

**JOINT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
OLD ROCHESTER REGIONAL DISTRICT SCHOOL COMMITTEE
MASSACHUSETTS SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENCY UNION #55**

**June 15, 2020 – 6:30 p.m.
MEETING HELD REMOTELY THROUGH ZOOM
Mattapoisett, MA 02739**

District Members Present: Cary Humphrey, Chairperson, Michelle Smith, James Muse, Stefan Gabriel, and Heather Burke, Tina Rood, Suzanne Tseki and Joe Pires.

District Members Absent: Paul Goulet

Union Members Present: Shannon Finning, Chairperson, Carole Clifford, Anne Fernandes, Nichole Daniel, Sharon Hartley April Rios, Robin Rounseville and Karin Barrows.

Union Members Absent: Ron Gerhart

Other Staff Members Present: Michael Nelson, Asst. Superintendent, administrative team, members of the Tri-Town Against Racism Organization, Barbara Sullivan, Alison Noyce and Tangi Thomas, members of the staff, members of the community and members of the press.

Meeting was called to order at 6:33 p.m. by Chairperson Humphrey of the ORR School Committee and Chairperson Finning of the Massachusetts School Superintendency Union #55.

Chairperson Humphrey made the following statement:

I wanted to welcome everyone and let everyone know that we have invited quite a few people to join us, that includes the three police chiefs from the three towns as well as the selectmen from the three towns, I'm not sure which will be here tonight, but we certainly appreciate their presence. I want to level set how we got to tonight by going backwards to last June, when we were approached by Barbara Sullivan and the Lopes family to come to an ORR School Committee meeting which was held in early June and they had an extremely emotional presentation about the experiences that their siblings and granddaughters had received as students at ORR. It was very emotional and very heart felt, I know all the committee members felt the same way, after that meeting I called Ms. Sullivan and we scheduled a meeting in the superintendent's conference room where other community members, community residents were in attendance, as well as central office staff and a couple of other school committee members including Dr. Finning were present, it was a very, very good meeting, the goal at that point was to continue to come up with a way to meet as a group, we were sure at that point it was going to be part of the ORR School Committee, the Joint School Committee or if would be a meeting that would be held in the community, I think at one point there was suggestions made to move it from town to town, and then the discussion kind of lead to have the school committee be part of this. I had several conversations with Ms. Sullivan on the phone, they were unbelievable powerful phone calls that we had, I really appreciated the conversations and the most definitely was looking forward to pursuing this and pushing it forward, we get to the fall and I'm not going to make any excuses but the ball was dropped with communication when it came to myself with Ms. Sullivan, Ms. Noyce and others, so I take that on behalf of the school committee. I also believe that Central Office was moving in the right direction but again I apologize to this group specifically Ms. Sullivan and Ms. Noyce because they were two of the members that were in attendance at the last meeting that we had, so that's where we are at today, Ms. Sullivan reached out to Central Office to get on the agenda for the ORR School Committee meeting, but Mr. Nelson spoke with her and we decided this should be put on the agenda for the Joint School Committee meeting because we feel like it's a Tri-Town problem that needs to be addressed, which lead us to invite other stakeholders within the town, so that's what we are hoping to accomplish tonight, obviously we should have communicated this throughout the school year and it didn't happen, what I will tell

you, is that going forward that won't be an excuse, Central Office will be communicating as well as the school committee and we hope that at the end of this meeting tonight that we are walking in the same direction with the same goals and we look forward to that.

Chairperson Finning made the following statement:

I am going to serve as the moderator and host for tonight's meeting which includes welcoming people as they come into the meeting, as well as managing the chat feature. One of the things that hopefully you saw upon entering the meeting was a comment that I entered into the chat that if you would like to speak during the open comment section of the meeting and I'll explain more about that in a minute, that we will ask you to use the chat feature and all you have to do is put your first and last name and we ask that you share your town of residence. We want to prioritize calling in order in which people identify, people from the Tri-Town and then we will also acknowledge as time allows speakers from other southcoast communities. In the open comment section, we will be limiting comments to three minutes per speaker, Mr. Humphrey will be our timekeeper and her will hold up a sign when we get to a minute remaining, therefore please keep Mr. Humphrey on your view on your screen. Some of the ground rules we like to review and set as expectations, the first group that we will call on to speak will not have a time limit because they are the reason that we called this meeting, that group is Tri-Town Against Racism. They have three speakers identified, I will introduce the first speaker, and I understand she will introduce the other two people who will speak. After that we have asked Mr. Michael Nelson, our current Asst. Supt. and named Supt. effective July 1st to provide some context and information about work done this year and plans going forward, I will not limit Mr. Nelson's time either. Then I will ask if any of our other town officials would like to speak and that is where we are going to start the limiting the time to three minutes as well as any school committee members who wish to provide any information or content. We will ask that our speakers not utilize the names of minor children unless you are speaking about your own children or if you are under 18 and you are speaking for yourself. Any child or student who speaks will be followed up with just as a way of providing support, by a school psychologist or a school adjustment counselor from their sending school in the Tri-Town tomorrow just to make sure they have access to resources and appropriate support. One other aspect that we want to make sure we speak to is that in the event that someone raises what would be a job performance related issue by naming a person we will ask you to follow up and direct the concern either to Mr. Nelson or the appropriate member of the TLC. I will make all their contact information available to you by the close of today's meeting. Personnel matters as you all know are confidential so we want to make sure we follow the process in place but also follow up on concerns. We ask that people don't respond to comments made about personnel issues in this forum. Also important, I know that we several people that are running for elections, that we are not using tonight's meeting as a campaign stumping ground, if you will. So we ask that people really focus on the topic at hand, in terms of how can we address systematic racism in the tri-town area and promote ant-racism across our district. We plan to wrap up tonight's special meeting by 8:30 p.m. we recognize that two hours of diving into this topic it could never be enough time to productively engage, so around 8:20ish Mr. Humphrey and I will look to provide some wrap up commentary and commitments for next steps from the group. I would like to start by welcoming our guest from Tri-Town Against Racism, Ms. Alison Noyce.

