

Committee Name: Diversity and Inclusion Committee

Chair: Jeff Commings

Minutes recorded by: Jeff Commings

Session #3

Date of meeting: 3/1/2023

Time of meeting: 8 pm EDT

Actions Taken:

1. Approved: The committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the January 2023 and February 2023 meeting minutes.

Number of committee members present: 7	Absent: 3	Guests: 0
Committee members present (list all, including chair and vice chair): Jeff Commings (chair), Ally Segal (vice chair), Rook Campbell, Virgil Chancy, Laura Dennison, Leo Letendre, Leann Rossi EC Liaison: Chris Campbell Ex-Officio: Daniel Paulling (national office) and Wilson Josephson (coaches committee liaison) Not present: Vicki Shu, Katharine Weathers, Sarah Welch		

Minutes

The meeting was called to order at 8:05 pm ET.

Welcome: Jeff Commings opened the call and welcomed the attending members. He entertained a motion to approve the minutes from January 2023 and February 2023 meeting minutes. Virgil Chancy made the motion. Leann Rossi seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Holiday guidance document: Jeff detailed a conversation he had with USMS CEO Dawson Hughes regarding the committee's vote to remove Diversity and Inclusion's name from the holiday guidance document that the national office has created. Jeff said that Dawson was supportive of our intent, and asked for background on the committee's original link to the list of holidays that had been submitted. Dawson asked for the committee's continued involvement in holiday guidance, as the national office will be working on a more streamlined process for sanctioning meets, which will include a section that will help make meet organizers aware of any holidays or observances that might present a conflict.

Code of conduct webinar update: Jeff detailed the meeting that was held by a subgroup of committee members (Sarah Welch, Laura Dennison, Virgil Chancy, and Vicki Shu) working to create a webinar about putting a code of conduct in place for clubs. The focus of the subgroup's meeting was to figure out the goal of the meeting and to find out which clubs have an existing code of conduct in place. A big point of the meeting was understanding that the webinar can answer the question of "why" clubs need to have a code of conduct. Virgil, Vicki, and Jeff were tasked with finding clubs that have codes of conduct in place, with the potential of using the club representatives as panelists for the planned webinar. Jeff opened the request to all committee members to find codes of conduct in place at the club or LMSC level. Virgil suggested that when talking with teams, the goal is not to "control your team" with a code of conduct. Leann Rossi asked if clubs that receive grant money for learn-to-swim programs are asked if they "fall in line" with the USMS mission. Jeff said he was not aware of such a question posed to those who submit grant proposals. The subgroup suggested that the webinar be held in October, just a couple of weeks before Relay, with a workshop to be held at Relay to help interested clubs shape their codes of conduct. Jeff also brought up Dawson's plan (brought before the board of directors) about the national office's plan to strengthen the webinars by reducing the number of offered webinars, with topics that appeal to a larger base of members. Jeff said the committee's goal is to make sure we create a "succinct and purposeful" webinar that grabs the attention of many members.

Committee's strategic goals: Using Chris Campbell's recommendation in the February meeting that the committee reaffirm its long-term goals, Jeff opened the floor to committee members to suggest strategic goals for 2023 and beyond:

Laura suggested creating a tracking system to help the committee/national office know the demographics and backgrounds of members. The goal will help to better serve members and help better shape the strategic plan. Jeff commented that this has been a goal of the committee since it was a task force, and mentioned that the national office has asked us to put this goal aside for the time being. Laura asked about the hurdles keeping the national office from making this a reality. Chris mentioned the heavy workload that the national office staff is dealing with, but said this particular goal is on the list of priorities at the national office. Ally Sega and Leo Letendre discussed the issues involving putting the work completely into the hands of volunteers. Jeff stressed that the national office is in support of this, and asked the committee to find ways to help push this goal forward until the national office is ready to implement it.

Rook suggested reaching out to Historically Black Colleges and Universities with the goal of creating more teams on those HBCU campuses. He said creating the relationships at the HBCU level, including reaching out to the communities around the campuses, can help with getting swim facilities, among other things. Virgil suggested that the national office meet with heads of aquatic programs at the HBCUs to foster the relationships.

Leann suggested expanding the USMS logo to be more inclusive, using LGBTQ+ and Hispanic Heritage Month as two examples of groups where the logo can be amended to show the organization's goal of inclusion.

Ally suggested creating a Diversity and Inclusion chair in every LMSC over the next two years.

Virgil suggested finding areas around the country to hold "heritage-themed" Masters meets. Jeff mentioned the Black Heritage age-group meet that has been held annually in Washington, DC, and thought pairing that with a Masters meet would be a good idea.

Leo proposed pairing a Masters team with USA Swimming clubs that have a large group of minority members. Jeff suggested expanding that to finding ways to grow that to pair with every USA Swimming club. Philadelphia Department of Recreation was mentioned as an example of a team that could do this. Virgil suggested the pools that have an Adult Learn-to-Swim program also look into expanding into a "community swim program."

Using proper acronyms: Jeff shared an email conversation that a USMS member had with Dawson Hughes and members of the board of directors. The email expressed the member's anger over the subject line of an email that included an acronym for "workout group" that was deemed to be "blatant and grossly offensive" to various ethnicities. Jeff shared that Dawson reached out to him about his proposed response to the member, which Jeff approved. Essentially, Dawson said the national office will cease to use the acronym in future communications. Leo pointed out that acronyms are not always helpful in documents, not only because it can cause the problem that came before the national office, but because it is better just spell out the words. Daniel Paulling commented that he recommended to Dawson that acronyms be eliminated, with the exception of the acronym for U.S. Masters Swimming.

New D&I Coordinator role: Jeff shared that the Southeastern LMSC has created a new Diversity and Inclusion Coordinator role. Connor Bailey, a former member of the national D&I Committee, recommended the addition of the role to the Southeastern LMSC board, which was approved. Connor then recommended current national committee member Katharine Weathers as the coordinator. That brings the number of D&I committees/coordinators at the LMSC level to seven.

Coaches Committee liaison update: Wilson Josephson detailed the goal-setting work that the Coaches Committee is working on in 2023. He mentioned opening the line of communication with ALTS programs to help them create swim programs. Wilson also mentioned the club and event development program, and the local support that is causing hurdles with implementation. Finding coaches has been very hard as well. Jeff asked

Wilson to ask members of the Coaches Committee if they have codes of conduct in place to help with the D&I Committee's webinar. Virgil asked for information on attending future Coaches Committee meetings.

Executive Committee update: Chris Campbell asked for the committee to submit any legislative proposals before the July 1 deadline. Jeff mentioned that the committee does not have any rules or legislation proposals. Chris also mentioned that his term as VP of Community Services will end this year, and asked those in attendance to consider being his successor.

Other comments: Leo asked about the transgender task force report and whether the board of directors had received it. Jeff said he hadn't seen it yet, and didn't know when it would be presented to the board of directors. Daniel gave an update on the work that the national office is doing, in particular the work to increase targeting for webinars. He mentioned the new USMS website system and how it will help store membership data. He said the new platform will go live on April 1.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:26 pm ET.