



195

TOWN OF MAYNARD
Human Relations Committee

MUNICIPAL BUILDING

Main Street

Maynard, MA 01754

www.townofmaynard-ma.gov/committees/human-relations/

Committee's Purpose: To promote human rights, personal dignity and positive relations between all residents and visitors to the Town of Maynard.

Racial Equity Municipal Action Plan: Maynard

DRAFT in PROGRESS for deliberation at 8/17/2020 HRC meeting

COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION AND NEED

Maynard, MA is... [Greg or Megan: does Maynard have a pithy paragraph already written that describes the demographics?]

We believe that Maynard is poised to serve as the model for other small towns that wish to interrogate and remedy ongoing inequities that often do not rise to the consciousness of the majority of residents. Maynard prides itself on being a tightly-knit, small town with many fine amenities such as a vibrant arts community, a walkable downtown, a newly constructed bike path and neighbors who know each other and their children. Many families have been here for generations; and an influx of newcomers are attracted to Maynard's reputation as a quintessential New England small town with many social justice community groups.. While the lived experience for most in Maynard aligns with its positive reputation, there also remain, often just below the surface, challenges and tensions that reflect our nation's ongoing struggle with racial justice. We hope to create and strengthen opportunities, practices and systems that encourage more diverse participation in shaping equity outcomes in Maynard.

The vast majority of Maynard is white with a small African-African population and a growing immigrant community. Major challenges related to equity include:

- a racial disparity in homeownership [Greg: what are the numbers/stats on this?]
- an obvious pattern of racial segregation in low-income rental units
- uneven patterns of political participation that do not reflect the growing diversity of the town.

These issues are coupled with tensions in Maynard that mirror the wider divisiveness of the times. They are increasingly apparent as the pandemic wears on, and more residents take to social media to express frustrations and anxieties. These challenges warrant study, reflection and action.

It is our belief that the emerging tensions are not new to Maynard, but rather, they are newly coming to light. It is our hope that the growing awareness can inspire processes that lead to substantive change. We are proud that through the development of the [Human Relations Committee](#), Maynard has already committed itself to doing the difficult and important work of challenging the persistent narrative of Maynard as an exceptional town.

In early 2017, community members approached the Maynard Police Department (MPD) to discuss issues of racial disparities and growing concerns about the national conversation around immigrant rights. In response, MPD proposed the development of a Human Relations Committee whose stated purpose is to promote human rights, personal dignity and positive relations between all residents and visitors to the Town of Maynard. The police department wrote:

“Our place in this community gives police officers a unique perspective about the challenges being faced by individuals and families who see themselves, or are viewed by others, as being “different”. For example: We have met with two separate citizen groups to discuss bias, racism, and fear some groups have about reporting crimes because they are categorized as being “different”. It is this lack of communication that creates a barrier of mistrust, misunderstanding and potentially creates conflict. It is in the spirit of preventing and avoiding conflict and opening the lines of communication that we put this proposal forward.”

The Human Relations Committee (HRC) has begun its work in earnest. Its mission is to:

a. Cultivate a community-wide climate that promotes mutual understanding, mutual respect and human dignity. b. Educate ourselves about the dehumanizing impact of prejudicial attitudes in an effort to avoid their harmful effect in our community. c. Promote community policies and practices that encourage equal opportunity and equal responsibility for all people. d. Publicly challenge any practices in our community that represent prejudice, intolerance, harassment, or discrimination.

To accomplish the Mission, the HRC is committed to: a. Work with the residents, advocates, civic groups, local government, business groups, school personnel, clergy and others to educate ourselves about the issue of diversity and to embrace the diverse face of our community. b. Actively pursue prevention of prejudice, intolerance, harassment, and discrimination through public discourse, media exposure, and community action on these issues.

Education and Prevention play a significant role in the committee's charge. Full HRC memorandum here.

The first task that the multi-racial HRC took up and completed was to revise the police department's policy to codify its position regarding limited interaction with ICE, despite a highly contentious and public show of resistance by a minority of community members. Currently, the HRC is working with several residents, who identify as People of Color, who live in unsatisfactory Section 8 housing conditions. Additionally, in every meeting, the HRC now includes discussion of texts that relate to the ongoing legacy of white supremacy ideology in our nation. We have discussed work by Michelle Alexander and Brian Stevenson and upcoming is a conversation about Richard Rothstein's research on segregated housing.

REMAP PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

The work of the Human Relations Committee is in its beginning stages. We envision opportunities to expand our reach and impact in meaningful ways and we also acknowledge a need for a deepened understanding of the roots of inequities in the town of Maynard, as well as training in innovative consciousness-raising and community-building practices.

Participation in the REMAP program will afford us the opportunity to:

- Study the roots of inequities in Maynard, particularly in areas of housing and political participation
- Surface racial and ethnic disparities and unintended harms in areas such as public health and education
- Develop sustainable and workable plans that center the insights, experiences and ideas of the community members who are most impacted by explicit and implicit racial bias
- Partner across municipal departments so that interest and ownership of racial equity work is shared, ongoing and sustained.

Some questions we hope to grapple with and resolve through a community-wide reflection process and racial equity plan development include:

- What do we need to explore and understand about Maynard's racialized history, past policies and practices regarding housing, employment patterns (we were a mill town) that can lead us to increased understanding of current realities and experiences in Maynard?
- What “hidden histories” must be acknowledged and remedied? For example, Maynard is listed as a probable “sundown town” on a [website](#) created by historian James Loewen. How do we learn

about this and more importantly, how do we facilitate community-wide, inclusive conversations about the impact of such findings?

- What role can restorative justice play in our community and in what contexts?
- What role can creatively imagined reparations play in remediating existing housing disparities? For example, how might we develop incentives and assistance for increased African-American homeownership in Maynard?
- How might our existing, rich arts and cultural community be leveraged to tell Maynard's stories and contribute to racial understanding and progress?

We request technical assistance and training to answer these questions. We are committed to honest, difficult conversations and are seeking creative partnerships that will foster the development of the knowledge and skills necessary to facilitate the conversations and move from idea development to policy implementation.

MUNICIPAL AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Municipal: the Housing group, BOH, DPW....??? finance?

Community: MARA, Milltown (Dreamscape collaborative), Jerry Beck and friends

[something about sharing best practices, regional partnerships]

[in kind contributions] Greg: who in the town is also already on board? Bill Nemser?