V. General

A. Tri-Town Against Racism Organization

Alison Noyce, Member of the Tri-Town Against Racism Organization made the following statement:

Good Evening, we thank you for this opportunity to share with you, the leaders of our school system, our experiences, our perspectives, and our ideas. Tri-Town Against Racism is a newly formed grass roots movement that came about not as a result of the unrest that our nation is currently facing, but as a result of our concern of racism in our schools and our broader community. While our

organization is new our challenges are not. I will be sharing with you in three parts, one is the PAST, two the PRESENT and three the FUTURE, our presenters representing the leaders of Tri-Town Against Racism will be Barbara Sullivan, a Marion resident with lifelong ties to the Tri-Town, she is a community activist, mother, grandmother and great grandmother, to current and past students who have gone through our school system. She is going to see going to speak about the past, addressing racism problems that have been plaguing our schools for decades. Myself, Alison Noyce, my husband and I have lived in Rochester since 1997, we have four children and four grandchildren, all of whom live in Rochester. We are the parents of two black sons, our oldest a student in our school system since project grow through 8th grade and a 2020 Old Colony graduate and our younger son a rising Junior at ORR. I will be addressing the present, where are we right now as a school system? And Tangi Thomas, Ms. Thomas is a second generation lifelong Marion resident and the mother of two children, a rising 2nd grader and a rising 8th grader. The three of us, me, Ms. Sullivan and Ms. Thomas while representing two different generations and two different races are all mothers of black children. Three deeply personal reason for fighting for change in our school system. So now I would like you to give your full attention to Barbara Sullivan.

Barbara Sullivan, Member of the Tri-Town Against Racism Organization made the following statement:

Good Evening District School Committee Members and others joining by zoom. This committee will recall as Cary Humphrey said that a small committee that I formed last year came before you and made a presentation regarding racial climate at the high school and jr. high school as well as at some of the district's elementary school, we detailed a sense of black students suffered at the hands of administrators, teachers, as well as students. Testimony was shared regarding behaviors suffered by the families represented were quite powerful, judging by the various emotions exhibited at the time by the school committee as well as members of the audience. You respectfully listened to our presentation and you made appropriate comments, I will have to change my presentation a bit because Mr. Humphrey said some things that I have to go back and check on and I had said that we had not heard back and I would apologize if I was incorrect and I would follow up after this meeting, but he did recognize that they did drop the ball later on. At that meeting last year you may recall that Danielle Souza Lopes, she had a situation regarding her son being bullied at the Sippican Elementary School which resulted in him locking himself in the bathroom where he called his mother frightened for his safety. Mrs. Lopes rushed to the school to meet with the Principal and her son, the school's first response was "why did he have a cell phone?" with no concern for her son. This principal is no longer with the district but the painful response remains as evidence of the systematic lack of understanding of the problems that plague the system and what an appropriate response might look like. I also read to you directly from the paper my granddaughter, Chantel Teixeira's then 13, written the summer before she entered 8th grade, mind you it was July summer vacation and this 13-year-old was not thinking about fun in the sun but rather what life was like in the system where racial hostilities be they of the micro or macro nature. The paper was given to the principal who never followed up with her, she had to schedule a follow up meeting with him, he listened, a weak explanation and apology were given and I might add that he was able to check another box. Here's a list of insult to comment that my granddaughter has detailed that go back to Rochester Memorial School. "I elementary school I got called names a lot, including ghetto, in seventh grade a teacher used my friend and me as an example in a class about slavery, in 7th grade I got racially profiled by the same teacher who assumed I was going off to do sexual things with another black boy, mind you we were leaving her classroom the same as all the other students, black jokes are frequently heard in school, in the 8th grade a teacher said to another teacher who was comparing names at the start of the new year, quote "you put two colored kids next to each other and you can't tell the different". Meeting with parents, apology from teachers and guess what the box was checked again. A girl called me nigger at the end of 8th grade, in the 9th grade health class a student told me to leave America if I don't agree what goes on in this country. The word nigger is heard frequently in some classes, teachers' response "knock it off"". My granddaughter further

