

HERNDON DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION COMMITTEE
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, November 2, 2023

The Herndon Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee (HDEIC) met in public session on Thursday, November 2, 2023, at 7:00 p.m. in the Herndon Council Chambers, 765 Lynn Street, Herndon, Virginia. In attendance were: Chair Pradip Dhakal, Vice Chair Soma Ramesh, and committee members Rachel Eisenfeld, Sabrina Hossain [arrived at 7:39 p.m.], Andrew Lacher, Arati Sigdel Parajuli, Eileen Villegas, and Yelena Barth. Committee members Alex Rodriguez, Lorena Brady, and Triston Chase O’Savio were absent.

Staff members in attendance were: Elizabeth Gilleran, Director of Community Development, and Aaron Zoellick, Clerk of Boards and Commissions.

1. Call to Order

Chair Dhakal called the meeting of the Herndon Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee to order at 7:01 p.m.

For the record, Chair Dhakal stated that seven members were present for the meeting, which constituted a quorum.

2. Comments from the Audience

Chair Dhakal called on any members of the public who wanted to address the committee.

No comments were provided.

3. Approval of Minutes

a. September 14, 2023, Herndon Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee Draft Minutes

On motion by Vice Chair Ramesh, seconded by committee member Barth, the minutes from the September 14, 2023, Herndon Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee meeting were approved by a 7-0 vote. The vote was: committee members Eisenfeld, Lacher, Parajuli, Villegas, Barth, Vice Chair Ramesh, and Chair Dhakal voting “Aye.”

4. New Business

a. One Fairfax Policy Discussion

Committee member Lacher provided a summary of the One Fairfax Policy and how it could be implemented by the Town of Herndon.

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There was discussion among the committee and staff regarding (1) the town's ability to consider transportation, (2) how a One Herndon policy would address the criminal justice system, (3) how the committee would go about getting resources for a One Herndon policy, (4) the inclusion of a diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) employee in the budget, (5) how Fairfax County handles DEI employees, (6) whether the HDEIC could have a representative attend the One Fairfax meetings, (7) the need for a list of expectations for the HDEIC from the Town Council, (8) whether the HDEIC should be fundraising, (9) whether the HDEIC should be involved in HR processes, (10) whether the HDEIC could ask all Town of Herndon businesses with ten employees or more to send a representative to an HDEIC meeting once a year, (11) whether the HDEIC is allowed to form subcommittees, and (12) the need for HDEIC to have greater visibility.

Committee member Lacher volunteered to draft a version of a One Herndon policy and suggested that this could be an item that the HDEIC recommends to the Town Council.

Chair Dhakal asked committee member Barth to send her list of questions and recommendations to Collin Okoniewski, Planning Operations Manager.

Chair Dhakal asked committee member Lacher to draft a One Herndon policy and forward it to Ms. Gilleran.

Ms. Gilleran stated that she would speak with the town manager about funding resources for a One Herndon policy.

b. Action/Initiatives Roundtable

Vice Chair Ramesh provided an update on an initiative program for internships for young adults who do not pursue college.

There was discussion among the committee and staff regarding (1) how the students are connected with potential employers.

Committee member Eisenfeld provided an update on the safe space initiative.

There was discussion among the committee and staff regarding (1) potential training for businesses identified as safe spaces, (2) whether employee background checks would be required, (3) whether students preferred businesses or public spaces to be identified as safe spaces, (4) current afterschool programs, (5) whether adult members of vulnerable groups would feel comfortable in a shared safe space with teenagers, (6) the use of similar concepts by silicon valley companies, (7) the organization GLSEN, and (8) whether a safe space program may be better handled by a private group like the Dulles Chamber.

Ms. Gilleran stated that the town could not declare that certain businesses are safe spaces.

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Ms. Gilleran recommended working with the Dulles Chambers to help promote a safe space program.

Chair Dhakal asked if the HDEIC could invite Mark Ingrao, the interim director of the Dulles Chambers, to a meeting.

Ms. Gilleran recommended inviting the president of the Dulles Chambers.

Ms. Gilleran stated that Mr. Okoniewski will reach out to committee members about scheduling the next meeting.

5. Comments

a. Comments from Staff

There were no comments from staff.

b. Comments from Committee Members

Chair Dhakal provided updates on (1) the creation of a Community Cultural Festivals policy, (2) the Town of Herndon business survey, (3) a possible skate event, (4) women's only hours at the community center, and (5) the town's rebranding efforts.

There was discussion among the committee and staff regarding these topics and reforming the Economic Development Committee.

Ms. Gilleran stated that if someone wants to host an event and use town facilities for the event, they should contact town staff as soon as possible.

Ms. Gilleran stated that the presentation of the Town of Herndon business survey can be found on the September 19, 2023, town council agenda.

6. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:29 p.m.



Collin J. Okoniewski

Planning Operations Manager