



SELECTBOARD REGULAR MEETING

Monday, November 27, 2023 at 6:00 PM

Chris Letourneau Meeting Room and via Zoom

MINUTES

Zoom Details:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6165843896?pwd=STduU2JzTmpiVmE1MXZSaWZWVadz09>

Meeting ID: 616 584 3896 | Passcode: 5243524

Dial by your Location: 1 929 205 6099 (New York)

Approved on 12.11.2023

1. CALL TO ORDER

- a. **Selectboard Present:** Devon Thomas Chair, Shannon Jenkins Vice-Chair, Jamie Comstock, Carl Rosenquist, Nicholas Martin
- b. **Staff Present:** Cheryl Letourneau, Dawn Penney, April Edwards, Doug Bergstrom, Bill Hinman
- c. **Public Present:** Marty Jansen, Bette Dunsmore, Heather Dunsmore, Heather Grimm, Fred Grimm, Terry Cleveland, Marc Price, Jason Chagnon, Tony Heinlein
- d. **Public Zoom:** Chris Taylor, Jana Thuesen, Karen Badger, Frank Gore, Kristina Senna

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. CHAIR UPDATE

4. ADDITIONS, DELETIONS, OR CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

- C. Rosenquist makes a motion to have two separate Executive Sessions with one early in the meeting to respect B. Hinman's time, N. Martin seconds. All in favor, motion carried.
- C. Rosenquist makes a motion to have this added to the agenda, N. Martin seconds. All in favor, motion carried.

5. SELECTBOARD MINUTES AND WARRANTS

A. Approval of Selectboard Regular Meeting Minutes for 11.13.2023

- C. Rosenquist makes a motion to approve the minutes from 11.13.2023 with corrections, S. Jenkins seconds.
 - Line 105 is a fragmented sentence.
 - Line 156 corrects the spelling of the word too.
 - J. Comstock makes a motion to have Thomas added to line 58.
- All in favor, motion carried.

B. Approval of Warrant #30

- S. Jenkins makes a motion to approve Warrant #30 with corrections, J. Comstock seconds.

- J. Comstock questions the audit, A. Edwards says it is not finished. N. Martin clarifies that they are still on budget, A. Edwards confirms they are.
- J. Comstock questions \$9296 for sand. N. Martin assumes it is the sand for the year.
- All in favor, motion carried.
- D. Penney clarified the motion was for corrections and there are no corrections on the warrant. D. Thomas confirms.

C. 11.22.2023 Executive Personal Committee Meeting Minutes

- C. Rosenquist makes a motion to accept 11.22.2023 minutes, J. Comstock seconds. All in favor, motion carried.

6. PUBLIC COMMENT (For items not on agenda)

All participants must clearly state their names. Appropriate actions will be considered once the Selectboard has reviewed the information provided and necessary subsequent research.

- B. Dunsmore states that she is fearful of the direction that Georgia is heading. Her opinion has nothing to do with anything online as she does not go there.

7. CORRESPONDENCE

A letter from Terry Cleveland:

Dear Selectboard and attendees of the board meeting on November 27th,

I have read the email some of the DEI committee sent and want to make a statement. I would also like to ask if EVERY name on the signature line signed on to this letter. I want to be assured that all four signed members agreed with the email.

My statement:

I began researching Aaron Kindsvatter once I realized he was suggested as a speaker to address the possible adverse effects of DEI in our town. All of Devon's bullet points about him are spot on:

Kindsvatter's issues are all about racism, anti-racism, whiteness, and white genocide. As far as I can see, he does not speak about the other marginalized communities in his speeches.

You can find a couple of instances of his colleagues' disappointment in him and disagreement with him as he DOES, in a comment to another student, agree that instances of violence may be necessary.

And, it is an incendiary response to the board. It is incendiary because the board and some members of the DEI committee found two people working to bring DEI to each town to make each Vermonter feel safe and welcome. Kindsvatter believes that anti-racism is an ideology that makes people think they are racist if they don't buy into it. He wants you to think that as a white person, he is being discriminated against, and that doesn't make him feel good. Hmmm. I would ask him to take a moment and reflect on that statement.

