

Proposal for an Inclusivity Working Group

Please find the following outline for the background, intended purpose and structure for a proposed “Inclusivity Working Group” for the town of Charlotte.

Background:

An initiative entitled “Vermont Declaration of Inclusion¹” has been put forward for adoption by municipalities throughout the State. The initiative is funded privately by a non-profit group and states the following purpose:

“Highlight the fact that we as Vermonters are not fully aware of the systemic racism that is present in our majority “white” society

Raise consciousness about the importance of diversity, the positive effect that diversity can have on our economy, and on equity and justice

Emphasize the importance of preparing our youth to live and prosper in the more diverse society in which we all will soon be living

Tell the world at large that Vermont welcomes all people to our state, which is struggling to maintain its population and its ability to fund basic programs for its citizens

Attract people with myriad skills and traditions to Vermont to live, work, and raise families in a state that values and encourages diversity in its population

Focus attention on examining employee manuals, police protocols, and hiring practices to promote fairness and equity in applying legislation, ordinances, etc., within our towns and the state as a whole, Employ best practices in coaching municipal and state

¹See Attachment 1 “Declaration of Inclusion”

employees, including police, to value and respect all citizens
(<https://vtdeclarationofinclusion.org/purpose/>, 2024).”

The proposed first step of the statewide initiative is the adoption of a “Declaration of Inclusion” as presented. Upon adoption, the initiative makes several recommendations for ongoing and in-depth implementation. While the “Declaration” has been adopted by the Selectboard in many cities and towns throughout the state, others have chosen to put it up for a town vote. Notably, the Declaration has been adopted by Shelburne, Williston, South Burlington, Hinesburg, Bristol and Vergennes.

At the regularly scheduled Selectboard meeting of the Town of Charlotte on 8/12/2024, the “Declaration of Inclusion” was presented to the Selectboard for a possible vote to adopt. At that meeting, public comment included voices both in support of and in opposition to adoption. At that time, proposed options for next steps included an immediate Selectboard vote to adopt as provided, town vote during regularly scheduled Town Meeting in March 2025 to adopt as provided, or the creation of a unique “Declaration of Inclusion” by the town of Charlotte to be voted upon at Town Meeting Day in March 2025. The Selectboard chose not to vote on the declaration at the 8/12/2024 meeting in favor of a town vote in March 2025. In the interim, the Selectboard will create an Inclusivity that will decide whether the town will vote on the “Declaration of Inclusion” as provided by the statewide initiative or a version drafted by this group of interested Charlotte residents.

Intended purpose:

The intended purpose of the Inclusivity working group is to review the statewide “Declaration of Inclusion,” the associated implementation recommendations and to make an initial recommendation to the Selectboard on whether the original Declaration of Inclusion, or an alternate declaration, should be added as an article for a vote on Town Meeting Day in March of 2025. Should the working group decide to move forward with the provided declaration, the goals of this group will have been met and the group will be dissolved. If, however, the working group decides to move forward with an alternate version, it will then

be the working group's purpose to draft an alternate declaration for the Selectboard to consider adding as an article to be voted on at Town Meeting in 2025.

Structure:

Inclusivity working group members will be expected to attend (at a minimum) monthly hybrid meetings of the group until the planned dissolution of the group. In addition, members may be asked to complete research and analysis tasks between meetings and report back to the group. Members should be prepared to adhere to Vermont's Open Meeting Law: [1 V.S.A. §§ 310-314](#).

The Inclusivity working group will be comprised of a total of 5 or 7 voting members to include 4 or 6 volunteer community members and at least 1 member of the Charlotte Selectboard. Ideally, community members will represent a variety of key community stakeholders including members of minority and underrepresented groups.

The members of the working group will be appointed by a majority vote of the Charlotte Selectboard at a warned meeting. Member resignations must be submitted in writing to the Charlotte Selectboard. In the event of a resignation, the Charlotte Selectboard reserves the right to solicit additional applications and appoint members to replace resignees.

Meetings will begin once a quorum of members has been appointed and will end no later than January 31, 2025 or until the working group has, by a majority vote, approved a final "Declaration of Inclusion" to be presented to the Selectboard, whichever comes first. If, by the planned dissolution date of 1/31/2025, the group has not drafted a suitable alternative to the statewide "Declaration of Inclusion" as presented to the Selectboard on 8/12/2024, the working group will defer to the aforementioned statewide version for a vote at Town Meeting Day 2025.

Citizen's of Charlotte who are interested in joining the Inclusivity working group and who are at least 18 years of age are encouraged to apply by following these steps:

1. Provide a written letter of interest and email it Nate Bareham, Charlotte Town Administrator at townadmin@townofcharlotte.com
 - Letters of Interest are due no later than noon on September 13, 2024
2. Review and be prepared to adhere to the Town of Charlotte Conflict of Interest Policy dated August 8, 2011
3. Be available for Selectboard interviews at a warned Selectboard meeting