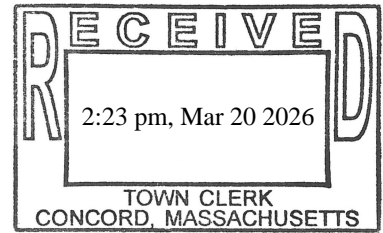


**BIAS AND HATE INCIDENT REPORTING WORK GROUP
MINUTES**

**Tuesday, February 24, 2026
6:00 p.m.
55 Church Street & Zoom Video Conference**



Members: Deborah Dorfman, Paul Boehm, Agnes Lubega-Kalisa
Virtual: Kerry Lafleur, Sandeep Pisharody (6:04 left 6:08)
Online Guests: Robert Grom, Sam Hiersteiner, Ece Turnator, Joyce Degreef, Joe Palumbo, Rose Cratsley
In-person Guests: Michael Williams, Naomi Rosenfeld, Craig Awmiller, Carrie Rankin

1. Call to Order: 6:03pm

2. Public Comments

No comments at this time.

3. Approval of Available Minutes February 3, 2026 Minutes

Ms. Dorfman motioned to approve the minutes of February 3, 2026
Ms. Lubega-Kalisa seconded
All in favor: Ms. Dorfman, Ms. Agnes Lubega-Kalisa and Mr. Boehm

4. Discuss Focus Group Insights

Mr. Boehm started the meeting by announcing that he would present an update to the DEI Commission the following Thursday, February 26. Ms. Lubega-Kalisa also offered to share that update jointly.

The committee then turned to recent focus group activity. Ms. Dorfman reported that the third focus group is scheduled for Sunday, March 8, from 1–3 p.m. at the Concord Main Library. Outreach efforts include listing the session in *The Concord Bridge*, with the goal of attracting participants from underserved communities, communities of color, and others who feel underrepresented. Additional contacts and suggestions received via email will be incorporated into outreach.

The group also discussed youth engagement, particularly high school students. Ms. Dorfman noted she lacks direct connections to students and asked for support; Mr. Williams confirmed the matter had already been raised at a School Committee meeting and would be raised again.

A substantive portion of the meeting focused on barriers to reporting and what the focus groups are revealing: under-reporting of non-criminal incidents; concerns about confidentiality; skepticism that anything will be done with the information; fear of retaliation (including in business contexts); and uncertainty about outcomes once a report is submitted. The group emphasized that building trust will require clear, timely follow-up and transparency about what happens to individual reports and to aggregated data. Ms. Dorfman also highlighted cultural barriers, immigration-related fears, and the need to define who can access information. Mr. Boehm will circle back with Town Counsel on anonymity and confidentiality options, and the group hopes to learn from Boston's approach.

The group agreed these themes will be central in designing an accessible system. Ms. Dorfman will compile a summary of all three focus groups after the final session.

5. Finalize Structure and Content of Incident Intake Information/Form

Mr. Boehm introduced discussion of the incident intake form, referencing Mr. Pisharody's extensive list of categories, which combines items drawn from multiple external reporting systems. Given its detail, Mr. Boehm raised the need to balance completeness with simplicity for users.

The emerging consensus is that the form should first capture the reporter's perception of the motivator (e.g., race, religion/belief, ethnicity, sex/gender/sexuality, age, language, etc.) with the ability to select multiple motivators and always include an "other" option. Ms. Lubega-Kalisa and Ms. Dorfman stressed the importance of allowing a free-text description so the (intake) staff can assign sub-categories later, rather than forcing the reporter to choose from an exhaustive list; intersectional motives should be accommodated without making the form overwhelming.

The group questioned the utility of distinguishing "legally protected" versus "policy protected" characteristics on the form and discussed dropping "employment/professional status" as a standalone motivator, with Mr. Boehm noting such cases could be captured as "other."

Mr. Boehm outlined a four-part intake form structure: (1) perceived motive(s) of the harm-doer; (2) type of harm (e.g., physical, verbal, intimidation, vandalism), which Ms. Lubega-Kalisa will draft by drawing from other federal/state/school forms; (3) location category (e.g., workplace, public place, private space, education), which Ms. Lubega-Kalisa will also refine; and (4) a narrative section for details and any additional information. The form will later incorporate front-end fields for identity/ anonymity preferences and back-end prompts about desired follow-up or support.