The definition of RACISM is prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism by an individual, community, or institution against a person based on their racial or ethnic group.

Several people asked multiple times in the last DEI meeting: isn't Vermont a KIND state? Are you saying we aren't KIND? Well, people. Let's talk about Saturday's shooting of 3 Palestinian students in Burlington. Here's your answer. We are not. And we are not in Georgia, either. While I won't use any attribution regarding this statement, it was asked in a conversation why we need a DEI statement in

Georgia. Only three black people are in town, and that's three too many. Are we kind? No, we are not. And that's just about race.

I imagine there would be many instances of targeting here in Georgia if you put out a questionnaire. And before you argue that people lie and would make up stories, shame on you. Marginalized people have no reason to lie. They have plenty of true stories to pull from. They only want to live in a community that accepts them.

I have a suggestion for the board: task the DEI committee to find a TOWN OR MUNICIPALITY that has refused a DEI statement. Ask them why. And ask for specifics on how it harmed their town or how they thought it would. THEN, you have an equal and similar view against Al Wakefield and Bob Harnish, who are working tirelessly to bring a feeling of safety and community to our towns. Otherwise, you only have propaganda.

And I'll ask one more time for those who didn't hear me the last five times: WHO WILL IT HARM TO HAVE A DEI STATEMENT that makes marginalized people feel more welcome in their community? WHO?!

8. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

9. BOARD BUSINESS (Public comment on agenda items limited to 5 minutes)

A. Addition to the agenda

- C. Rosenquist makes a motion for Executive Session where prior information may put the town or people at risk, N. Martin seconds. All in favor motion carried.
- C. Rosenquist makes a motion to go into Executive Session with the board, C. Letourneau, and B. Hinman to discuss Greenbacker Contract issues at 6:18 p.m.
- At **6:30 p.m.** - C. Rosenquist made a motion to exit Executive Session, N. Martin seconded. All in favor, motion carried.
- There were no motions made from Executive Session.

B. Bill Hinman – Errors and Omissions

- B. Hinman explains what Errors and Omissions are and how they are mandated by the state. He requests approval from the board to update: Paya and Lane, Wimble & Sons, Comcast Broad Band, John Rhodes Revocable Trust, and the Veteran's Exemption list.
- B. Hinman explains that individuals need to apply directly to the state each year for their Veteran's Exemption.
- C. Rosenquist makes a motion to approve the four Errors and Omissions leaving out the Veterans to deal with later, N. Martin seconds. All in favor, motion carried.

C. Historical Society Request

- C. Rosenquist says the request came from the Historical Society at the budget meeting. They are requesting \$5,227.30. C. Letourneau says she will put it in the next budget meeting.
- C. Rosenquist says there was a request to have an exchange of dehumidifiers between the town office and the Historical Society. C. Letourneau confirms there was an agreement made earlier today.

D. Furnace Quotes

- C. Letourneau presented the board with the two quotes that T. Cadieux received and submitted to her. C. Letourneau says their quotes are not clear and says she has not heard from T. Cadieux but is waiting in hopes he can help.
- C. Rosenquist asks if there was a recommendation. C. Letourneau says no.
- The board asks C. Letourneau to ask T. Cadieux for a breakdown of the quotes via email.

- ❖ C. Rosenquist makes a motion to move items E and F ahead of D for the sake of time efficacy, N. Martin seconds. D. Thomas abstains, S. Jenkins, J. Comstock, C. Rosenquist, and N. Martin vote yes, motion carried.

E. Hidden Woods and Forest Glen – Engineer

- C. Letourneau asks the board which part of the Purchasing Policy they would like her to follow.
- S. Jenkins says it is good practice to get three bids.
- N. Martin asks how long the estimates are good for.
- F. Grimm asks if the estimates would have any teeth at all.
- C. Letourneau asks if she is asking for bids or estimates. S. Jenkins says estimates.