stated, "it shouldn't be that the black community feels safe in their own skin" I can tell you that as a young black woman I have dealt with racism just not just outside but inside of school. Whether is from students or a teacher, racism is a problem. There is a constant use of the words, and I am intentionally using these words that the kids use, there is a constant use of the word "nigger" and "nigga". Students by the way differentiate between the words pronunciation with a hard R sound or with an A in it. I repeat what I said at last June's meeting, these words and behaviors are being said by your children, your nieces, your nephews, your grandchildren and your next door neighbor's kids, who like you likely did not raise their children to use those words, but did you ever have a real discussion about racial inequality and issues in America? Probably not. Tri-Town Against Racism has received dozens of what I like to call horror stories, some of these stories are from adults who have experienced racism themselves while attending district schools, and now their children are experiencing the same. People have been grateful for the opportunity that Tri-Town Against Racism has given them to tell their story. Mrs. Lopes, other parents and even a few teachers have apologized for not truly understanding the depths of the racial behavior and its effect on their student and not doing more about it. Mrs. Lopes solution at the time, was that to comfort her daughter in her misery. Mrs. Lopes daughter would call her father at work in tears saying "dad come get me, I can't take it anymore". He would leave work, head to the school to meet with Principal, say what he had to say and the Principal would offer little in return. He would hear the complaint, offer some words in return, said goodbye and bingo another box checked. This is a report given to me by Mrs. Lopes's daughter "A sub looked at a group of my friends to make sure we were doing our work, when she left she made a joke to my friend about me working hard contrary to the stereotype, the sub overheard and came back in and then proceeded to tell me that racism didn't exist that I needed to stop complaining about it because people were tired of hearing about it, she said if I was that unhappy to go to New Bedford to be with other brown people, I told the principal, showed him the recording, he promised she would be gone and that I would get an apology. The following year she was the substitute for my homeroom teacher in my first class. I was never checked on to see if I was ok following the incident, my concerns were dismissed and she continues to work there". After the black slam poet performed at the Jr. High School during the 2017-2018 school year another 7th grade student reported that when they got back to class the teacher said "we need an assembly how not to be offended by everything". There is a myriad report of that go back several years, it's difficult to pull them all out to report them all here, but my purpose here is to give you a taste of what has happened. The committee that met with you last year ended up with a presentation with the following statement: "We are here because the issues that have been raised require deep introspection on the part of everyone in this room who have the power to make changes, no one is excluded. A sub-committee title to help the community self-examine, self-educate and self-direct towards a kinder community. This is not just a sub title, but a challenge to the Tri-Town as a whole, including every level, from families to town administration. In order for change to occur we have to commit to three things; 1. Commit to self-examination, self-education and self-direction towards greater community kindness. Kindness is one of the values stated in your five-year strategic plan 2. A task be established to explore the problem and develop a plan of action, 3. Develop a grant funded Student Services position to provide black students with support. We understand that there is a Healthy Tri-Town Committee and having attended one meeting I can see that although on the right track the committees need to understand that the problem we are talking about require more than a booklet, although that is a very good start. So here we are back stronger than ever ready to work with you please understand this, my feeling is that you have not earned the right to be trusted but we look forward to being a part of the change that takes place. We have heard that we have many boxes checked from people we have met with and then the district tends to move on and we committed to seeing this through and helping the system and the Tri-Town School District become a better district. I thank you for your time."

Alison Noyce, Member of the Tri-Town Against Racism Organization made the following statement:

Thanks to Tri-Town Against Racism, we've begun to find each other. The parents of kids of color now know that we were never alone, we were just made to feel we were. We were treated like individuals whose kids were experiencing isolated incidents. As a school system you put out each individual fire. You made promises to make real change. You did not keep those promises. I wish someone within the school leadership had said to my husband and I, you're not alone. There are other families going through similar issues. That would have helped us. Now we also know, that parents of white kids have been behind the scenes, fighting for change as well. Like us, they were made to feel listened to, given encouraging promises, and ended up disheartened when real change never came. Teachers who long for change and want to be a part of that change have become outspoken members of Tri-Town Against Racism. We are relieved to know they are there for our kids. This is why I am so grateful that we formed Tri-Town Against Racism. In a short time, we have become a community. I am having conversations with other parents, we are listening to each other's stories, we are giving each other support. And in DROVES, the white members of our community have shown up. They are speaking up; they are educating themselves but most importantly they are listening. This is what a strong community does. This is what we want you to do as well, you have shown up, you are here and we are grateful. I hope you are listening; I hope you have shown up to make change. It's not just the parents of the black kids begging for this, it's the parents of the white kids as well. They have come to the table, they are behind us, I hope you're behind us too. My job right now is to talk about the present and I hope you can agree, we're kind of a mess right now, the culture of our schools is a significant problem, everyone can recognize casual racism, it's the stuff the makes the news, like the white hockey player who spit on called a black hockey player the N word, it's the racial posts on social media, the casual racism is also rapid, the kid who said to my son "obviously your favorite meal is fried chicken and watermelon" and it's the kids who laughed at that, the kids who made racist jokes and the kids who laugh, it's the white kids' constant use of the N word, or the kid who told my other son, he kind of looks like an ape. Then there are the not so occasional micro aggressions, "can I touch your hair?" "you play basketball right?", "it's cool you got into that college, but it's easier for you, they have to fill a quota", "I don't even think of you as black", "I'm not racist I have a black friend", "I'm color blind". We have administrators who have long hidden behind careful words "equity", "cultural proficiency", "multi-culturalism", these words are important, these goals for our schools, they are admirable, but we need you, the people in power to go deeper. We have teachers at our schools who are true alias, for example Megan Hall was is our son's sophomore English teacher stopped dead in the middle of teaching her planned lesson and created a lesson that connect George Floyd's murder and nationwide protest to the Crucible, that's exactly what this moment in history called for her to do, this is how we lead, this is how we support all of our students, and this is how we let our black students know that we see them and we care about them. Greg Andre he's well known at the Jr. High for supporting all students, I've heard countless students past and present say that he was there for them, that they felt safe talking to him, that he made them feel accepted for who they are. Mr. Andree and the other 8th grade English teacher Nichole Charbonneau have developed curriculum the past three years featuring black writers and issues of systematic racism. Greg Andre wishes he could hang a Black Lives Matter flag in his classroom, this mother of black boys wishes he could too. I know there are other teachers who are like Ms. Hall, Mr. Andre and Ms. Charbonneau, let's nurture those teachers and empower them to lead us to change. On the other hand, we have teachers who claim not to see color, they believe the Civil Rights Movement solved racism, they believe that ignoring race makes them not racist, because of teachers like this, students of color do not feel seen or heard. Megan Hall and Alison Barker the High School Librarian have put together trainings for both students and teachers that tackle some of these hard topics. While the administration supported the creation of these trainings, Ms. Hall and Ms. Barker were told that they had to make them optional, so for the most part, I think you can figure it out, the teachers and students who already get this are the ones that show up, while the ones that really need it are not attending. In closing I'm going to share a personal experience our son faced. I'm going to say two words and I want you to hear them and I want you to really listen to what I'm going to say. Monkey, Slave. These slurs were hurled to our

