

Chilmark Select Board September 1, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Remotely present: Select Board: Chairperson James Malkin, Warren Doty and Bill Rossi. Others: Tim Carroll, Diana DeBlase, Marina Lent, Margaret Maida, OWIT International, Suellen Lazarus, MVTV, JVF I Phone, Anne Richie, Saskia & David Vanderhoop, Palmslate, Michelle, Graysen KL, Jeff Herman, Alongtalk, Sue Murphy, Jennie I Shinn, Noah Asimow, Keith Blackman, Lucas Thors, Ken Sweder, Molly Scarbough, Moira Cullen, Valerie Sonenberg, Max Larkin, Norman Hall, Arthur Hardy Doubleday, Sophia Hall, Jeffie, AGB, Ann Baker, Daniel Karnousky, Freedom Cartwright, Jennelle Gadowski. Scarlet Johnson (39)

At 4:30 PM Chairperson James Malkin opened meeting on the Zoom platform.

Chairperson Malkin said this special meeting has been called for the Select Board to receive a report from the Chilmark Town Affairs Council - this report is on the incident at the Summer Program that occurred on July 29. Each Select person will provide his response to the report so that the Town can make clear its response to the event. After the Select Board responds, I will allow a representative from the Summer Program to reply to the Select Board's comments.

The special meeting will then conclude. Should anyone wish to provide comment they can communicate with the Summer Program directly at chilmarkcommunitycenter@gmail.com Should they wish to communicate with the Town they can reach it at townadministrator@chilmarkma.gov

The Summer Program is not a Town program. It is run by a Not for Profit entity, run by the Chilmark Town Affairs Council, whose website is www.chilmarkcommunitycenter.org. The Program receives no town funds, no town management, nor town direction. However; as it is on town owned land, the Town has an interest in the activities of the Program.

For all the serious work and the considerable time that went into the report prepared by the Summer Program and which was published on their website and made available to the Town of Chilmark, I have the following comments that I think are important.

As the members of the committee or group that compiled the report were not identified by name, I don't know if any people of color were involved in the investigation or the conclusion - I would suggest that a group of white people - no matter how thoughtful - do not have the lens or experience to determine if an incident is racist or not.

I am surprised that given the amount of time that transpired from the event on July 29 to the issuance of the report on August 26, the only concrete step taken by the Summer Program is the creation of a sub-committee. I would have liked to have seen the Summer Program specifically outline planned training of staff to deal with bullying and racism, to address the lessons and leaning specifically with the children involved and to create an environment at the -

Summer Program where all children and specifically black children can go to a facility in the Town of Chilmark and feel safe.

Additionally, as there are diversity groups, programs and individuals on this island who have been working on these issues, I am disappointed that they had not been brought into this issue sooner, including during the investigation.

My bottom line, the finding that the White boys didn't mean it as a lynching/race-based thing doesn't at all mean the incident wasn't racially traumatic for the 8-year-old Black child.

Chairperson Malkin asked for Select Board members to speak.

Mr. Rossi said he would like to state that he feels that the CTAC treated this situation with upmost seriousness. Mr. Rossi said this is a well written document. Forming the committee to deal with moving forward with what will be the end result in how to positively be implementing the mission into the next year's camp season.

Mr. Doty said The Chilmark Town Affairs Council (CTAC) has submitted a detailed and thorough report on an incident that happened on July 29 at their summer program at the Chilmark Community Center.

Their investigation claims there were no racial slurs spoken and no dialogue among the boys about skin color. But their report does recognize that systemic racism exists in our community and could have played a part in this incident.

The CTAC has taken this incident seriously.

The Chilmark Select Board has received this report and welcomes its spirit of self-examination and its desire to find a program that is anti-racist. I am reminded that along the roadsides of Chilmark there are many small blue signs saying "Only You and I Can End Racism." I think we need to commit to a program that lives up to this slogan – what can we do to end racism in our town?

Chairperson Malkin reminded people if they have comments to please send email to Chilmarkcommunitycenter@gmail.com or townadministrator@chilmarkma.gov

Chairperson Malkin said Suellen Lazarus from the CTAC would talk not about report but what the committee will be doing moving forward in addressing the safety of all campers. Ms. Lazarus asked if President of CTAC had any comments before she began.

Mr. Herman said the Chilmark Community Center has been running over 50 years. Prior to opening the program next season we will address steps to take going forward. Suellen will address steps moving forward.

Ms. Lazarus said the report raises issues of racism and of supervision. The community center needs to grapple with the realities of systemic racism and bias, and consider how we can and must do better. It is our priority to create an environment that welcomes children of diverse backgrounds, races, cultures, ethnicities, religious beliefs, and sexual orientation, and that all children feel safe and supported while participating in our programs.

The steps that we will take include:

- Develop a code of conduct that helps create a safe and inclusive environment where all children can thrive. Chilmark Community Center expects all campers, counselors and staff to engage in positive interpersonal relationships including being inclusive and welcoming to people of diverse backgrounds, races, cultures, ethnicities, religious beliefs, gender, sexual orientation, age, and abilities.
- Develop a reporting system so that campers, their parents or counselors can readily file a report when an incident occurs and be assured that it will be quickly investigated.
- Incorporate programming for kids around anti-bullying, anti-racism, and inclusive play.
- Provide diversity, equity and inclusion training for all staff, counselors and CTAC.
- Actively recruit staff, counselors and campers to create a diverse environment.
- Diversify the CTAC.
- Strengthen our recruitment and training of counselors to ensure that there is adequate and appropriate supervision at the camp at all times.
- In implementing the above, we will partner and seek advice of community experts in diversity, equity and inclusion with the objective of strengthening and improving our programs.
- Deliver our recommendations by the end of September.

Chairperson Malkin said he appreciated the work that will go into this and looks forward to receiving timely update reports.

Mr. Rossi thanked Ms. Lazarus for speaking to Select Board today.

At 4:51 PM Chairperson Malkin said the meeting will now adjourn as we have a Board of Health meeting starting at 5:00 PM. Mr. Rossi moved to adjourn. Mr. Doty seconded the motion

SO VOTED: 3 Ayes

Minutes respectfully submitted by Diana DeBlase

Approved 02/15/2022

Document list:

- Incident report from CTAC