The group acknowledged a need for authentication and bot-prevention measures without undermining the option for anonymous reporting, and agreed to consult IT. Mr. Boehm will invite Chief Information Officer (or a team member) to discuss technical options such as human-validation tools, while recognizing that prank or bot submissions cannot be fully eliminated. The form and site must clearly state mandated reporting caveats—for criminal acts or child endangerment—so reporters understand when information must be referred to police or appropriate authorities.

Core components proposed for the intake form:

1. **Perceived motivation** for the incident
 - Race, religion/belief, sexual identity, age, ethnicity, etc.
 - Reporters may select multiple motivations; "Other" must always be available.
 - Wording will center on the **reporter's perception**, not the offender's intent.
2. **Type of harm**
 - Physical, verbal, intimidation, vandalism, slurs, etc.
 - A descriptive section will allow reporters to explain the incident in their own words. Ms. Lubega-Kalisa volunteered to draft this section.
3. **Location category**
 - Workplace, public area, private space, educational setting, etc.
 - Ms. Lubega-Kalisa will also produce the draft list of location categories.

4. Narrative description

- Reporters may describe the incident freely, allowing staff to classify details later.

Mr. Boehm (number 1) and Ms. Lubega-Kalisa (numbers 2 and 3) will prepare draft components for review at the next meeting.

6. Discuss Reporting Mechanisms

On reporting mechanisms, the group agreed residents should be able to report online, by phone, and in person, with multiple language options and disability accommodations; an aggregate landing page on the town website should host the form and list resources, with QR codes considered as a convenient entry point. KL confirmed a hotline could be set up and, where feasible, answered by a real person during business hours, with after-hours calls potentially routed to civilian staff at the police station. KL also indicated existing Human Services staff could handle intake and triage within their roles, depending on volume.

Mr. Boehm presented a high-level incident lifecycle: incident occurs; report is submitted (victim, bystander, or witness); intake by trained town staff; immediate response/support scaled to the incident (e.g., police for criminal matters, referral to town social workers, or community resources); data capture with longer-term coordination among the police, the Middlesex DA, and schools where appropriate and consistent with confidentiality obligations; periodic data analysis (monthly/quarterly) feeding town management and Select Board decisions and informing community bodies (DEI Commission, Human Rights Council, and others) for broader actions; and, over time, community response aimed at reducing incidents. This framing underscores that the reporting system is connected to—but does not replace—existing systems; trust will be built through consistent, visible follow-through.

The group agreed to benchmark other municipalities and universities to understand what works in practice. Town Manager, Kerry Lafleur, and Assistant Town Manager, Jessica Porter shared observations from Belmont and Andover, respectively, noting varying levels of implementation and activity. The group will identify communities such as Sudbury, Acton, and Belmont, and select universities to contact, adding this to the next meeting's agenda.

The group revisited insights from the focus groups regarding preferred reporting channels.

Recommended reporting options:

- Online submission form
- Telephone hotline, ideally answered by a live person during business hours
- In-person reporting option for those who cannot or do not wish to report electronically
- Language access & disability accommodations

Ms. Lafleur indicated Human Services staff could likely support intake responsibilities, with after-hours calls potentially routed through the police station's civilian staff.

The group discussed integrating the reporting system into a Town website landing page, which would provide access to the reporting form, phone number, in-person instructions, and community resources. A QR-code-based "Concord Safe" concept was also noted.

Members emphasized the need for clear information about mandatory reporting requirements (e.g., child endangerment, criminal acts).

Mr. Boehm previewed a draft incident lifecycle model, showing connections between incident reporting, intake, individual support, data analysis, and the broader role of the DEI Commission and Human Rights Council. Benchmarking with other municipalities (e.g., Sudbury, Acton, Belmont) and universities will be added to the next meeting agenda.

7. Upcoming Meeting Schedule

The group's upcoming schedule includes planned work sessions on March 17 and March 24, with Mr. Boehm noting that operations could extend to May 1 if further time is required to finalize system design, benchmarking, and the concluding report. Looking ahead, the agenda will pivot toward a comparative analysis of neighboring communities—specifically Sudbury, Acton, and Belmont—to evaluate their existing reporting systems. This benchmarking phase aims to identify the strengths and pitfalls of various models to inform the group's final recommendations.

8. Adjournment: 7:25pm

Respectfully submitted:
Magnolia Begley
Human Services Generalist