F. Extended Office Hours

- D. Thomas asks for thoughts.
- N. Martin says it has been tried before saying it did not work. N. Martin says he can see it both ways.
- C. Letourneau says she tried it for a couple of months, and no one came. She says the clerk's office usually is open early and everyone is willing to stay later if anyone needs anything. Discussion was had on the wording of a statement.
- B. Dunsmore says maybe the word 'accommodate' could be added to the statement.
- F. Grimm says you may want to say, 'may accommodate'.

G. DEI invitation to Aaron Kindsvatter

- D. Thomas asked the DEI Committee not to invite Kindsvatter to the town of Georgia.
- D. Thomas reads aloud a letter to the board from some members of the DEI Committee. He asks if this is a resignation. H. Grimm says it is not.

Devon & Selectboard Members,

We are writing in response to the request from Devon to put a hold on the invite to Dr. Aaron Kindsvatter to speak with the DEI Committee.

We feel that the board has sent us mixed messages on how we are to operate as a committee. We were formed and tasked with looking into what a DEI statement would mean for our community. We were also told that as long as it could be tied to the charge that you would allow the committee to decide how to approach our research and decisions.

We knew that the board wanted the founders of the Vermont Declaration on Inclusion to come to the committee to make a presentation before the committee was even in place. We decided that we should look at all viewpoints on accepting a DEI statement and what the pros and cons would look like. This means that we would need to look at multiple viewpoints to be fair in our conclusions.

Our first attempt at finding a counter claim was an interview by John Stossell of Dr Erec Smith who was a former DEI trainer, this was turned down by the board as it was deemed to be from social media sources and would not allow a question and answer opportunity from committee members and the public. Our argument was that videos are posted to YouTube because it is a platform for videos on the internet and it is a platform that our own town uses to post their meeting videos. But we moved on and looked for another viewpoint that would allow for a question and answer period.

Countless hours have been put into researching other speakers and how we could meet the charge and find a speaker who could give some time. Dr. Aaron Kindsvatter was found and his presentation "How

DEI Fails Children and Families” seemed to fit what we are working on. This presentation is well worded and very respectful. Dr. Kindsvatter is a founding member of Free Black Thought and a chapter leader for the Foundation Against Intolerance and Racism (FAIR) We decided to move forward and see if he would be willing to attend via zoom or if he could meet in person since he is also from Vermont. Dr Kindsvatter agreed to meet with us and we set a date of 12/4/2023 at our committee meeting. Some of us knew that as soon as a name was put out, there would be community members that would try to find a reason to have this shut down as they do not want opposing views to be seen or heard. We were shocked to hear that Devon’s plans were to continue with censorship and prohibit us from going forward with this guest speaker. We were given the reasons as follows:

- “Aaron’s message is more focused on a discussion of racial identity and not the municipal impact of a DEI statement.”
- “I find it concerning that he has a history of using violent language and has even encouraged acts of violence against students at UVM”
- “it seems like an incendiary invitation which is the type of action the Selectboard asked the committee to avoid making in pursuing its charge”

We do not agree with these statements, and ask the board to give us more information on how you came to these conclusions. We feel that we cannot come to a clear understanding on how this would affect our community without being able to explore all viewpoints. Does the select board have any recommendations on an acceptable opposing viewpoints or is this just a tactic of smoke and mirrors? Due to the divisiveness and backlash to having an opposing view and the personal attacks online and in person to our committee members as well as community members, individuals are scared to attend and or speak up to say they don’t agree. The insinuation that our committee cannot view information and make an informed decision of facts without the influence of the select board is quite offensive. Our diverse backgrounds should be respected and allowed to explore the charge as stated by the select board. If the select board wanted to lay out a predetermined plan as to how, what, where and why we were to investigate this subject, it should have been done in advance with clear guidelines and a list of appropriate resources.

At this time we feel that we cannot move forward as the select board continues to intervene and stop the forward action of the committee.

