

# Reading Public Library

## Division for Equity and Social Justice

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### **Statement of Purpose**

At the recommendation of the Ad Hoc Human Rights Committee, the Board of Library Trustees (BoLT) will establish a Division of Equity and Social Justice within the Library Department. Led by the Director for Equity and Social Justice and with the assistance of a volunteer action and advisory board named the Reading Alliance for Equity and Social Justice (RAESJ), this new municipal division is a will foster and support a Reading culture that promotes and celebrates diversity. Together with the Reading community, the division will work to honor our shared humanity, and also confront and respond to discrimination, racism, and bias. The purpose of this division is to educate, empower, and connect community members regardless of their social, cultural, or economic position.

### **Proposed Structure:**

The Town of Reading currently has a Human Rights Advisory Committee (HRAC) made of up volunteers appointed by the Select Board. HRAC will be incorporated into the new Division of Equity and Social Justice.

The new division will consist of a paid director who works with the RAESJ which will have 8-14 members.

### **HIRING THE DIRECTOR AND RAESJ FORMATION**

- 1) The Director: The library director will appoint a selection committee to hire the Director for Equity and Social Justice. The hiring committee will include representatives from the town's elected boards, other Town departments, and other community stakeholders. The selection committee may include members from the Ad Hoc Human Rights Committee. Any future hiring committees will draw from RAESJ.
- 2) Funding: The salary for this position is to be approved and allocated by the Town to the budget for the Reading Public Library. The Director for Equity and Social Justice may pursue grants and accept funds raised or donated by outside groups as appropriate. All funds will be clearly identified as Equity and Social Justice accounts.
- 3) RAESJ Appointment Process: The new director will oversee appointment 8-14 members to RAESJ. This includes advertising, soliciting applications, and any related reviews or interviews. Individuals, including elected officials, town employees, and community

members may suggest candidates to the Director, but all interested candidates must complete the application and interview process.

- a. **Originating RAESJ:** The selection committee for the originating RAESJ will consist of the Director and representatives from both the former HRAC and Ad Hoc Human Rights Advisory Committee.
  - b. **Subsequent RAESJ Appointments:** Subsequent selection committees will consist of the Director, 2 members of the current RAESJ.
  - c. **Ex Officio:** The Director may name representatives of Reading's municipal and school departments as ex officio members of the RAESJ without going through a formal interview process.
- 4) **RAESJ Composition:** RAESJ will reflect a diverse (in all senses of the word) cross-section of persons who live, learn (or whose children learn), work, or worship (or a member of the clergy whose congregants live) in the Reading community, and who are prepared to work to support the mission of the organization. Members may include, for example, Reading Public Schools students and staff, senior citizens, and members of other community organizations or committees. Each person may serve for two- or three-year terms and may re-apply at the conclusion of their term.
- 5) **Changes to the Structure:** With a majority approval from RAESJ and the Board of Library Trustees, the Director may alter the process, terms, or composition of RAESJ as needed.

## **Helpful Terms:**

**Ad Hoc Human Rights Committee:** Sunset on December 31, 2020, this committee was created to help establish a human rights-focused organization. Appointed by and reporting to the Select Board, representatives included two members of the School Committee; two members of the Select Board (co-Chairs); and a member of the Board of Library Trustees.

**Board of Library Trustees** A six member elected board established by the Article 3, section 3.4 of the Town of Reading Charter.

**Human Relations Advisory Committee (HRAC):** An advisory group for and appointed by the Board of Selectmen. HRAC promotes and encourages respect for the human and civil rights of all Reading residents. HRAC sponsors outreach efforts and educational programs to foster a greater understanding and appreciation for diversity. <https://www.readingma.gov/human-relations-advisory-committee>

**Reading Coalition for Prevention and Support:** Established in 2006 and formerly known as RCASA, the Coalition started as a community initiative focused on improving community collaboration and reducing substance abuse. Since then, the coalition has built capacity within our community to address this complex issue and implemented a number of prevention initiatives. <https://www.reading.k12.ma.us/community/readingcoalition/>

# Frequently Asked Questions

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## SECTION I: WHY

### 1) Why do we need this kind of human rights organization in our town?

From May 2017 through December 2018 the Town of Reading experienced a series of more than 30 anti-Semitic, racist, and anti-LGBTQ+ graffiti incidents. These events and growing national trend of marginalization, and discrimination are real and threaten to polarize neighbors, exclude new home buyers, and eat away at the fabric of our country. We read about it every day in the newspapers and we have experienced it here in Reading, our home. It is a public health emergency and needs to be prioritized in Reading.

### 2) Is there support for this initiative in the town?

As of December 2020, the Select Board, the Board of Library Trustees, and the Reading Public Schools have committed to building a more equitable and just community. Additionally, members of HRAC and the Ad Hoc Human Rights Committee fully support this initiative. Members of these committees represent the Reading Police Department, faith leaders, METCO families, the Town Manager, the Select Board, and community members.

