

**TOWN OF WAYLAND HUMAN RIGHTS, DIVERSITY, EQUITY  
AND INCLUSION (HRDEI) COMMITTEE HOTLINE**

**I. HRDEI Committee Charge**

The HRDEI Committee (“Committee”) shall serve in an advisory capacity to the Select Board, and shall have the following charge and responsibilities:

*“...Serve as a portal for residents or visitors to make a report about concerns, complaints or questions of discrimination or unequal treatment of individuals within the Town of Wayland, so that victims and witnesses can feel safe and town officials can investigate such reports, concerns, complaints or questions. The Committee shall develop procedures for accepting and managing complaints, whether anonymous or named, and protecting the reputation of all parties involved as appropriate and legally required. While the Committee may report and render recommendations on certain issues involving the Town, the Committee does not have the authority to formally investigate complaints, the power to subpoena witnesses or take sworn testimony, or the power to adjudicate or mediate the resolution of disputes between individuals or entities.”*

**II. Public Records Law and Confidentiality**

As an advisory committee of the Select Board and public body, the Committee is subject to the Massachusetts Public Records Law and its regulations, which give individuals the right to access public records. Public records are broadly defined as “books, papers, maps, photographs, recorded tapes, financial statements, statistical tabulations, or other documentary materials or data, regardless of physical form or characteristics.” There are a few strict and narrowly defined exemptions providing a basis for withholding disclosure, in whole or in part, from a person making a public records request.

Within this legal framework, it is paramount to the Committee that the confidentiality, privacy and reputation of individuals coming forward to report concerns, questions or complaints be protected to the greatest extent possible. As such, the Committee will establish a phone hotline wherein callers may leave a name, phone number and brief message, or opt to proceed anonymously. No one will be denied assistance based on his/her/their preference to proceed anonymously, and the Committee will not solicit any information beyond what is necessary to determine the issue at hand and possible resources available. Further, the Committee will not utilize an intake form or other written tool to document interactions with callers.

**III. Hotline Message**

The Committee will set-up Google Voice or similar service that allow multiple hotline volunteers/devices to access the phone line and receive real-time alerts when callers leave a message. Volunteers will use only the assigned Google Voice phone number when making and returning calls and will refrain from using their personal phone numbers.

The following hotline message will be recorded:

*“You have reached the Wayland Human Rights, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee’s hotline. If this is an emergency, please hang up and call 9-1-1. Please speak slowly and clearly to leave your name and telephone number. You may also leave a brief message as to the nature of your call. If you prefer to remain anonymous, please let us know and your information will be kept confidential. A member of the Committee will return your call within 48 hours, or as soon thereafter as possible. Please indicate whether it’s okay to leave a message at the number you provided, and the best time to reach you. Thank you and have a good day.”*

Callers will be able to leave a message 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and 365 days a year, either anonymously, or by indicating their names and phone numbers. A brief message as to the nature of the complaint may also be included if callers so desires. Once received, the Committee’s policy will be to return calls within 48 hours, or as soon thereafter as possible.

#### **IV. Hotline Volunteers**

Committee members will rotate the responsibility of checking hotline messages between monthly meetings, pursuant to the sample schedule outlined below.

July/August 2022 (Mei-Ling)

August/September 2022 (Isabel)

September/October 2022 (Jessica)

October/November 2022 (Karen)

November/December 2022 (Yauwu)

December/January 2023 (Heather)

January/February 2023 (Janot)

February/March 2023 (Steve)

March/April (Yamini)

April/May 2023 (Dovie)

#### **V. Intake Procedure**

In conducting phone intakes, hotline volunteers will introduce themselves as members of the Committee. They will focus on listening to callers in an empathetic manner, building trust, obtaining relevant information and identifying next steps.

As a preliminary matter, volunteers will inform callers that the Committee does not offer legal advice, and complaints will not be investigated nor adjudicated. Instead, the role of the Committee is to connect callers to general information, referral and/or options concerning their complaint.

Volunteers will focus on ascertaining the following things:

- (1) Whether the caller or incident is connected to Wayland;
- (2) The degree of privacy and confidentiality desired by the caller;
- (3) The general nature of the issue (i.e. discrimination in housing, education, employment, etc.);
- (4) The caller's desired outcome, if known; and
- (5) Any other assistance or steps the caller has pursued.

*MANDATED REPORTERS: If the assigned hotline volunteer is a mandated reporter, he/she/they will disclose this fact to the caller prior to conducting the intake, explaining that Massachusetts law requires him/her/they to make a report when, in the volunteer's professional judgment, there is reasonable cause to believe that a child is experiencing abuse or neglect. The volunteer will further inform the caller of the opportunity to speak to a different volunteer who is not a mandated reporter. If the caller elects to speak to a different volunteer, the intake will immediately cease and the matter will be referred to another volunteer for follow-up. No one will be denied assistance for opting to speak to a different person on this basis.*

#### **A. Follow-Up/Referrals**

When the initial phone intake concludes, hotline volunteers will inform callers of next steps and follow-through. Volunteers will utilize the HRDEI Committee's Community Resource Guide to identify agencies or providers that can potentially help in the area of housing, domestic violence, food, safety, unemployment, disability, LGBTQ, legal, etc. Other guides and resources, of course, may be consulted depending on the nature of the issue.

A designated point person will be available to supervise the hotline, provide guidance and trouble-shoot, if needed. The point person may be changed from time to time.

#### **B. Closing Intakes**

The Committee's goal is to provide prompt and brief service to callers within the scope of its charge. Steps will be taken to provide swift resolution of matters, and when services are complete, callers will be expressly informed that no further action will be taken. If the caller needs further assistance in the future, however, he/she/they may access the hotline again. Thereafter, the matter will be closed.

#### **C. Reporting Procedures**

It is the responsibility of hotline volunteers to make oral reports to the full Committee at its regularly scheduled monthly meetings, being careful not to divulge any personal or identifying details, such as name, address, phone number, etc. An example of a verbal report is as follows:

*"In the last month we received one call concerning a Wayland resident who reported experiencing racial discrimination at work. The caller was referred to the Massachusetts Commission Against*

*Discrimination and MetroWest Legal Services for further assistance. The caller was also provided a copy of the Community Resource Guide.”*

Oral reports will be reflected in the meeting minutes as well as on the Town’s Waycam video. General data will also become part of the Committee’s annual report. No other record will be kept by the Committee.

**D. Training**

Committee members serving as hotline volunteers will familiarize themselves with the intake procedures described herein prior to operating the phone hotline. If they have additional questions, they are encouraged to connect with the designated point person/hotline supervisor.

**VI. Press Release**

The Committee has prepared a press release to notify the public of the phone hotline. The press release will be disseminated widely (i.e. Wayland Patch, social media, local list-serves, public library, etc.