Respectfully submitted,

Heather Grimm, Martha Jansen, Linda Kirker, Bob Stebbins

- S. Jenkins says H. Grimm, M. Jansen, L. Kirker, and B. Stebbins can welcome him personally; she just does not agree with it.
- C. Rosenquist makes a motion to enter into discussion about the DEI Committee, N. Martins seconds.
- J. Thuesen wants it known that she is not any part of the letter. She goes on to state her reasons.
- C. Rosenquist says he went through all of the links that were sent to him and he did not see any mention of the violence that is being referred to.
- J. Chagnon says that there are 4,565 signatures calling for the resignation of Kindsvatter.
- D. Thomas says the issue is not what he says but what it will do to the town conversation. He says to google his name and read the controversy.

- 213 ▪ C. Rosenquist makes a motion to have the DEI Committee be allowed to invite Kindsvatter
- 214 to present opposing viewpoints, N. Martin seconds.
- 215 ▪ H. Grimm says you have formed an opinion before meeting with the person. She says they
- 216 are shutting down the conversation.
- 217 ▪ J. Chagnon says he would love to hear from him.
- 218 ▪ M. Jansen says it was a temporary agreement and she was waiting to hear from the
- 219 selectboard to see what they were thinking.
- 220 ▪ D. Thomas wants to bring the information to the community.
- 221 ▪ B. Dunsmore clarifies that they were instructed not to look online and now they don't want to
- 222 allow a person to be physically present to answer questions.
- 223 ▪ D. Thomas says the speaker was reported to encourage violence. Discussion continued.
- 224 ▪ J. Comstock says this committee is at the Direction of the Chair so if that is what he wants he
- 225 does not understand why it is this much of a conversation.
- 226 ▪ T. Cleveland asks who it will harm. Her letter to the board is as follows:

227 Dear Selectboard and attendees of the board meeting on November 27th,

228
229 I have read the email some of the DEI committee sent and want to make a statement. I would also
230 like to ask if EVERY name on the signature line signed on to this letter. I want to be assured that all
231 four signed members agreed with the email.

232 My statement:

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234 possible adverse effects of DEI in our town. All of Devon's bullet points about him are spot on:

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236 can see, he does not speak about the other marginalized communities in his speeches.

237 You can find a couple of instances of his colleagues' disappointment in him and disagreement
238 with him as he DOES, in a comment to another student, agree that instances of violence may be
239 necessary.

240 And, it is an incendiary response to the board. It is incendiary because the board and some
241 members of the DEI committee found two people working to bring DEI to each town to make each
242 Vermonter feel safe and welcome. Kindsvatter believes that anti-racism is an ideology that makes
243 people think they are racist if they don't buy into it. He wants you to think that as a white person, he
244 is being discriminated against, and that doesn't make him feel good. Hmmm. I would ask him to take
245 a moment and reflect on that statement.

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247 or institution against a person based on their racial or ethnic group.

248 Several people asked multiple times in the last DEI meeting: isn't Vermont a KIND state? Are you
249 saying we aren't KIND? Well, people. Let's talk about Saturday's shooting of 3 Palestinian students
250 in Burlington. Here's your answer. We are not. And we are not in Georgia, either. While I won't use
251 any attribution regarding this statement, it was asked in a conversation why we need a DEI statement
252 in Georgia. Only three black people are in town, and that's three too many. Are we kind? No, we are
253 not. And that's just about race.

254 I imagine there would be many instances of targeting here in Georgia if you put out a questionnaire.
255 And before you argue that people lie and would make up stories, shame on you. Marginalized people
256 have no reason to lie. They have plenty of true stories to pull from. They only want to live in a
257 community that accepts them.

258 I have a suggestion for the board: task the DEI committee to find a TOWN OR MUNICIPALITY
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260 or how they thought it would. THEN, you have an equal and similar view against Al Wakefield and

Bob Harnish, who are working tirelessly to bring a feeling of safety and community to our towns. Otherwise, you only have propaganda.