### 3) Why the Library in particular?

The Reading Public Library has always strived to be a space of belonging and inclusion, an equitable public service open to all ages, abilities, interests, and cultures. This blends well with the values related to human rights, equity, and social justice. Moreover, this new division aligns with the Library's strategic plan, and will serve to help the Library fulfill its existing mission and core values, extending its reach and impact to more corners of the community.

*Library Mission: The Reading Public Library is a center and resource for learning and civic engagement. We provide a place and platform of, by, and for the people who can benefit as individuals as well as contribute to the well-being of the community.*

*Library Core Values: Education and Equity, Accountability and Access*

## SECTION II: READING ALLIANCE FOR EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

### 4) How will this organization make a difference in our town?

Under the guidance of the Director for Equity and Social Justice, the RAESJ will provide education, programming, and reconnect our community. RAESJ will create a safe space and offer resources for problem-solving that will help build a stronger, more welcoming and inclusive, diverse, and enriched community in which we all live, learn, play, worship, and work.

**5) How is RAESJ different from HRAC?**

HRAC is a volunteer board appointed by the Select Board, may only be residents of Reading, and may only work under opening meeting law. RAESJ will be appointed by the Director for Equity and Social Justice, may include persons who live, learn (or whose children learn), work, or worship (or a member of the clergy whose congregants live) in the Reading community. RAESJ may meet in open session and provide minutes or other important public communications, but they may also advise and the Director on sensitive or issues outside of formal meetings.

**6) Why utilize a structure falling within a municipal department like the Library, as opposed to a more traditional town committee structure?**

Per the Reading Charter, traditional town committees and boards are restricted to Reading town residents only. To fully meet the needs of our community, it is important that this committee is inclusive and open:

- a. to families whose children are educated in our town whether through METCO or private education
- b. faith-based leaders whose houses or worship are outside of our town but whose parishioners live in our community. Finally, our community also
- c. business owners and individuals who work in Reading

Additionally, the purpose of RAESJ is education, programming, and connection, not to make or enforce policy as other appointed committees and elected boards do.

Therefore, this structure emulates that of the Reading Coalition for Prevention and Support (formerly known as RCASA), another Town organization with broad-based community support and one that reflects a community priority.

**7) If this isn't a town committee and not subject to open meeting law, will it lack transparency?**

No. RAESJ will include stakeholders from across the community, who will update and educate their own organizations, committees and networks on their work. The Director of Equity and Social Justice will also be responsible for traditional communications such as websites, social media, newspaper articles, as well as periodic reports to elected boards, town meeting, or other organizations as requested.

To be as inclusive as possible, RAESJ may choose to have public meetings, listening forums, or town halls. Also, all programs, classes, workshops will and open to the public to reduce barriers and provide equitable access to resources.

However, RAESJ will also work to potentially resolve or de-escalate community conflicts as appropriate. When applicable issues arise, RAESJ will also serve as a safe and confidentiality resource so people are comfortable coming forward.

**8) Will RAESJ have the authority to make policy?**

No.

**9) Will RAESJ have the authority to enforce laws or regulations?**

No.

**10) Then what will the RAESJ actually do?**

The REASJ will act as a community resource and provide support to the Director of Equity and Social Justice. Members will assist the Director in planning and carrying out events. Additionally, member will network with other groups and individuals, ensuring cross-community communication, collaboration, and engagement.

**11) How will the RAESJ pay for programs and related expenses?**

RAESJ and the Director of Equity and Social Justice may pursue grants, but may not actively raise funds. The Director may accept funds raised or donated by outside groups. All grants and donations will be managed by the town and clearly identified as Equity and Social Justice accounts.

**SECTION II: DIRECTOR OF EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE**

**12) Why have a paid Director?**

This is a named priority and commitment for the Town. In order to be effective, the RAESJ needs professional leadership, expertise, and consistency to direct programs, strategize and plan, and manager the community volunteers who have an interest in building an equitable and more just community.

After researching and exploring a variety of ways to implement a human rights-based organization, the Ad Hoc Human Rights Committee recommended this position based on guidance from the United States Department of Justice <https://www.justice.gov/archive/crs/pubs/gehrc.htm>

**13) How will the Director be accountable (and to whom)?**

The Director would report to the Library Director, who reports to the Board of Library Trustees, who are directly accountable to the voters.

**14) How will the position be funded?**

The salary for this position will be put into the overall Library budget in a separate Division for Equity and Social Justice. Related benefits will be funded through accommodated costs.

**15) Will Director have the authority to make policy?**

No.

**16) Will Director have the authority to enforce laws or regulations?**

No.

# Director for Equity and Social Justice

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## **POSITION DESCRIPTION:**

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### **REPORTING**

The Director for Equity and Social Justice reports to the Director for the Reading Public Library, and falls within purview of the elected Board of Library Trustees. This as a municipal employee, this position is also accountable to the Town of Reading.

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### ***Summary***

The Director for Equity and Social Justice is a municipal position that fosters and supports a Reading culture of diversity, belonging, and inclusion. Based in the Public Library Department, the Director works collaboratively within the town on programs, projects, and initiatives that both focus on our shared humanity, and also confront and respond to discrimination, racism, and bias. The purpose of the position is to education, empower, and connect community.