son by a classmate when he was in 8th grade, a fist fight ensued, a teacher called me right away, he was very shaken up about the racism that our son had just experienced, before administration called me, before my husband could even make it home from work, I sped to the school angry and upset, this wasn't the first racial incident that happened to one of our sons at the Jr. High School. I was shown into the administrator's office, in tears I asked the administrators one question, "what are you two going to do to keep my son safe at this school?". And at first he said two things to me that I'll never forget, first he told our son, that he should have followed the lead of MLK and handled the situation with his words, the second was he told me that our son had thrown the first punch, he reminded me that our son started the fight, our son was the one to use violence. These two things perfectly illustrate where we are and how much work needs to be done. Our black students should not be expected to behave like civil rights leaders when they are victims of racism. Our administrators need to recognize that racial slurs are an act of violence, our son responded to violence, it doesn't matter who threw the first punch, clearly we are not where we need to be in responding to racism in our schools. However, the recent statement from the district leadership council regarding racism gives me cautious hope that we are capable of moving in a new direction for our future. Tangi Thomas will now speak about just that "our future".

Tangi Thomas, Member of the Tri-Town Racism Organization made the following statement:
*So, we've talked about the past. This is important, our history will guide us. We've talked about the present. I hope everyone agrees there is work to be done. It's time to get hopeful. It's time for real change. It's time to talk about the future. Tri-Town Against Racism is here. Tri-Town Against Racism is not going anywhere. We will partner with you to make our schools places where all students feel safe and can thrive. Let's talk about how to make it happen. Move beyond, Equity, Multiculturalism, and Cultural Proficiency. These things are important. But be bolder. Be clearer on who we are striving to become. We are asking you to firmly state, now and always: Our goal is to become an ACTIVELY ANTI-RACIST SCHOOL We need you to call out racism by name. Don't say we had a racial event. Say we had a racist incident. And then talk about it. We don't want you to say who did it. But please tell us what they did and why it was wrong and how we can do better. The school department needs to develop a robust plan to become an actively anti-racist school. We recognize that you don't currently have the skills and knowledge to do this. You need help with this. You need to hire someone who has done this work before to guide you. There is no quick fix. You need to be committed to the work of becoming an actively anti-racist school for the long term. No more putting out fires and ignoring the big picture. No more making the parents of the kids of color feel that they are dealing with individual isolated incidents. Responsive Classroom and Rochester Memorial's CARES motto are great, but they are not going to take us where we need to go. How do we start? Assign a school wide read for all students and faculty in grades 8-12. We strongly suggest *Stamped, Racism, Anti-Racism and You* by Ibram X Kendi and Jason Reynolds. Find an appropriate model for how to deal with incidents of racism within our school. The students who do these things need your help and guidance, too. Peer to peer mediation or restorative justice might be a good place to start. A firm speaking to and a suspension are not going to create the change we need. Diversify the curriculum. There are teachers and parents who have been calling for this. It's time to listen to them. For example, a junior level English class had five books on the reading list. All of them were written by dead white men. It's time for new perspectives. New voices. You have so much power to impact our students through diverse books. We can help you with this. Teach real black history. Go deep. Don't stop with Rosa Parks and MLK. Our kids need to know what is happening NOW in our country. They need to know the names Trayvon Martin, Tamir Rice, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and so many more. Train your teachers on these issues. Don't make it optional. Hire a director of Equity and Inclusion. Let us help you in this process of finding the right person. The thing we hear the most from students of color, past and present, is that they wish they had teachers of color. Make that a reality for our current and future students. These things are the beginning. The work we are doing is hard and ongoing. We are looking to YOU to make big changes. Tri-Town against racism is here to help you. Let's get to work.*

Asst. Supt. Nelson made the following statement:

Hello Everyone – my name is Mike Nelson – I am the current Assistant Superintendent for the school system and the Superintendent-Elect - fully transitioning into the position on July 1st.

