

WEST HANTS REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

Diverse, Equitable, and Inclusive Communities Committee Meeting Minutes

July 14, 2025, 6:01pm – 8:12pm

Council Chambers, 100 King Street, Windsor



West Hants

something inspiring awaits

Attendance:

Anne Bishop, Community Member, Co-Chair
Domenic Padula, Community Member, Co-Chair
Lisa Bland, Community Member
Alma Crnalic, Community Member
Iza Rayworth, West Hants Pride Liaison
Kayla Leary-Pinch, Councillor
Jim Ivey, Councillor (Alternate)
Mark Phillips, WHRM CAO
Katie Rose, WHRM HR Manager
Deanna Snair, WHRM Employee
Vanessa Lake, WHRM Employee

Guests:

Sheldon States, Guest Speaker
3 people in the audience

Regrets:

Mattea Sexton, Community Member
Rayvonne Carrington, SPEC Advisory Member
Karrie-Ann Wilkie, Health Board Representative
Tim Doyle, RCMP Representative
Heather Kidd, West Hants Middle School Liaison
Donna MacMillan, Avon View High School Liaison
Ashley Connors, Avon View High School Liaison
Chris Burns, WHRM Employee
Brielle Pyette, WHRM Employee

1) Call to Order

At 6:01pm, Domenic called the meeting to order.

2) Land Acknowledgement & Peoples Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that we are in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq people. We are governed by the treaties of Peace and Friendship signed in 1726. We are all treaty people, and we all have responsibilities to this land and to each other. African Nova Scotians are

a distinct people whose history, legacies, and contributions have enriched this part of Mi'kma'ki known as Nova Scotia for over 400 years. We acknowledge the historic and ongoing racism against these communities, and we are committed to mending our relationships by listening, learning, and recognizing our wrongs.

3) Attendance

At the time of attendance, the Committee did not have quorum. Domenic continued with the meeting so that Sheldon States could give his presentation. Quorum was achieved at 6:06pm when more members arrived.

4) Approval of the Agenda

Moved by Anne Bishop and seconded by Lisa Bland that the agenda be approved as circulated. Motion carried unanimously.

5) Declaration of Conflict of Interest

No conflicts were declared.

6) Announcements

Congratulations were extended to the West Hants Pride Society for an incredible Pride Parade on July 5, 2025. The attendance was the highest since the parade first began four years ago.

7) Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

Moved by Alma Crnalic and seconded by Iza Rayworth that the minutes of June 9, 2025, be approved as circulated. Motion carried unanimously.

8) Committee Membership – Empty Seats

The Committee has two vacancies. Deanna received one expression of interest, but no applications. Finding a Glooscap representative is a top priority for the Committee.

9) Ongoing Business

a) Windsor Plains Community Meeting

The engagement session with the Windsor Plains community was held on June 26, 2025, at the Three Mile Plains Hall. Key community members were invited, however, only two people attended. Staff had a very passionate and open discussion with these individuals and learned a lot. Though the strategy was not directly discussed, valuable input was received.

A major point of discussion was the disconnect between people and their land. In the past, black people were given land to live on, but no actual deed. Despite families living on these properties for generations, there is no formal documentation. This leads to the inability to prove ownership and familial disputes over the responsibility for upkeep and property taxes. Because of this, properties up for tax sale are disproportionately owned by black families. There were discussions on how the municipality can assist in these situations, by sharing resources and information. The municipality is unable to deal with land ownership directly.

The Committee discussed ongoing structural racism. Historically, black people were given lower-quality land to live on, or the zoning would classify the land as lower quality. Despite families using it as viable farmland, it was considered “less important” than the agricultural lands white people owned and did not have the same protections or permissions. Much of this zoning still applies, and there is currently no process to rezone back to Agriculture.

Staff will follow up on the low attendance and find better ways to engage with the community. It was noted that a more social event, like a barbeque, may be more well-attended. The more formal the event, the less comfortable and willing to speak people will be.

b) Strategic Actions: sub-committee reports

Alma’s group, focused on accessible and welcoming businesses, had met. Alma and Iza are working to compile a list of safe, welcoming businesses and organizations. June is a very busy month for many, and other sub-groups were unable to meet.

c) Emancipation Day

A list of movies/documentaries was circulated to the Committee after the last meeting. Committee members narrowed down the choices. Deanna has secured the location, theatre screen, and snacks, and just needs confirmation on which movie to show.

Moved by Lisa Bland and seconded by Iza Rayworth that the movie “Speak It! From the Heart of Black Nova Scotia” by Sylvia Hamilton be shown during the Avon River Days festival. Motion carried unanimously.

Tea, coffee and doughnuts will be provided for the flag raising event. A guest speaker is yet to be chosen. Anne will see if she can get in touch with Sylvia.

d) Response to Housing Letter

The Committee’s letter was sent to all Council and was included in the agenda package as correspondence. Council had considerable discussions around this topic during the budget deliberations. They have committed to providing the space but will no longer offer the supplement. This is an issue involving all levels of government. The Committee discussed how to get their concerns addressed more directly. They can submit a recommendation report to Council. Unlike correspondence, it will have its own space on the agenda.

e) Request that Council ask for the Environmental Racism Report

Council is waiting for a response.

10) New Business: Noise and Community Standard By-law

Domenic added this item to the agenda for discussion. Committee members expressed concern over the by-law disproportionately targeting marginalized communities and requested to be given a copy to review through a DEI lens. Deanna will share the updated version with the Committee to review at the next meeting. There was substantial community feedback to the by-law and the Public Hearing was postponed by Council. The Committee plans to compile a recommendation report to Council for consideration. The Public Hearing is also an opportunity for public comment. At this point, changes can be made, and the decision may even be made to start over from the beginning.

Special Presentation on African Nova Scotian history: Sheldon States

Sheldon States is the Principal of the West Hants Middle School. He is not a professional historian but is a well-known and well-respected African Nova Scotian history buff. He combines his own personal history with his research for an engaging and informative presentation. Unfortunately, Mark had another engagement and had to leave the meeting at 7:00pm.

Mr. States shared the history and migration of black people in Nova Scotia, from the first arrivals during the slave trade in the 1600s to the communities of today. Nova Scotia was once home to the largest free black community in all North America. Despite this, Mr. States shared the many issues black people still faced, despite being “free.” People remained unable to find decent work in Nova Scotia or the equitable treatment they deserved. The injustice of the past isn’t as far away as many seem to think with the last segregated school in the province closing in 1983. Mr. States presents information in such a way to not to make anyone feel guilty or ashamed, but to educate and share parts of history that are not as well-known or documented.

The Committee thanked Mr. States for his excellent presentation and for taking the time.

11) Next Meeting Date / Adjournment

The next Committee meeting will be held on August 11, 2025, at 6:00pm in Council Chambers at 100 King Street, Windsor. With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:12pm.