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-
- H. Grimm says they have not decided, they want to hear both sides before they do that.
- J. Chagnon says the board was voted in to do this, why don't they just do it. S. Jenkins says they wanted to.
- D. Thomas says they work on behalf of the board, they work for us.
- J. Chagnon says democracy is the board deciding; they could have signed it.
- F. Grimm says true democracy is putting it on a ballot. He encourages everyone to be critical thinkers and validate sources.
- M. Price says it does not make sense to have both sides of an argument, you could invite a KKK member.
- D. Thomas calls for a vote.
- C. Rosenquist votes yes, D. Thomas votes no, S. Jenkins, J. Comstock and N. Martin abstain. Motion fails.
- N. Martin says he sees both sides. He is not sure that is what the board represents.
- M. Jansen says when reviewing the videos, she heard someone talking about a second phase. She knows that she is part of the first phase but has not been asked about a second. She says she has invested hours and hours into this.
- M. Jansen resigns from the DEI Committee.
- J. Theusen reads C. Rosenquist's quote from the newspaper. She says 'should there be a second phase' is what was said.
- B. Dunsmore says the newspaper is not unbiased news.
- C. Rosenquist says it is not proper for the selectboard to become political. He says this is getting worse.
- H. Grimm clarifies that they cannot have Kindsvatter as a speaker. D. Thomas says not as a committee. N. Martin says they can collect information. H. Grimm says after the first meeting they were told people had to come in to bring information.
- D. Thomas says they can reach out and get information on their own.
- H. Grimm says it is hard to get people to come and speak. People do not want to be seen as racist and put their businesses at risk.
- C. Letourneau asks the board if they have a recommendation of a person to come and speak with the committee. Nothing is offered.
- H. Grimm is being asked to read a statement out loud via her phone from Bob Stebbins (DEI Committee), he says he wants to resign as it is not productive.

10. TOWN ADMINISTRATOR, TREASURER AND SELECTBOARD SUB COMMITTEES REPORTS

- A.** Town Administrator
- B.** Treasurer
- C.** Buildings
- D.** Budget and Finance
- E.** Personnel

- Personnel Policy will have a planned meeting.

H. Public Works/Grounds/Recreation

- T. Heinlein reports that he got together with T. Cadieux and wants a copy of the survey that Perrigo had done. He was hoping to have it last week but still has not seen it. He will get information and meet with T. Cadieux and C. Rosenquist.

G. Committees at the direction of the chair

11. OTHER

- T. Cleveland asks where the board is with the Conflict-of-Interest Policy. D. Thomas says they are currently working through to see what positions conflict with each other and what ones they can double up on. N. Martin says many of these are volunteer positions.
- C. Rosenquist says he thought they were going through the recommendations from the committee versus the recommendations from legal.
- D. Thomas says they are going through the process.

12. PLAN NEXT MEETING AGENDA

A. 12.11.2023 Regular Meeting

B. 11.29.2023 Budget Meeting

13. EXECUTIVE SESSION (if needed, pursuant to 1 V.S.A sec 313)

- At **8:17 p.m.** - C. Rosenquist makes motion to move into Executive Session where premature knowledge may put the town or its members at risk, N. Martin seconds. All in favor, motion carried.
- C. Rosenquist makes a motion to invite C. Letourneau, the board, and D. Bergstrom to Executive Session to discuss an employee's grievance, N. Martin seconds. All in favor, motion carried.
- At **8:44 p.m.** - C. Rosenquist makes a motion to come out of executive session, N. Martin seconds. All in favor, motion carried.
- N. Martin makes a motion that the board will review and submit a letter on behalf of the board to a member of the Community, S. Jenkins seconds. All in favor, motion carried.
- At **8:45 p.m.** - C. Rosenquist made a motion to exit Executive Session, N. Martin seconded. All in favor, motion carried.
- At **8:46 p.m.** - N. Martin made a motion that the board will review and submit a letter on behalf of the board to a member of the community, S. Jenkins seconded. All in favor, motion carried.

14. ADJOURN

- At **8:46 p.m.** - C. Rosenquist makes a motion to adjourn the meeting, N. Martin seconds. All in favor, motion carried.

TABLED ITEMS:

Posted to the Town website, four designated places within the Town of Georgia (Town Clerk's Office, Georgia Public Library, Maplefields & Georgia Market), and e-mailed to the local media.

Signed: Cheryl Letourneau, Town Administrator

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