

# **Simsbury SPIRIT Council**

**September 29, 2020**

# Simsbury SPIRIT

Simsbury  
Problem  
Identification and  
Resolution of  
Issues  
Together



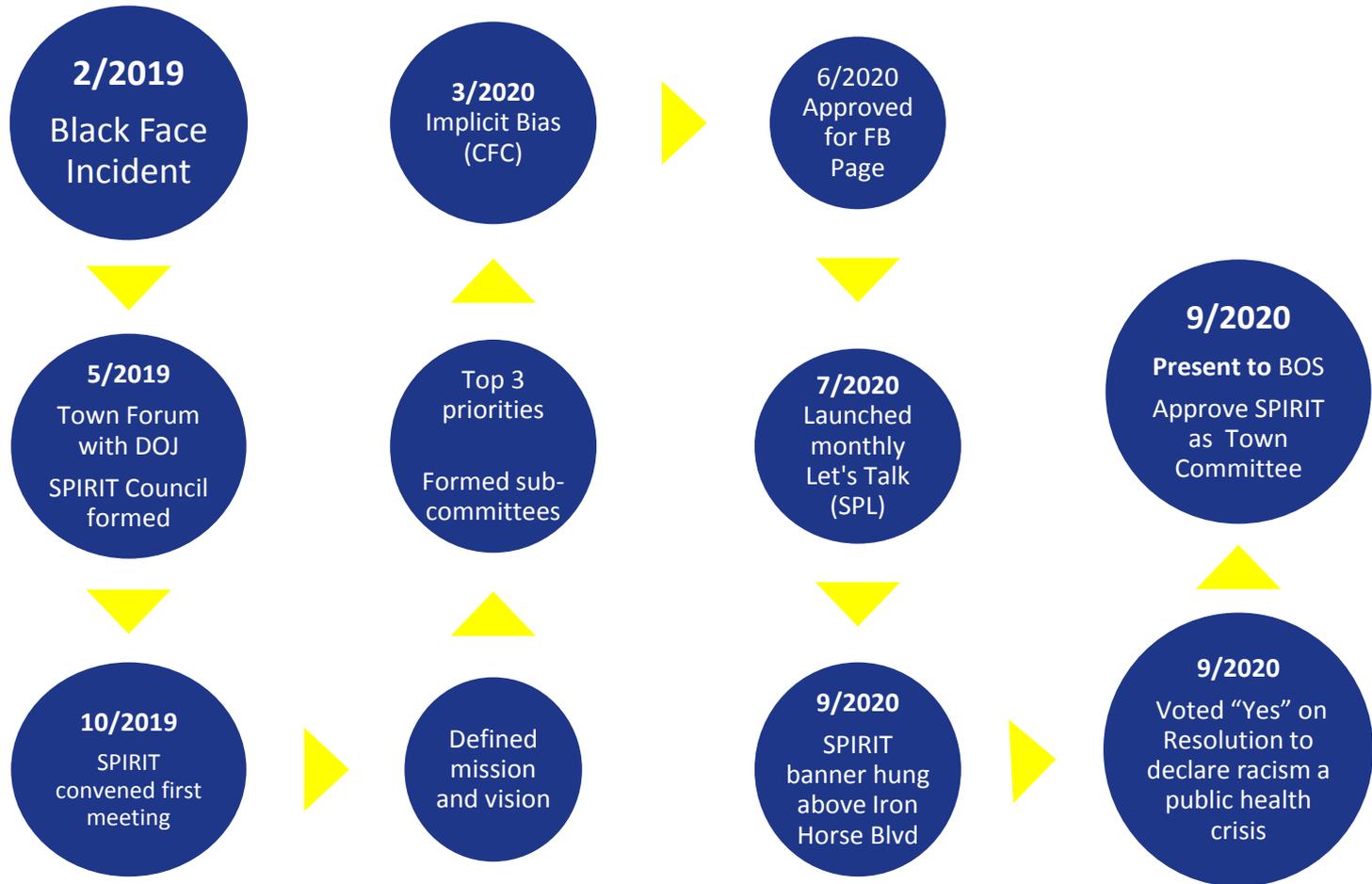
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**SIMS**

**BURY RACISM! BURY PREJUDICE!**

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# Timeline of SPIRIT



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# SPIRIT: Vision

Simsbury is a town that welcomes, celebrates,  
and takes actions to support diversity and  
inclusion among current and future community  
members

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# SPIRIT: Mission

Launched in 2019, the Simsbury SPIRIT Council represents community at large and serves as Diversity Champions to help Simsbury become more inclusive, fostering awareness, action, and a community where all voices are welcome and each and every individual can live, work, learn, and play in a safe environment with meaningful and healthy relationships.

