

TOWN OF SUFFIELD

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Melissa M. Mack
First Selectman
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July 9, 2020

Dear Suffield Community,

In light of recent events taking place across our nation, a number of courageous residents opened up to me to share their experiences about what it's like to be a person of color and live, work and raise families in the Town of Suffield. There was the Mom, who makes it a practice to wear some type of identifying Suffield accessory (a Suffield baseball hat, shirt, jacket) in order to avoid suspicious glances when she shops at local stores. The neighbor, whose children have borne the heavy weight of insult, because their family differs from their classmates. The hurtful remarks, commonplace racial slurs that each witnessed. I want to thank these residents for coming forward. We all agree that our tight-knit town embodies a wonderful sense of compassion and community. I found these contrary accounts painful to hear. I am deeply troubled that in a place we all call home, there are residents who don't feel comfortable, accepted and safe. That's not Suffield. And that's not acceptable. Racism has no home here. We can all do better.

My goal in seeking public service stemmed from a heartfelt desire to improve our town. To date, my efforts focused on good governance and infrastructure. By engaging with the community over the last few weeks, I realize there is work to be done in the area of social justice. Today, I share Suffield Public School Superintendent Tim Van Tasel's aspiration of achieving an inclusive community. While we look to the national stage for leadership, the truth is, change always begins first at home. But, how? By listening without judgment, engaging and committing to anti-biased and anti-racist systems.

Local government should set the standard. To that end, I undertake the following as a starting point:

- Collaborate with Suffield's Schools, Youth Services, Parks & Recreation, Kent Memorial Library and the Suffield Senior Center to facilitate multigenerational discussions and programming that seeks to nurture inclusivity and educate about racial inequality, inequity and intolerance.

- Work with Town of Suffield Human Resources to provide current training to town employees to ensure equal access to town services and respectful treatment for all citizens.
- Review data from Town departments relevant to race-related issues to serve as a benchmark for strategic planning and investment where needed.
- Follow-up with the Police Commission and the Police Chief in their review of Police Department policies and the recommendations of the 2019 Management Operational Study to confirm accountability to all citizens.
- Work with the Board of Selectmen to adopt a policy applicable to all Town of Suffield Boards and Commissions committing to anti-biased and anti-racist systems in Suffield.
- Review, communicate, make available and enforce Town policies on equality and equity.

As a “newcomer” to Suffield some 15 years ago, I know the joy of being welcomed by Suffield and how it fostered my own need to give back. I humbly ask you to please join me in trying to make a difference in our beautiful Town of Suffield.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melissa M. Mack". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Melissa M. Mack
First Selectman

cc: Board of Selectmen