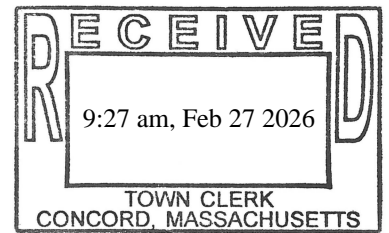


**BIAS AND HATE INCIDENT REPORTING WORK GROUP
MINUTES**

Thursday, January 15, 2026

6:00 p.m.

Harvey Wheeler Community Center & Zoom Video Conference



Attendance:

Members: Paul Boehm, Sandeep Pisharody, Kerry Lafleur, Agnes Lubega-Kalisa, Daniel Hart, Deborah Dorfman
Guests: Court Booth, Rob Morrison, DA Marian Ryan, Lt Tim Landers

1. Call to Order: 6:03pm

2. Public Comments

No comments at this time.

3. Approval of Available Minutes: January 6, 2026 Minutes

Mr. Pisharody motioned to approve the minutes of January 15, 2025

Ms. Dorfman seconded

All in favor: Mr. Pisharody, Mr. Hart, Ms. Dorfman, Ms. Agnes Lubega-Kalisa and Mr. Boehm

4. Discussion of Prior Briefings

Members reflected on recent briefings and agreed they have been valuable in providing multiple perspectives to inform the group's work. Discussion focused on recommendations from Carlos Hoyt, particularly around reframing or renaming the incident reporting system and questioning whether reporting should be the group's primary focus. While some supported the conceptual shift toward emphasizing "social bias" rather than only hate or incidents, others raised practical concerns about naming, authority, and consistency.

The group emphasized that the reporting system should be understood as part of a larger process, not just a form. Key themes included clarifying the purpose and value of reporting for both individuals and the community, and ensuring the information collected is meaningful and usable by the Town, DEI Commission, Human Rights Council, schools, and other stakeholders.

Significant attention was given to how reported information would be reviewed, used, and referred to, especially in cases involving potential crimes, mandated reporting obligations, or emergencies. Members agreed the system should clearly direct people to law enforcement or emergency services when appropriate and include guidance and referrals for other situations.

Overall, the group acknowledged that users' needs should drive system design, that reporting is only one tool among many the Town must use, and that further input—such as from focus groups and the district attorney—will be critical in shaping both the system and its implementation.

5. New Briefings and Discussions

Marian Ryan, Middlesex District Attorney

District Attorney Ryan outlined her office's anonymous anti-hate/anti-violence reporting system, created about five years ago, which receives a few reports per month and follows up on every submission. The system provides a safe entry point for people reluctant to contact police, captures harmful non-criminal behavior, and helps identify patterns over time to guide prevention, training, and outreach. She emphasized that many serious incidents emerge from repeated, previously unreported behavior and that allowing people to describe experiences in their own words is critical.

DA Ryan stressed that trust, visible response, and follow-through—not data alone—are what increase reporting. Reporting systems should be mobile-friendly, protect confidentiality (especially in small communities), and serve as a bridge toward stronger local relationships, not an end goal. Her office also receives information through police, schools, calls, and community conversations, documenting concerns even when they are informal.

Discussion focused on underreporting, particularly of non-criminal incidents, driven by fear, mistrust, and past inaction. Participants emphasized that any town-wide system must lead to clear action and accountability. DA Ryan affirmed that meaningful response, education, and collaboration among towns, schools, police, and the DA's office are essential to building trust and long-term change.

Public Comments:

Craig Awmiller raised concerns that when schools do not report incidents to law enforcement, they may be making decisions without access to broader public safety information and expertise. He argued that failing to consult law enforcement when deciding whether to report incidents poses risks, especially given the wider context and resources available to police and prosecutors.

