

Committee Name: Diversity and Inclusion Committee

Chair: Jeff Commings

Minutes recorded by: Chris Campbell

Session #1

Date of meeting: 2/5/2025

Time of meeting: 8 pm EST

Actions Taken:

1. None.

Number of Committee Members Present: 8+3 Ex Officio	Absent: 0	Guests: 2
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Present: Jeff Commings (Chair), Chris Campbell (Vice Chair), Vicki Shu, Lucila Davies, Laura Dennison, Mary Jurey, Megan Shovlin, Sharon Snyder, Kenny Brisbin (Ex Officio—VP Community Services), Ed Coates (Ex Officio—USMS President), Daniel Paulling (Ex Officio—National Office), Dawson Hughes (Guest—USMS CEO), Michael Moore (Guest)
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Absent: None

Minutes

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

1. MSA Minutes from the Dec 11, 2024 Grievance follow up meeting. The vote to accept the minutes was unanimous. Note—the meeting minutes from the regular Committee meeting, held Dec 4, 2024, were approved by an email vote prior to the Grievance follow up meeting.
2. Member introductions and welcome to the new Committee members.
3. Jeff led a review of the Committee’s 2024 activities and accomplishments. Included was an overview of the 2024 Grievance filed by the Committee on the behalf of three USMS members. Briefly, the grievance was heard and adjudicated by the USMS National Board of Review.
 1. The NBR noted that the nature of this particular grievance was not within their scope of responsibility, since it was against an employee of USMS. Specifically, the NBR is chartered to hear and adjudicate grievances between USMS members, not employees. The responsibility for handling such cases belongs to the Board of Directors, and the matter was referred to them for action. Additionally, it is not in the purview of USMS Committees to file grievances on behalf of USMS members.
 1. The Board of Directors discussed this matter at length and determined that it resulted in no actions (i.e., reprimand, sanction or termination) that could be undertaken against the individual against whom the action was brought.

2. Rather than bury this issue, in order to move forward, learned lessons are being incorporated into more robust review and vetting procedures and policies to insure that similar issues do not arise in the future.
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4. Subsequent to the discussion of #3 above, Jeff, Ed and Dawson led a review of the Committee's scope of work as specified in the Committee's charter. In 2023, the Committee laid out a multi-year strategic plan of goals to meet and projects to undertake. What are the Committee's plans for 2025 and beyond? Both Dawson and Ed reminded the Committee that the Committee's expectations, goals and plans need to align with the Mission, Vision and Values of USMS as reflected in the USMS Strategic Plan. The guidelines for the Committee to follow are:
 1. Stick to the USMS Mission. This means balancing the wants and passions of this Committee with USMS goals and strategic planning. The overarching goal of USMS is to get more adults into the water. While USMS strives to celebrate diversity and inclusivity, the organization is not equipped to fight individual battles. Rather, there are other organizations that are set up to do that.
 2. Balance Committee desires with the realities of USMS business needs and limitations. USMS is neither set up nor resourced to fight every battle out there. Hence, the Committee needs to do a better job picking its battles and confining its activities to the Mission supporting and Vision of USMS.
 3. Diversity is for and about everyone—not just about singular groups. It's not solely about Race, or Gender Orientation and Identification, or Age. It honors and celebrates all of these and more. While the National Organization realizes that it can and should do better, this represents a cultural shift, and that is a long term, heavily resourced and diligent effort, not one that can be performed in the blink of an eye.
 4. How do we, as an organization, create and drive more events that celebrate diversity? One specific example is the HBCU-themed Heritage Meet associated with the Celebration Bowl. However, there are other options besides competition to be considered.
 5. The specific points in the Committee's Strategic Plan for 2025 and beyond are:
 1. The establishment of Diversity and Inclusion Chairs/Committees in all 51 LMSCs. Currently, there are 13. After only 2 years of this effort, this represents a positive return, and we should continue to press forward with it.
 2. Upgrading the USMS member registration process to track more accurately member ethnicities and challenges.
 3. Continue to work with USA Swimming to identify existing USA-S minority clubs and those in underserved communities, with intent to establish USMS programming associated with them.
 4. Enabling and assisting the growth of adult aquatics programs at HBCUs.
 5. Expansion/revision of the USMS logo to reflect more explicitly that inclusivity is a core value of USMS. Given the size and scope of this effort, this may be a situational modification when authorized.
 6. Creation of Heritage Themed Masters events on a larger scale nationwide. While Meets are an obvious option, there are many other programming opportunities that can meet this challenge.

5. There was general discussion about options and possibilities for meeting the goals of the Committee's Strategic Plan. Luci noted that we may be overthinking these and suggested that we follow the lead of many public institutions. Many of these paths have been mapped before. There are some caveats though—specifically, we need to be mindful of cultural misappropriation and information overload.

6. In their closing remarks, both Ed and Dawson addressed the recent grievance, and both emphasized that communication is absolutely key. Both Ed and Dawson make time to have one on one discussions, and the grievants did not avail themselves fully of these opportunities. It is likely that much could've been resolved prior to filing a grievance, the outcome of which didn't seem to leave anyone completely satisfied.

The next Committee meeting is scheduled for April 2, 2025.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 EST.