This position reports to the Director for the Library who reports to the elected Board of Library Trustees. This position also works with a volunteer community advisory and action committee called the Reading Alliance for Equity and Social Justice (RAESJ).

The Director for Equity and Social Justice will be a visionary, and inspirational leader, able to build trust with diverse communities and stakeholders. A successful candidate will understand relevant local, state and federal laws, and stay informed on helpful individual and community response resources. They will be given ownership to build an effective and diverse RAESJ Committee based on individual strengths, skills, and competencies. The Director will be a champion for equity and Human Rights within the Town of Reading, aligning their work with the Library's Mission, Vision, and Core Values.

### ***Essential Functions***

Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

- 1) Fosters conversations that acknowledge privilege and all the ways people may experience it, and that work to eliminate individual and systemic bias and discrimination
- 2) Provides a safe place for community partners to share and be heard
- 3) Advises members of the community, liaising and advocating with the Town and other agencies for awareness and resolution of issues
- 4) Collaborates with partners to provide community-based educational opportunities, professional development, non-monetary resources, and outreach around equity, social justice, and Human Rights
- 5) Organizes and supports events and programs that advance the community's commitment to equity, social justice, and Human Rights.
- 6) Serves as a resource for town government agencies and Reading-based civic organizations seeking to make events and programming more inclusive. This may include direct engagement or connecting to programs or other non-municipal groups.

- 7) Leads the 8-14-person RAESJ to reflect a diverse (in all senses of the word) cross-section of persons who live, learn (or whose children learn), work, or worship (or a member of the clergy whose congregants live) in the Reading community, and who are prepared to work to support the mission of the organization.
- 8) Demonstrates an ability to establish a strategic focus and applicable strategies connecting The Reading Alliance's strategic and tactical plan to the Library's and Town of Reading's Strategic Plan.
- 9) Demonstrates an ability to plan, prioritize, coordinate, lead, and monitor projects, and define and appropriately measure results.
- 10) Demonstrates an ability to effectively communicate with individuals and groups from varied social, cultural, and economic backgrounds. Specific skills include listening, speaking, and writing. Potential audiences include elected officials, Town employees and representatives, representatives of other jurisdictions and private organizations, RAESJ, and community members.

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***The Ideal Candidate:***

- 1) Demonstrates an expert understanding of the full range of modern principles and best practices specific to Human Rights education and engagement
- 2) Demonstrates effective leadership and passion by promoting the vision and mission of the library and the community as they relate to equity and social justice
- 3) Demonstrates an ability to build trust and a trusting environment
- 4) Demonstrates an ability to lead by example, displaying honest and ethical behavior, consistency in words and action, and clear follow through on commitments
- 5) Demonstrates an ability to achieve results and add value by implementing appropriate strategies and objectives
- 6) Demonstrates effective public speaking, presentation, and facilitation skills
- 7) Has experience with various forms of conflict transformation
- 8) Produces timely, accurate, and easily understood presentations and correspondence to ensure proper communication with the intended audience
- 9) Has experience facilitating the group problem-solving process and negotiating satisfactory outcomes
- 10) Is able to transfer knowledge and positively influence others
- 11) Has strong and demonstrated racial, and cultural competencies
- 12) Possesses knowledge of housing, employment, public accommodations, education, disability, and human rights law
- 13) Possesses knowledge of Federal Civil Rights laws, and Massachusetts Human Rights laws, and local Human Rights Ordinances and policy
- 14) Has a Bachelor's Degree or equivalent education and experience in civil rights, human rights, social justice, or related field of study; and
- 15) Has a minimum of 10 years of relevant experience with 5 years of proven experience working in a leadership capacity with human or civil rights organizations, equity and social justice groups, or other civil society groups; or a combination of training and experience which demonstrates the potential ability to perform the duties of the position. Any equivalent combination of education



and progressively responsible experience, with additional work experience substituting for the required education on a year for year basis

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***Competencies:***

- 1) Personal Effectiveness
  - 2) Relationship Building and Stakeholder Management
  - 3) Discernment/Judgment,
  - 4) Collaborative Skills
  - 5) Leadership Skills,
  - 6) Credibility/Confidentiality
  - 7) Project Management
  - 8) Communication Proficiency
  - 9) Problem Solving
  - 10) Planning & Organizing
  - 11) Resource Management
  - 12) Thoroughness & Attention to Detail
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***Key Milestones:***

- Within two months of hire:
  - Appoint 8-14 members to the RAESJ
  - Create a thorough list of resources to provide the community with information on how and where to raise concerns and seek resolution
  - Identify key stakeholders and build network
- Within first sixth months of hire:
  - Conduct a thorough need assessment by interviewing key stakeholders, reviewing metrics and conducting community listening sessions that will lead to a 1-year action plan outline
- Within first year of hire:
  - Complete at minimum two enablement and training sessions with the Town and or School employees
  - Successfully plan and complete two community engagements
  - Develop a 3-5-year framework for future annual action plans
- Annually:
  - Review action plan annually and present to the Library Board of Trustee and Reading Select Board, reporting on progress and results against set goals and action plan