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# SPIRIT Members

## Chairs

- Cheryl Cook
- Nicole Kodak

## Town Liaison

- Kristen Formanek

## Library Liaison

- Lyndsay Neffinger

## Sub-Committee Chairs

- Rebekah Hatch, Data/Audit
- Lloyd Huie, Outreach
- Nkosi Lee, Events

## Council Members

- Gertrude Banks
- Sara Batchelder
- Chief Nicholas Boulter
- Carol Clark-Flanagan
- Officer Todd Cushman
- Meg Evans
- Mary-Margaret Girgenti
- Lisa Grant
- Tenesha Grant
- Wendy Helmkamp
- Sue Homrock-Lemke
- Chris Kelly
- Gene Ott
- Joan Robichaud
- Diana Yeisley



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# SPIRIT: Initiatives



- *#Simsburyontherise* slogan
- February 2020 Letters to Simsbury businesses and organizations introducing SPIRIT, inviting to 3/11
- March 11 Implicit Bias with CFC
- June 8 Simsbury SPIRIT FB page
- September Banner hung over Iron Horse Boulevard
- September Resolution declaring racism a public health crisis
- Upcoming Racial History Series
- Upcoming Food Truck and Multi-Cultural Event

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# SPIRIT: Events Sub-Committee

**Purpose:** To create opportunities that promote diversity and inclusion allowing for personal growth through exposure to a variety of ideas, experiences and cultures that make meaningful contributions to our community

**Members:** Nkosi Lee (Chair), Gertrude Banks, Sara Batchelder, Carol Clark-Flanagan, Lisa Grant, Tenesha Grant, Nicole Kodak, Gene Ott, Diana Yeisley

**Plans:** Let's Talk monthly, cultural food truck event, cultural music events

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# SPIRIT: Simsbury Let's Talk Calendar

Partnership with Simsbury Public Library and  
Community for Care

## 2020

8/25 Racist v. Anti-Racist  
9/3 Hispanic Heritage  
10/1 Disability Awareness  
10/21 Housing and education  
racial inequality & discrimination  
11/5 Indigenous People  
11/16 Manju Soni Lessons from  
Apartheid  
12/3 World Aids Day

## 2021

1/7 Human Trafficking  
2/4 African-American History  
3/4 National Women's History  
4/1 Arab-American History  
5/6 Jewish Heritage  
6/3 LGBTQIA+ Pride Month  
6/17 Juneteenth

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# SPIRIT: Outreach Sub-Committee

- **Purpose:** Promote awareness of SPIRIT committee and partner with other organizations locally and regionally to drive progress in diversity, equity and inclusion efforts
- **Members:** Lloyd Huie (Chair), Cheryl Cook, Susan Homrock-Lemke, Chris Kelly, Joan Robichaud, Diana Yiesley
- **Plans:**
  1. Reach out and connect with organizations
  2. Facilitate racial history discussion series (SPL and SCTV)
  3. Partner with Simsbury groups also working on DEI initiatives (FB groups, etc.)
  4. Collaborate with regional and state entities (PAC, towns, universities, Health Equity Solutions, etc.)

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# SPIRIT: Outreach Sub-Committee

## Organizations for Outreach

- Chamber of Commerce
- Simsbury religious organizations
- PAC
- Rotary Club
- Realtors
- Main Street Partnership
- Newcomer's Club
- Athletic leagues and clubs
- Junior women's club
- Neighboring towns
- Neighboring universities
- Health Equity Solutions

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# SPIRIT: Outreach Sub-Committee

## Organizations for Partnering

- NAACP
- CREC
- Disability communities (Oak Hill, etc.)
- State Human Rights Commission liaison
- CT Fair Housing Commission liaison

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# SPIRIT: Data/Audit Sub-Committee