Lt. Tim Landers responded that schools do report bias or hate incidents to school resource officers, who then coordinate with police and, when appropriate, report incidents to the DA's office, ADL, or other entities. He noted that schools also address many incidents internally when they do not rise to the level of a crime. Questions remained about inconsistencies in recent reporting.

Mr. Boehm suggested that a town-wide reporting system could help address gaps by allowing school-related incidents to be reported through the town, reducing barriers and ensuring referrals occur when appropriate.

Mr. Williams emphasized that reporting systems must lead to visible action to build trust. Simply collecting data is insufficient; communities need to see that reporting results in change, support, and improvement. DA Ryan agreed, noting that many people approach his office after being dissatisfied with previous responses. He emphasized the importance of listening to reporters, validating their experiences, and providing appropriate responses even when behavior does not meet the legal definition of a crime.

DA Ryan and Mr. Boehm both stressed that the ultimate goal of any reporting system is not data collection alone, but meaningful action and long-term change. Measuring incidents helps identify patterns, but without follow-through, trust erodes and reporting declines. The discussion closed with mutual appreciation and a shared understanding that any system developed should align with existing town, school, and law enforcement efforts to create real impact.

Court Booth and Rob Morrison – Concord-Carlisle Human Rights Council

Court Booth and Rob Morrison of the Concord–Carlisle Human Rights Council reflected on Concord’s decades-long efforts to address hate and bias, noting that many challenges persist despite sustained work. They emphasized that trust is central to any reporting or response system and argued for making reporting easy through multiple entry points, with consistent outcomes regardless of how concerns are raised. When people believe nothing will happen, reporting stops.

The Council described its role as a trusted, non-governmental partner focused on education, empathy, and support—not investigation or enforcement—through programs like Holocaust remembrance, Martin Luther King events, and Active Bystander training. They highlighted the need for a sustained, cyclical approach: reporting, response, education, corrective action, and long-term culture change. Key recommendations included strengthening existing systems, ensuring values-driven leadership, and creating an impartial group to review aggregated town-wide data while protecting confidentiality.

They stressed the importance of non-governmental avenues for people unwilling or afraid to engage with police and cautioned against top-down system design that ignores the lived experience of those harmed. Morrison shared examples of quiet, relationship-based interventions that helped de-escalate incidents and support individuals without public escalation, while acknowledging that many such incidents go unreported, limiting the town’s understanding of overall climate.

The discussion underscored persistent underreporting, especially around informal police interactions, the value of bystander involvement, and the importance of empowering individuals to choose their own next steps. Overall, participants agreed that the goal is to make reporting safe, accessible, and meaningful—so people feel heard, supported, and confident that speaking up leads to real change.

6. Debrief on Focus Session

Mr. Boehm and Ms. Dorfman discussed the first focus group, noting it was about 1.5 hours and explored participants’ experiences with hate or bias incidents, barriers to reporting, and ideas for a reporting system. Key takeaways included the need for:

- Confidential reporting with protections against retaliation.
- Clear communication on what happens with reported information, helping people decide whether to report.
- Multiple reporting options, including in-person or online, to ensure accessibility and ease of use.
- Focus on themes of incidents rather than just numbers, and mechanisms for sharing and addressing these trends publicly while maintaining confidentiality.

The next focus group is scheduled for Thursday, February 5th, 5:30–7:30 PM at the Goodwin Room, Concord Public Library. They aim for about 20 participants per session but are open to additional sessions to accommodate more voices.

MR. Boehm emphasized the desire for a more diverse participant mix and suggested broad outreach, including advertising near public housing and through community organizations (Human Rights Council, DEI groups, Communities Organizing Against Racism, Concord Housing Authority, newsletters, and local media) to ensure wide participation. The goal is to collect robust input to inform the development of a reporting and response system that reflects community needs.

7. Upcoming Meetings Schedule and Focus Group

Next Meeting scheduled- February 3, 6pm at 55 Church St

8. Adjournment: 7:39pm

Respectfully submitted,
Magnolia Begley, HS Generalist