*I appreciate the opportunity to be able to address the students, parents, family members, staff members, school committee officials, town officials, and other stakeholders tonight. First and foremost – I'd like to personally thank the presenters tonight (Alison, Barbara, Tangi) from the **Tri-Town Against Racism** group for reaching out directly to the school district to share their concerns and more importantly their group's mission and purpose – as we move forward together. I know it is not easy to foster and facilitate such conversations – and I thank you for making the efforts that you have. Moreover, I thank the **Tri-Town Against Racism** administrators for agreeing that a Special Joint School Committee Meeting made the most sense to hear your voices. From my perspective – it seemed ESSENTIAL that our whole administration team be present tonight to hear and learn more about the group's purpose and mission. We also invited our staff members to attend tonight as well - recognizing the importance of this topic. Our responsibilities as educational leaders regarding this work involves us all - it is not just at the secondary level with our 7th through 12th grade students – it is system-wide. It has to start with our youngest students.*

We want to hear from our students, families, and stakeholders... And we will listen...

We are listening...And more importantly we will act! Since last summer our schools have taken steps in the right direction regrading diversity, equity, and inclusion work. Throughout the school year – I have shared information regarding our efforts at school committee meetings.

We believe the work this year was a beginning. I want to be clear – I want to be crystal clear – that we know and understand that the work we have done is not enough...that we have to keep going. We know that our students and families are depending on us. This year - as a faculty – we needed to start the process of self-examination, reflection, and develop common language regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion work. We had to start the process of FULLY committing ourselves to ongoing anti-racism and cultural proficiency ideologies. This past school year – we titled our efforts “Starting Conversations about Cultural Proficiency & Diversity” – this was strategic on our part. We knew that this year was just the start of an ongoing commitment to improving our schools' cultures. Looking back: We planned our schools' opening day with our keynote speaker being the focal point – our presenter was Mr. Steve Pemberton. Among many other accomplishments, Mr. Pemberton is the author of the book titled “A Chance in the World”. Specifically, Pemberton stressed the importance of being an advocate for those students who may have been left in what he referenced the “shadows”. Pemberton has been a champion for equality, access, and opportunity both in his professional and personal life and shared a powerful message with us all. To help lead our efforts internally – we recruited teacher leaders who wanted to serve on building-based diversity teams. All six teams are comprised of volunteer teachers, paraprofessionals, and/or administrators. Each TEAM has 5-10 members who regularly attend system-wide cultural proficiency meetings to discuss needs, efforts, and action steps. In the Fall of 2019 - Ms. Patti DeRosa a cultural proficiency training facilitator with decades of experience working with both private and public agencies, provided in-depth professional development for our Building-Based Teams on October 31, 2019. The title of the workshop was titled “Unpacking Equity and Cultural Proficiency in Schools”. The workshop objectives for the participants were:

- 1. Engaging in self-exploration and reflection of personal attitudes, beliefs, and assumptions regarding equity, cultural proficiency, and anti-bias education.*
- 2. Become familiar with the principles, elements, and tools of, and barriers to, equity and cultural proficiency in schools.*
- 3. Begin to develop awareness, knowledge, and skills for interrupting bias, and creating policies and practices that support educational equity.*

*Our administrator team participated in the same training the following day. Later in the school year - three high school students from Diversity Talks led an hour long presentation for our entire faculty. Diversity Talks specializes in providing student-led professional development grounded in diversity, equity, and inclusion. Their student leaders aim to increase the cultural competence of adults by fostering a healing space for adults and youth to have culturally relevant and responsive conversations. This presentation focused on inclusion, student voice, and the role of power in schools. This presentation set the stage for our building-based teams to work with their colleagues by exploring the following articles by field experts in interactive professional development sessions: White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack, by Peggy McIntosh White Fragility: Why It's So Hard to Talk to White People About Racism, by Dr. Robin DiAngelo and SchoolTalk: Rethinking What We Say About-and to-Students Every Day, by Mica Pollock. That same day, all staff members within our schools listened to the message of Dr. Adolph Brown. Dr. Brown describes himself as a servant-leader at heart and a life-long social justice advocate. His message to our staff encouraged the idea of "real talk" around the topics of unconscious bias, equity, diversity, and inclusion. He encouraged our faculty to understand structural inequities, but more importantly start the work of dismantling them. Our most recent effort was a second presentation by Diversity Talks and one of their student-leaders. The audience for our presentation was our junior high and high school students. This experience allowed our students to see the power of student voice. It also symbolizes a commitment to start providing more and more learning opportunities for our students to talk about anti-racism in schools. I want to repeat an earlier remark – we know this is still the beginning of where we want to go - and we have much progress to make. In hindsight – we should have included more voices from our community – like many of you here at this meeting tonight - to help us design our efforts this past year. I am hopeful we can start working in unison – as I truly believe we have common goals to achieve. Please know – that is my hope and plan moving forward. Speaking on behalf of the Leadership Council – we want nothing more than to form a strong partnership with our stakeholders to drive this work onward. We understand that in our roles as educational leaders – our communities need us to take the lead in many ways – but, we can't be truly successful without collaboration from our community members. In closing – our position as school leaders is this: racism and racist acts have no place in our schools. They are unacceptable. As the Leadership Council articulated in a recent statement to our educational community – we acknowledge that we have had our own struggles with racism. Most recently – unacceptable racist actions on social media outlets have damaged the foundation of our schools. These actions go against everything our schools' mission and values stand for. They are unacceptable. Our ultimate goal is to create safe, welcoming, and supportive schools for everyone. **ALL STUDENTS.** I understand that tonight – my words are just that – words. We will foster and facilitate change as we move forward by examining existing policy and needed developments, continuing to train staff, by providing more and more learning opportunities for our students, by ensuring that our curriculum does not tell a single white dominate story, and most importantly by holding ourselves individually and mutually accountable. Thank you.*

