

FINAL

CITY OF LEBANON
DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION COMMISSION
June 17, 2025— 6:00pm
COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL or
Remote Via Microsoft Teams: LebanonNH.gov/LIVE

MEMBERS PRESENT: Richard Ford Burley (Secretary); Keiselim Montas (Public Representative); Simone Whitecloud (Public Representative Alternate acting as Public Representative); Devin Wilkie (City Council Representative); Tia Winter (Vice-Chair as Acting Chair)

MEMBERS ABSENT: Bise Wood Saint Eugene (Chair); Karen Zook (City Council Alternate)

STAFF PRESENT: Deputy City Manager David Brooks

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3 **1. CALL TO ORDER**
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5 The June 17, 2025 meeting of the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Commission (DEI) was called to
6 order by Acting Chair Tia Winter at 6:00pm. The Acting Chair recognized Public Representative
7 Alternate Simone Whitecloud as a Public Representative.
8

9 **2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
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11 *A MOTION by Councilor Devin Wilkie that the DEI Commission approve the minutes of the*
12 *May 20, 2025 meeting of the DEI Commission as presented.*

13
14 *Seconded by Keyselim Montas.*

15
16 **The Motion was passed unanimously.*
17

18 **3. OLD BUSINESS**
19

20 No old business was discussed.
21

22 **4. NEW BUSINESS**
23

24 **A. Environmental Justice Task Force Report**
25

26 Councilor Devin Wilkie explained that the unofficial “task force” has been working for the last
27 two years to produce the report in the packet.
28

29 Simone Whitecloud suggested changes for clarity, as well as a suggestion about splitting sewer
30 from water to save gardeners money on sewer fees not used.

31
32 ***A MOTION by Simone Whitecloud that the Lebanon Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion***
33 ***Commission hereby endorses the Environmental Justice report as amended to the commission***
34 ***in its June 17, 2025 packet, and recommends its adoption by the Lebanon City Council.***

35
36 ***Seconded by Keyselem Montas***

37
38 Councilor Wilkie made mention that the report is going or has gone to other boards and
39 committees, and that changes suggested there have primarily been grammatical in nature. The
40 Motion should be interpreted as accepting this report or one very closely aligned.

41
42 ****The Motion was passed unanimously.***

43
44 **B. Update on the Status of HB 511, Anti-Sanctuary Act, and City Code Chapter 185, the**
45 **Welcoming Lebanon Ordinance**

46
47 Councilor Wilkie spoke first on the topic. A ban on “sanctuary city policies” goes into effect on
48 January 1, 2026. The City is currently in compliance with the law and will be, without changes,
49 until that time; however, the Welcoming Lebanon Ordinance as currently written would be in
50 violation of the law as of January 1, 2026. The City Council would like the DEI Commission to
51 provide a recommendation. As Councilor Wilkie explained, there are three possible options: 1.
52 Recommend taking no action—meaning that, come January 1, the City would be out of
53 compliance with state law. This might introduce considerable liabilities. 2. Recommend making
54 relatively small adjustments to the Ordinance—tweaks to the Ordinance that would put it into
55 compliance without drastically changing the effect of the Ordinance. 3. Reevaluate the entire
56 Ordinance to determine whether there’s any value left in a compliant version of it, with an eye to
57 making a more comprehensive Ordinance—the Council could rescind and replace the current
58 Ordinance effective December 31 of this year.

59
60 Councilor Wilkie recommended taking a comprehensive look regardless of Commission
61 members’ inclinations at this time, and creating a limited working group including members of
62 the Commission and of the public to explore the options.

63
64 Acting Chair Winter opened the discussion up.

65
66 Keyselem Montas explained that he believes the Ordinance is more important now than ever. The
67 most important tool for compliance with authoritarian regimes is fear, and these things we are
68 seeing are, in his perception, aimed at causing fear, to make people tolerate things they otherwise
69 would not. He expressed concern over the City potentially losing funding, being another thing to
70 for residents to fear. He would not like to see the City get rid of the Ordinance. He expressed his
71 opinion that the options that are more viable were numbers 2 and 3, in order to avoid the risk of
72 losing funding for the city, while attempting to keep a loss of functionality to a minimum. While
73 he would like to take a more combative approach personally, he expressed that should any

74 actions stand to put the City at risk, such a decision should lie with the voters, not the members
75 of the DEI Commission.

76
77 Acting Chair Tia Winter expressed reservations about a full repeal, but voiced support for
78 leaving the Ordinance “as is.” She seconded Councilor Wilkie’s idea of a task force or other
79 limited focus group, and expressed a desire for much greater public communication about the
80 topic, in order to create a robust discussion with the community, especially given the potential
81 funding implications and the recent public outcry at tax time.

82
83 Keyselim Montas suggested that the City may lose funding regardless of the ultimate decision on
84 the Ordinance, bringing up the case of Columbia University, who complied with similar
85 demands and were still targeted for funding cuts and other measures.

