

Article 46 - Stoughton Equal Opportunity Committee By-law

To see if the Town will vote to amend the Town of Stoughton's General Bylaws to add a new Chapter, Chapter 44 entitled "Stoughton Equal Opportunity Commission;" as set forth in a document entitled "2025 Proposed Stoughton Equal Opportunity Commission Bylaw" on file with the Town Clerk's office, and included in the appendix hereto; or take any other action relative thereto.

Inserted by:	Select Board
Requested by:	Stoughton Equal Opportunity Committee
Date:	February 4, 2025
Estimated Costs:	\$0

Chapter 44 Stoughton Equal Opportunity Committee

§ 44-1. Purpose and Mission

The purpose of the Stoughton Equal Opportunity Committee, ("SEOC"), is to increase cooperation, understanding, and dialogue among Stoughton residents, commercial and institutional entities, and other stakeholders of diverse cultural, religious, socio-economic, racial and ethnic, and experiential backgrounds.

The SEOC will work to welcome and promote inclusion throughout town for anyone who resides, works, or attends school or a faith community in Stoughton, or otherwise visits Stoughton for any reason. The mission of the SEOC is to promote Stoughton as a welcoming community that: (1) values diversity, (2) strives to create a community where everyone has an equal vote and a voice in the way the government works; (3) and is a community where all people can thrive where they live, work and play.

§ 44-2. Membership

The SEOC shall be comprised of nine (9) voting members. Five (5) members shall be appointed by the Select Board. Four (4) members shall be appointed by the School Committee. Terms of each member shall coincide with the Town of Stoughton fiscal year (effective July 1) and expire on June 30. SEOC members shall serve for a term of three (3) years, except for the initial appointments to establish a staggered rotation of members.

Three (3) initial appointees shall serve for terms expiring June 30, 2026; three (3) appointees shall serve for a term expiring June 30, 2027; and three (3) appointees shall serve for terms expiring June 30, 2028. Prospective members may apply to either the Select Board or the School Committee or both. The Select Board shall make the first five (5) appointments. After the initial nine (9) members are appointed, further appointments shall be made by the appointing authority that initially appointed said expiring or vacant seat. At its first meeting, and thereafter at its first meeting after the start of each new fiscal year, the SEOC shall conduct an organizational meeting to elect from its members a Chair, a Clerk, and (at its discretion) a Vice Chair.

Members shall be residents of Stoughton but shall not include sitting members of any elected Town board or committee. The Select Board and School Committee shall strive to appoint a highly-qualified and diverse committee that centers the voices and perspectives of historically marginalized populations in Stoughton. Additionally, the committee members should will be representative of Stoughton's diverse community. the diversity of age groups of Stoughton residents.

A requirement for appointment shall be the individual's interest in, and passion for, diversity, equity, and inclusion fair treatment and inclusion of all Stoughton residents, without exclusion. Qualifications may include life experience and/or demonstrated expertise that the Select Board and/or School Committee may deem relevant and beneficial to the Committee. Such expertise may include, by way of example only, demographic data analysis, law, project management, social services/sciences, survey design/analysis, human resources, community development, engagement, communications, and organizational change.

If the SEOC determines that additional expertise is needed to support specific efforts, it may petition the Select Board for appointment of one or more non-voting members for a limited term. The SEOC may provide the Select Board and/or School Committee with a recommendation and rationale to modify its structure or charge at any time.

§ 44-3. Duties

The SEOC shall offer the Select Board and School Committee recommendations on topics both within and without the Select Board's and School Committee's purview. Recommendations outside of the Select Board's or School Committee's purview may be endorsed by the Board and/or Committee and/or provided to the relevant agency for informational purposes. Duties and responsibilities shall include:

- Assess residents' ability to access and benefit from relevant Town services.
- Document opportunities to increase residents' sense of belonging within Stoughton.
- Identify and track key metrics that describe Stoughton's designation as a welcoming community.
- Remain informed of relevant tools, resources, and best practices other municipalities have used to successfully increase inclusion and belonging of its residents.
- Provide expertise and recommendations to relevant town agencies and committees to improve inclusion and belonging of Stoughton residents.

⊖ Gathering first-hand experiences in Stoughton from all Stoughton residents;

- Providing training for committee members to self-examine and recognize their own experience with historically disenfranchised populations and unconscious bias;

- Facilitating discussions and education forums for Stoughton residents, institutional managers, and employers about issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion;
- Identifying ways to promote awareness, engagement, and community building around diverse experiences and to create a more inclusive, welcoming community;
- Working in conjunction and in cooperation with other local and/or regional community, government, cultural, and faith groups that are addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion issues in order to optimize momentum and use of resources;
- Providing evidence of systemic racism in Stoughton, and developing recommendations of steps to be taken as individuals, organizations, and as a community to combat racism and embrace greater diversity, equity, and inclusion in those areas;
- Developing strategies and tools to assess the current diversity, equity, and inclusion metrics in Stoughton (through surveys or other fact-gathering means), working with the Select Board and School Committee to develop and define goals related to bettering those metrics, and developing strategies to measure progress related to any identified goals;
- Delegating a committee member to serve as a liaison to any internal municipal Equal Opportunity working group that may exist under the Town Manager's purview;
- Assisting the Select Board and/or School Committee in recruiting and selecting applicants for membership in all other appointed board and committees.
- Delegating a committee member to serve as a liaison with the Select Board and/or School Committee in any Equal Opportunity-related activities or conversations that they schedule, and/or to any Equal Opportunity-focused subcommittee of the Select Board and/or School Committee that may be formed.
- Periodically, and no less frequently than once every six months, the SEOC shall Brief the School Committee periodically, and no less frequently than once every six months, on any events, campaigns, or programming that the SEOC is facilitating, and on any Equal Opportunity-related data, accounts of experience, or issues relevant to the Stoughton Public Schools that the Equal Opportunity has uncovered. The School Committee may request that the SEOC provide specific recommendations on topics within the purview of the School Committee.
- Periodically, and no less frequently than once every six months, the SEOC shall Brief the Select Board periodically, and no less frequently than once every six months, on progress made identifying obstacles toward achieving Equal Opportunity goals in Stoughton and shall make recommendations to address these obstacles. As they relate to the above identified areas of the Committee's purview, recommendations may be related to community engagement and education; quality of life; public access to various amenities, assets, and services; the Town of Stoughton's public-facing policies, practices, procedures, budgets, Charter, General Bylaws and Zoning Bylaws, Town Meeting Warrant Articles; and other local issues the Committee identifies pertaining to residents'

and other community members/stakeholders' experiences in Town. The Select Board may request that the SEOC provide specific recommendations on topics within the purview of the Board.

- Annually, at fiscal year end, the SEOC shall submit to the Select Board and School Committee a written report with a summary of activities pursued over the previous fiscal year, identifying Equal Opportunity-related SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-based) goals for the Committee and Select Board to pursue and identify recommendations to achieve those goals in the upcoming fiscal year.

§ 44-4. Regulations

The SEOC may promulgate rules, regulations and/or policies to assist it in effectuating the purposes of this chapter. Failure by the SEOC to promulgate such rules and regulations or a legal declaration of their invalidity by a court of law shall not act to suspend or invalidate this chapter.

§ 44-5. Severability

The invalidity of any section or provision of this Bylaw shall not invalidate any other section or provision.