OPEN COMMENTS:

Mr. Muse, Chairperson of the Mattapoisett School Committee and Mattapoisett Representative on the ORR School Committee made the following statement: *I would like to thank everyone who is in attendance tonight, I see that there are 165 people participating in this meeting. This is a simple acknowledgement that there is a lot of education necessary. We all can say that we would like to do something, we all could say that we tried to do something, but I know based on what I've heard tonight that we don't do enough, and the biggest thing that I say to anyone listening tonight is that every individual can do something. As a group, as a school committee and other capacities you may be able to do more but every individual can do something, when you see racism, when you hear racism, you should not accept it, so when you hear it or see it at a minimum let it be known that it's not right. Don't walk away silently.*

Ms. Karin Barrows, Mattapoissett School Committee Member made the following statement: *I would like to say thank you for your presentation tonight, your stories, your testimonials were heart breaking as a parent, I can't imagine my child going through anything like that. I think it's so important that you're here and that we are listening. Unfortunately, this problem is not unique to ORR but were I would like to see us as district stand apart is how we react. How we respond, I want to work with you, I'm glad you're here and we are all listening.*

Ms. April Rios, Vice Chairperson from the Marion School Committee made the following statement: There was audio difficulty during Ms. Rios's statement, however we were able to recover the following: She thanked the members of the Tri-Town Against Racism for coming and she was looking forward to working with them.

Ms. Nicole Daniel, Marion School Committee member made the following statement: *I just wanted to thank everyone for coming out tonight, there's a lot of people here tonight and that speaks volumes, how much people care about our community. We all as committee members love and care about our kids, care about what happens to them, listening to the stories tonight makes it real, you always know it's real, but hearing the personal stories from everyone definitely makes it more real and it makes you think, change needs to happen, so your stories spoke volumes, knowing the personal experiences from all of you make a huge difference, thank you for sharing and we look forward to speaking to you all again.*

Ms. Heather Burke, ORR School Committee member made the following statement: *I agree with many of the comments previously said, so I won't repeat them, instead I'm going to extend this conversation to the town officials and other community leaders who are here tonight and don't regularly attend school committee meetings. I hope that they are listening too, because it will take all of us to adequately address racism in the Tri-Towns. So I'm going to use my time to extend the conversation to speak frankly. Last week there was a tweet going around from a high school football coach in California that said in part "we have been defunding schools for years" that is certainly true in Massachusetts until just recently when the state decided to slowly reinstate some of the lost funding. The fact is, if we want to make lasting, meaningful, significant change in the issue or racism, do more than just check the boxes, we as a community have to commit to funding the infrastructure and invest in the resources to ensure that change. Recently the town of Mattapoissett commissioned an analysis from the Collins Center at UMass Boston to look at the assessments of the ORR School District. Among other things this report points out that compared to comparable districts, ORR spends the lowest amount on administration, spending \$141 per pupil less than the nearest district. And this is in a highly demanding and complex district, a district that doesn't have a grant writer, that doesn't have the number of social workers, asst. principals and other middle level administrators that districts our size do and one in which our leaders negotiate with at least thirteen different unions. So if we as a community want a robust program of training, if we want a professional trusted adult for black students in every building, if we want our communities trained in programs like restorative justice, if want rapid response teams that can quickly address the racial incident before it can hurt others and to deal with perpetrators quickly, if we wanted a coordinated and consistent anti-racism program in all of our schools, then we as a community need to invest in the additional personnel and resources to drive these initiatives forward. If we want these things, as I think we should and I think we do we need to back up our words with additional strategic and financial investment in the people and programs who can make it happen.*

Ms. Michelle Smith, Chairperson of the Marion School Committee and Representative on ORR School Committee made the following statement:

I want to thank the speakers who were here tonight. Alison I don't know you personally, but I just want to say that you did a really wonderful job and I really appreciate you coming out. Tangi I do know you, great job as well. Barbara, I don't know you but thank you so much for coming out this

evening and taking the time to speak with us. As the Marion School Committee Chairperson and as Ms. Daniel and Ms. Rios stated we are dedicated to this, and we are here to help in any way that we can. I thank you again and I'm excited to be part of this change.

