. The bill creates resources to support construction and rehabilitation of affordable housing units. Increased allowable units per acre 4 to 5. Anywhere a house is permitted a duplex is now permitted. It also altered Act 250, which restricts development of undeveloped land, and increased the amount of units that can be created in a 5 year period. Grant money will be obtained for first generation home buyers, and the development of affordable

housing and renting units. There is currently a shortage of 30-40,000 units based on population in Vermont. The zoning laws do not specifically address tiny houses. A tiny house is considered a mobile home and falls under the same regulations. A mobile home park has to be on at least 10 acres of land and can only have 4 mobile homes per acre. Dan suggested that we may want to make a recommendation to the town that they look at the tiny house definitions/regulations and consider making a change since they are so much smaller than a mobile home. Dan will prepare a statement for the next meeting re: changing regulations on tiny home communities to be presented to the planning commission.

ii. Identification of rental units: No new information

iii. Fair housing handout: No new information

b. Follow-up of review of selected town policies and procedures

i. delinquent tax, water, and wastewater assessment collection

Char Osterlund spoke to Shaneen at the water department. If someone is delinquent, they are charged 1.5% interest per month, and receive a monthly notice for 3 months. After 3 months they get a shutoff date if more than \$200 is owed. They can make arrangements to pay but interest continues to accrue. Resources for helping with utility payments are given with every notice. Char will get a copy of the flier so we can look at the language/reading level and determine whether it is accessible for those with disabilities.

ii. hiring or public safety:

Caroline Comley presented possible recommendations for changes to the town hiring policy, but they were not discussed at length as we were over allotted time for the meeting. This will be discussed at the next meeting along with all subsequent agenda items.

iii. public park permitting

c. Discuss information received concerning training for town employees

i. Police Department

ii. Fire Department

iii. Other Departments

To be discussed at next meeting.

8. Potential Recommendations to Selectboard

Add committee purpose statements, openings (if any), requirements (if any), and link to appointment questionnaire to town website for each committee

Add sustainability committee to list of town committees

Add list of committee openings to town website

Fix the link on the town website with the declaration of inclusion (currently not working)

9. Set date of next regular meeting: September 26, 2023, at 5:30 PM

10. Adjournment

Char moved and Caroline seconded that we adjourn. Unanimous. Meeting adjourned at 7:12pm

Respectfully submitted,

Caroline Comley