

On Thursday, May 26th after initially convening separately in executive sessions, the Select Board and the Diversity, Inclusion, and Racial Equity (DIRE) advisory committee held a joint meeting to discuss the findings of a police investigation regarding an email that included violent imagery sent to the DIRE committee on May 23. This meeting was held in direct response to the violent language of the email and its encouragement of additional threats directed to DIRE committee members. The investigation was conducted by the Williamstown Police Department in consultation with State Police and the FBI. This investigation found that the email, which was sent by a resident of Williamstown, was sufficiently threatening to be charged as criminal harassment if additional harassment continues. While a chargeable crime has not occurred, the sender was informed that criminal harassment could be enforced if this type of behavior continues.

This meeting was held in direct response to the threatening tone of the letter to ensure the sense of safety and well-being of our DIRE committee members. These are volunteers appointed by the Selectboard to serve the community of Williamstown. We recognize and commend their commitment to their jobs. We all must work to protect our committees and the people who serve on them, from intimidation acts of all kinds.

Williamstown is made better by the active participation of all our citizens. When you wish to communicate with our various boards and committees, especially via email or social media postings, please take a moment to remember that there are human beings on the receiving end of your message. **All of our voices are valuable and need to be heard as we work toward more transparency and citizen participation in our town government.** No one should be making personal attacks or utilizing violent or threatening language. We commit to treating each other with the respect that everyone deserves.

The Select Board and the DIRE committee stand together and strongly condemn this email, and any threats of any kind directed at members of our town boards, committees, employees, and residents.