Mr. Joseph Pires, ORR School Committee member made the following statement:

I want to say thank you as well, last year when I began to hear the stories it really hit home for me, I can relate, having had similar experiences years ago, and also had an experience with my son a few years ago. Hearing the stories brings you to where that child was and I think stories like this need to be told more because it creates awareness. And the worst thing, and I speak from experience, for a parent of a child is being discriminated. But then on top of that not being heard and not having it handled correctly, so I really appreciate everyone's input today and I'm really appreciate Mr. Nelson's plan moving forward, having a system, a procedure that we can all abide by to create awareness.

Ms. Robin Rounseville, Rochester School Committee member made the following statement:

I wanted to extend my gratitude to everyone for participating. I am heartbroken to hear the stories shared tonight, that those things have happened to students throughout our district, I offer my sincerest apologies. But more importantly I offer my commitment to do whatever is necessary to facilitate change so that none of these things are happening again.

Ms. Anne Fernandes, Rochester School Committee member made the following statement:

Piggy backing to what everyone else has said, thank you. This is personal, as personal as it can be, it wasn't my children who were harmed, it wasn't my siblings who were harmed, but I'm a mom I'm a sister, I'm an aunt, I'm all of those things and this information is personal. I did know of two of the situations, and I'll agree with Robin it was heartbreaking to hear, but you kind of assume as a school committee member that things get taken care of and then you found out differently and I don't know who's fault that is but that will stop now I am sure of it. The other thing that I wanted to talk about was, I saw on several posts information about hiring practices and I think that would be a wonderful place that we could invest some time.

Ms. Suzanne Tseki, ORR School Committee member made the following statement:

I wanted to thank everyone for starting this conversation last year, I had just joined the school committee when we started having these talks and I was able to hear Barbara's presentation last year as well as some of the other ladies that came in front of the school committee. I think what we are seeing across the country right now are communities like ours sort of sweeping everything under the rug, and I'm glad that we are out here and that we are talking about it, and we are going to try to figure this out together, whatever that may mean, I really liked what Heather was saying about having additional administrators on hand, I think that's important, but I think we really need to where the heart of this is, where these feelings are coming from, we can teach right and wrong, but that comes from the head, but I think a lot of the things that we are seeing are coming from the heart, I guess my question is how do we reach the heart of people and not just their head.

Michele Cusolito, Rochester Resident made the following statement:

I am a Rochester parent and a former Rochester School Committee member. I am here just to make a request and I'm also a member of Tri-Town Against Racism. I'm here to make a request on their behalf, and that is that future school committee meetings for all of the towns and the district level include monthly updates on what's being done towards this initiative. So we would like to hear from the Supt. and from the Principals at each monthly meetings, so perhaps in their monthly reports. Tri-Town Against Racism is still working out on what are roles are going to be, but my role will be the coordinator between school committee and the organization, so we ask that be another step we take moving forward.

Rhonda Baptiste, Rochester Resident made the following statement:

I live in Rochester, I've lived here 30 of my 45 years I have one son he's 10 and he's bi racial and he's a 4th grader at Rochester Memorial School. In first grade a child asked my son why his skin was brown, to which he said "because I'm black", to which the child said "no you aren't you're brown". In third grade another student on the bus told my student that he must be poor because all black people are poor. Later that same school year, my son heard the N word for the first time in his life, he was 8, while I was putting him to bed he told me that someone said a bad word to me, I don't know what it means but I know it's bad. Even after I told him he would not be in trouble for saying it to please tell me what it was he still wouldn't say it. I said ok tell me the letter it starts with and when he said N I literally almost threw up. I actually sought out and spoke to the parent of the child, I figured she should know directly from me, from mom to mom, her response was "yeah I heard but when he said it, it had an A on the end not an ER". As if somehow that made it acceptable. That is unacceptable. There are countless incidents where children simply from lack of exposure and driven by curiosity ask my son questions about why his mom is white, why he tans so well in the summer and why his hair is so curly. These questions are worth mentioning because I believe they are just a symptom of a lack of exposure and education and ignorance. We as parents and as a community need to do better. The schools need to do better. My son should not be alienated and embarrassed. Please know that I absolutely love Rochester Memorial School, the teachers, the administrators and the community. I am not interested in demonizing or pointing fingers. I want to be part of the solution; I want to be part of the movement for better. I have spoken to RMS every time these incidents have come up in my son's short life and there have been several. The normal school curriculum needs to include more exposure, celebration and acceptance and not just tolerance for diversity of people and family units alike.

Tangi Thomas made the following statement:

Rhonda I just wanted to thank you and Kelsey for all your hard work in the book drive. The Tri-Town Against Racism has started a book drive. My children and I always have a hard time going to libraries including school libraries finding books with people that look like us, so we end up ordering them from catalogs or amazon. So I thought it was a great idea to try to do a book drive to try to get books into our schools that are diverse, not just books for me, but all kinds of books on our amazon wish list. If you're interested in participating you can find the list on our Facebook page.

