

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION COMMISSION

Meeting
May 20, 2026

6:00 p.m.

School Board Conference Room
City Hall, 2nd Floor

PRESENT: Raven Bruno
Ian Callahan
Cecilia Carpenter
Mark Jeter, Vice Chair
Charles Lawson
AnhThu Nguyen, Chair
Belinda Osario Polgar
Natalie Slater (remote participant)
Antwhon Suiter
Jordan Zipser

ABSENT: Sabrina Burress

ALSO PRESENT: Alice Woods, Council Liaison
Leslie Beauregard, City Manager (remote participant)
Josh Knight, Engagement & Communications

AnhThu Nguyen called the meeting open at 6:05 p.m.

AnhThu stated “we received a request from Natalie Slater to participate remotely in the May 20, 2026 DEI Commission meeting due to a personal matter that prevents her physical attendance at the meeting. I will now entertain a motion for her to participate.”

Charles moved to allow Natalie to remotely participate in the May 20, 2026 DEI Commission meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

AnhThu asked Natalie to state the location from which she was participating. Natalie responded that she was in Staunton. AnhThu asked the commission and the audience if they could hear Natalie. The response was affirmative.

1. Approval of Minutes

Charles moved to approve the minutes of the April 15, 2026 DEI Commission meeting as presented. The motion was seconded by Cecilia and carried unanimously.

2. Subcommittee Report Outs

- a. Community Connections – Members met with Staunton City Schools Superintendent Dr. Irizarry on April 20 to continue discussions on the student art event focused on “belonging and kindness.” Planning to finalize verbiage by end of summer/start of school year with even targeted for mid-November. Belinda met with Angus Carter from the Staunton Augusta Art Center regarding fundraising including the idea of a calendar featuring student art to sell for proceeds. SCS has

some funds but cannot cover all costs. Leslie clarified that as a city Board/Commission, the DEI Commission **cannot directly fundraise or hold funds**. However, the Commission **can endorse and promote** a fundraiser, directing all proceeds directly into the school system's project fund. Commissioners must not handle the money directly. The project will double as a qualitative research project analyzing what students see as belonging/kindness.

There was discussion about a way to amplify local events, like the Staunton Health and Wellness Fair, on a public facing community calendar. Staff will look into embedding a Google Calendar link or a dedicated DEI calendar directly onto the city webpage. Events would be vetted through a DEI lens.

The Commission has compiled an outreach list that the subcommittee will begin working through for other Boards and Commissions. The commission will use the standard City of Staunton logo paired with "DEI Commission" text rather than designing a brand-new logo.

- b. Data and Research – **Department Managers Meeting (June 1):** The upcoming June 1 meeting will focus on strategic information gathering. The agenda is being designed to learn from department heads, which will shape the Commission's goals for subsequent meetings.

To maintain forward momentum the subcommittee is researching creative hiring and recruitment practices from other localities. They are exploring whether HR has a pipeline with SCS to recruit recent graduates to make city staff more representative.

3. Continuation of Discussion of DEI Goals/Objectives

Quarterly City Council Updates: The Commission and Alice Woods discussed creating a formal, two-way communication mechanism with City Council. It was suggested that subcommittees will provide summaries of current activities. The Commission will vote on a formal, unified summary report and send it to the full City Council. Alice will then present a summary during public City Council meetings, ensuring the updates are placed on the official public record. The Commission will use a template (some on the Google Drive) to log and code community inquiries and activities. These will tie directly back to specific past recommendations/goals to maintain continuity and streamline the creation of the Annual Report.

4. Sharing Community Concerns

Concerns were raised regarding accessibility with the downtown HSIP and demonstration project. Leslie strongly encouraged everyone to submit feedback on this one-month pilot project.

The deadline for public feedback on the Comprehensive Plan is May 25. A special joint Planning Commission meeting is scheduled for June 3.

5. Going 'Round the Circle!

- Yoga in the Park: 3rd Saturday of the month at 9:00 AM (shade/grass). Proceeds benefit the LGBTQ center.
- Pride Proclamation: City Council meeting on Thursday, May 28 at 7:00 PM. Community support is requested.
- Book Reading: Author Jeffrey Dale Lofton (*Red Clay Suzie*) reading on Saturday, June 6 at 11:00 AM, facilitated by Nat.
- Drop-in Workshop at LGBTQ Center: Partnering with New Directions on June 24 at 4:00 PM (resumes, interview prep, clothes closet).
- Juneteenth Celebration: Saturday, June 20, 12:00–6:00 PM at Montgomery Hall Park (MHP). Jordan will coordinate a Google Drive signup sheet and gather materials for a DEI Commission information table.
- Queen Miller Home Historic Marker Dedication: May 30 at 1:00 PM, with a reception to follow at Mt. Zion.
- School Color Runs: Raven noted that recent spring color runs at Shelburne and the elementary school were reviewed for cultural appropriation (given the ties to the Hindu spring festival, Holi). Both school groups engaged willingly, and the events were well-received.

6. Other Business

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:01 p.m.