86
87 Councilor Wilkie mentioned the Federal “Sanctuary Cities” list, clarifying that the Ordinance is a
88 separate issue from the list, being a state rather than federal mandate. The Councilor indicated
89 that the Federal Government had claimed that it would reach out with “remedies” to
90 communities on the list, but to this point have not done so. Councilor Wilkie further explained
91 that they are separate matters, and indicated that the City will deal with the list if and when the
92 Federal authorities reach out.

93
94 Keyselim Montas pointed out that “sanctuary city” is not presently a legal term that has a set
95 meaning.

96
97 Secretary Ford Burley asked for clarification on which parts of the Ordinance would be in
98 violation of State Law. Councilor Wilkie responded that the question is a complicated one. There
99 has been an amended draft circulated, but it has controversial elements, such as its explicit
100 naming of HB 511. There is language in the present Ordinance barring City employees and local
101 agencies from aiding or participating in federal immigration actions, which would be out of
102 compliance, and there may be other conflicts as well. The interim City Manager found other
103 parts that may have been “antagonistic” but not out of compliance.

104
105 Acting Chair Winter asked about contingency plans, for example if the State Law were to be
106 challenged, whether the current ordinance would be in place until such time as absolutely
107 required.

108
109 Deputy City Manager David Brooks said the City has time to make plans, so Commission
110 members have time to consider options before making a recommendation.

111
112 The members of the Commission generally agreed that compliance in advance would be
113 untenable.

114
115 Councilor Wilkie discussed timing. The Council might be more amenable to revisions and plans
116 in October than during budget time in November. If a proposal could go to the Council no later
117 than September’s DEI Commission meeting, that would give the Council time to hold a public
118 hearing and make appropriate considerations. This would also give time for a task force or other
119 working group to consider this matter.

120
121 Acting Chair Winter opened the matter to public comment.

122
123 Kathleen Beckett (Ward 2) explained that a group of concerned citizens, including authors of the
124 original Ordinance, have met. They would like to keep the Ordinance as it is. They believe
125 HB511 is unconstitutional and are pleased to hear that there may be challenges. They also urge
126 consideration of whether funds will really be withheld, or if doing so will itself be overturned in
127 the courts. They also recommend consideration of how the City’s actions might affect vulnerable
128 members of the population, and are reaching out to members of those communities to see how
129 they feel. They also object to the circulated draft by the former City Manager, feeling that it
130 would nullify the purpose of the Ordinance. They urge not rushing into action, making the state
131 nullify the current Ordinance, then making a replacement as necessary.

132
133 Angela Zhang (Ward 2, via telepresence) urged more time to discuss the matter, especially with
134 input from affected communities.

135
136 Henry Dansby (Ward 2, via telepresence) urged the community to fight injustice and make those
137 in power force any change.

138
139 Taylor Maine (nonresident, via telepresence), the ACLU Campaign Manager for the North
140 Country, indicated that their legal team has not yet released any official legal recommendations
141 on the subject, but that it will be doing so in the fall. HB 511 and SB 62 “are very airtight
142 legally” and there is not much wiggle room in keeping the Ordinance as it is currently. She also
143 explained that some actions could draw attention to the City and put certain communities in
144 danger, and urged the Commission to please take that into account.

145
146 Acting Chair Winter closed public comment.

147
148 Rather than forming an official subcommittee, it was decided that Councilor Wilkie will be in
149 charge of coordinating input and thoughts with members of the public. They will then bring that
150 information back before the Commission in the coming months. Members of the Commission
151 and of the public will be asked for aid as needed.

152
153 **C. After Action on Taste and Traditions – Lebanon’s Multicultural Celebration**

154
155 Acting Chair Winter was in attendance at the festival, which despite being on the same day as the
156 nationwide “No Kings” protest, was well attended.

157
158 Secretary Ford Burley, also in attendance, agreed that it was relatively well attended for a first
159 time event, though suggested publicity could be improved upon for next year’s.

160
161 Councilor Wilkie reported that some vendors had sold out of food, indicating higher demand than
162 expected, and also that it would be good to reach out to coordinate next year’s regarding timing
163 and publicity. The Councilor suggested that it might be worthwhile to move next year’s to
164 combine with previous efforts that aligned with the Nexus Festival.

165

166 **D. Juneteenth Update**

167
168 Acting Chair Winter spoke on the event, which was slated to take place on the following
169 Saturday, from 2-4pm at Lyman Park in White River Junction. The DEI Commission will have a
170 table. The Acting Chair indicated that she will be there for the duration of the event. Simone
171 Whitecloud shared that decorations are up on the Lyman Bridge in advance of the event.

172
173 **5. OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

174
175 No further comment was given.

176
177 **6. OTHER BUSINESS**

178
179 No other business was discussed.

180
181 **7. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

182
183 Keyselim Montas suggested keeping a “Welcoming Lebanon update” as a standing agenda item
184 to keep the Commission abreast of the evolving situation, as well as an after-action report on
185 Juneteenth. He also suggested a final report of the Environmental Justice Task Force.

186
187 **8. ADJOURNMENT**

188
189 Acting Chair Tia Winter adjourned the meeting at 6:53pm.

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191
192 Respectfully submitted,
193 Richard Ford Burley, DEI Commission Secretary