Michael Lorencio, Mattapoissett Town Administrator made the following statement:

I'm the new Town Administrator in Mattapoissett and I was also a former ORR graduate and also went through the Mattapoissett schools. I mainly joined tonight to listen to the stories and various ideas presented, just know that I'm here to support the school and the Tri-Town Against Racism in whatever capacity as I can. I hope we all take an active approach to eliminating acts of racism in our community.

Closing Remarks

Cary Humphrey

I would like to thank Barbara, Alison and Tangi for speaking tonight, you guys did an excellent job, I know it's hard to say some things that make you feel emotional but you were heard and I hope that you three do not have to have this conversation again, that we are moving in the right direction. As a team as a group I feel like we are all in this together, if you look at everyone here tonight, there's teachers, there's police chief, town administrators, selectmen, there's members that want to be here. They didn't show up tonight to be a dissenting opinion, they want to be part of the team and part of the solution. Partnering with Mike Nelson this will definitely change, communication will be a lot better, and Barbara we will earn your trust and you won't have to be curious about that anymore. Thank you all for being a part of this.

Shannon Finning

I want to reflect back, so ran last year at the encouragement of some folks at Center School in Mattapoisett, I had only been in the community for two years and ran as a write in candidate. My son was a kindergartener last year at Center School and two of his classmates shared micro aggressions that were happening, a little girl because of her hair and another boy because of his size. I knew that Barbara and others had gone to speak to the ORR School Committee and not the full Joint School Committee last year, I went to the open meeting in June, and was heartened by the response in the room. Things that were important to me, knowing that Doug White was retiring and knowing the roles of the school committee played around hiring and evaluating the superintendent, around monitoring and recommending the budget, and also around policy making, that a priority for me was to be a member on the Joint School Committee and hire a superintendent who demonstrated skilled abilities experiences and willingness to learn about how we address and promote actively becoming an anti-racism school district. To me that's about our curriculum, it's about our hiring and retention of diverse staff and while I think we have wonderful educators I think we have been very fortunate because we get a lot of applications for all our positions here, but we haven't done the work that other districts have done and I've talked to Mr. Nelson about this. Around targeted recruitment and retention of educator and staff of color and that is a priority. I know how important it is to see people who look like you and be represented so having that as a priority. Also around the budget because priorities are linked to the budget, COVID certainly presented different challenges for all of us. But making sure that this does not get lost and that we do the intensive work. I was heartened by the professional development that started this year, I went and was heartened by the start of the conversation but I agree that the hard work, the work of unpacking white privilege for those who are white and Caucasian is difficult and it's painful but it's critical that we support that effort. So I heard you when you said self-examination, self-education and self-direction, we will do that. The taskforce, we started that work but we need to broaden and be inclusive of all of you around the work that we are doing and looking at staffing. I appreciate the recommendation about grant funding for support services person, certainly I think that Mr. Nelson has had some really good successes with grant funding, but I think we can do more looking at the vacancies that we have and prioritizing them. When Cary and I talked to Mike about our top priorities for him once he was named as Superintendent, our top two priorities were how do we address racism, and how do we navigate the budget given the impending crisis with COVID. You have my word, you have my commitment and I will work to earn your trust I promise you that.

Michael Nelson

I just want to echo the appreciation for the Tri-Town Against Racism group to come out tonight and work directly with us it truly meant a lot and I also want to thank the other stakeholders who spoke and also the others who just chose to come and participate I also appreciate your efforts as well. I just want you to know again that I will work with school committee chairs and respective boards to ensure an effective communication protocol moving forward, not only on updates at school committee meetings but just in general as we take on this important work moving forward. I tried to scan as many zoom boxes as possible, I also want to thank some of the town officials that came out, I saw Woody Hartley, Mike Lorenzo, Chief Lyons, Chief Garcia, Officer McGraw, Suzanne Szyndlar, and if I missed you I apologize and I thank you for being here supporting our schools. Lastly I want to thank the teachers who chose to come here tonight, I think it speaks volumes that you chose to come here tonight and to listen and to hear the information from our stakeholders and I feel more confident that ever that we will forge a strong partnership moving out of this meeting to make our schools even better. Thank you very much.

Cary Humphrey

My goal is that everyone leaves the meeting feeling like we are all walking in the same direction, with the same goals with the same outlook, if we have gotten to that point then this was a really big success. That's what I'm hoping for and frankly looking forward to.

Last thoughts from Ms. Thomas, Ms. Noyce and Ms. Sullivan:

Tangi Thomas and Alison Noyce both thanked everyone for their support and expressed that they are leaving the meeting feeling hopeful, and expressed that they hope that they hope the school administration and school committee is ready to work because they believe that together it can be done.

Ms. Sullivan also thanked everyone who participated and expressed that she's especially pleased with the town administrators who have come on board to listen to hear and get a little more information, she expressed that she recently had a conversation with town leadership and they had no idea what was going in the town, she expressed that when she broke down one situation that had occurred, you could hear him being really distressed by it.

Motion for meeting to adjourn at 8:07 p.m.

District, Mr. Muse,

Union, Ms. Daniel

District, Ms. Smith

Union, Ms. Fernandes