- **Purpose:** To gather data and to assess progress towards DEI goals developed by the Simsbury SPIRIT Council
- **Members:** Rebekah Hatch (Chair), Gertrude Banks, Meg Evans, Mary-Margaret Girgenti, Wendy Helmkamp, Chris Kelly
- **Plans:**
  1. Engage an expert to assist with gathering & analyzing multi-faceted (quantitative and qualitative) context-specific data
  2. Recommend follow-up plans or actions, with community involvement
  3. Create benchmarks using existing and not-yet-collected data
  4. Monitor progress

# SPIRIT: Data/Audit Sub-Committee, con't.

## EXAMPLES OF SURVEY QUESTIONS<sup>1</sup>

Please rate your community on each of the following:

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Don't know
Making all residents feel welcome	<input type="radio"/>				
Helping new residents feel connected and integrated	<input type="radio"/>				
Attracting people from diverse backgrounds	<input type="radio"/>				
Valuing residents from diverse backgrounds	<input type="radio"/>				
Demonstrating respect for residents of different cultures and belief systems	<input type="radio"/>				

<sup>1</sup>VISIT [here](#) for the full sample from the Community Equity & Inclusion survey, Marion, IA.



# SPIRIT: Resolution

## RESOLUTION DECLARING RACISM A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS

**WHEREAS**, racism is a social system with multiple dimensions, including (1) individual racism that is interpersonal, and (2) systemic racism that is institutional or structural and is a system of structuring opportunity and assigning value based on the social interpretation of how one looks; and

**WHEREAS**, race is a social construct with no biological basis; and

**WHEREAS**, racism unfairly disadvantages specific individuals and communities, while unfairly giving advantages to other individuals and communities, and saps the strength of the whole society through the waste of human resources; and

**WHEREAS**, racism is a root cause of poverty and constricts economic mobility; and

**WHEREAS**, racism causes persistent discrimination and disparate outcomes in many areas of life, including housing, education, employment, and criminal justice, and is itself a social determinant of health; and

**WHEREAS**, racism and segregation have exacerbated a health divide resulting in people of color in Connecticut bearing a disproportionate burden of illness and mortality including COVID-19 infection and death, heart disease, diabetes, and infant mortality; and

**WHEREAS**, Black, Native American, Asian, Latinx and other residents of color are more likely to experience poor health outcomes as a consequence of inequities in economic stability, education, physical environment, food, and access to health care and these inequities are, themselves, a result of racism; and

**WHEREAS**, many studies have linked racism to worse health outcomes; and

**WHEREAS**, the collective prosperity and wellbeing of the Town of Simsbury depends upon equitable access to opportunity for every resident regardless of the color of their skin.

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# SPIRIT: Resolution

## RESOLUTION DECLARING RACISM A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS

### NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE TOWN OF SIMSBURY TO:

Declare racism a public health crisis affecting all of the United States, including Connecticut.

Work to become an equity and justice-oriented organization, by continuing to identify specific activities and policies to enhance diversity and to ensure antiracism principles across our leadership, staffing and contracting.

Promote equity through all policies and enhance educational efforts aimed at understanding, addressing and dismantling racism and how it affects the delivery of human and social services, economic development and public safety.

Set clear goals and objectives and improve the quality and analysis of the data the Town collects to assess progress; it is not enough to assume that an initiative is producing its intended outcome, qualitative and quantitative data should be used to assess inequities in impact and continuously improve.

Capitalize on opportunities to further advance racial equity in education, in housing, in health, in food security, and in criminal justice.

Advocate locally for relevant policies that improve the health of people of color, and support local, state, regional, and federal initiatives that advance efforts to dismantle systemic racism.

Work to solidify alliances and partnerships with other organizations that are confronting racism and encourage other local, state, regional, and national entities to recognize racism as a public health crisis.

Use community efforts to amplify issues of racism and engage actively and authentically with communities of color wherever they live.

(Board of Selectman Names)  
August, 2020

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# SPIRIT Council Town Committee

## Next Steps:

- Sept 29 - BOS approve SPIRIT as town committee
- Oct 14 - BOS appoint members
- Date TBD SPIRIT - Goal setting meeting
- Nov 2 SPIRIT – Organizing and Housekeeping meeting
  - Organize roles and subcommittees
  - Adopt calendar, vote on policies/procedures
  - Update member contact information
  - Commission liaisons
- Nov - Forward plans with budget requests

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