

**Committee Name: Diversity and Inclusion Committee**

**Chair: Jeff Commings**

**Minutes recorded by: Chris Campbell**

**Session #4**

**Date of meeting: 7/30/2025**

**Time of meeting: 8 pm EST**

**Actions Taken:**

1. None.

<b>Number of Committee Members Present: 7   Absent: 1</b>	<b>Guests: 16</b>
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<p><b>Present:</b> Jeff Commings (Chair), Chris Campbell (Vice chair), Sharon Snyder, Vicki Shu, Laura Dennison, Mary Jurey, Megan Shovlin, Kenny Brisbin (Ex Officio—USMS VP Community Services), Daniel Paulling (Ex Officio—National Office Staff), Dawson Hughes (Ex Officio—USMS CEO)</p>
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<p><b>Guests:</b> Melinda Mann, Cheryl Kupan, Kathy Gill, Kirk Clear, Paul Windrath, Ken Mammo, Christina Fox, Stephen Rouch, Ariene Delmage, CJ Rushman, Dylan Wilcox, Barb Protzman, Zena Courtney, Doug Sayles, Emily Challis-Clark, Kathy Casey</p>
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<p><b>Absent:</b> Lucila Davies</p>
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**Minutes**

The meeting was called to order at 8:03 pm EST.

1. Approval of the meeting minutes from the previous Committee meeting, held June 4, 2025, were deferred until a later date.
2. Committee Chair Jeff Commings presented the agenda for the meeting, noting that this meeting constituted the D&I Committee meeting associated with the 2025 USMS Annual Meeting, to be held in September. Per current USMS practices, selected Committees hold their associated meetings prior to the overall Annual meeting. Per the norm, this Committee meeting served primarily as a review of the Committee’s activities during the prior year. Given the large number of guests present online, and the scope of the following topic, Jeff reminded the attendees of the ground rules for discussion, per Roberts Rules of Order. As guests were not allowed to speak unless formally recognized by the Committee Chair during the meeting itself, an open forum period was provided for guest comments and feedback at the end of the meeting. USMS CEO Dawson Hughes and USMS National Staff Member Daniel Paulling were both granted permission to address the group during the meeting.

3. Jeff noted that the Committee continued to focus on the primary goals and objectives that were set in December 2023. The most significant are:

- a. Establishment of a Diversity and Inclusion Chair and/or Committee in all 51 LMSCs. Currently, 15 LMSCs have identified D&I Chairs with points of contact.
- b. Establishment of USMS programming in facilities that do not currently have any such programs. Emphasis is on the establishment of programming particularly in underserved communities. In addition to a list of prospective facilities and areas, a subcommittee was established to review potential obstacles to this process. This information was passed to the National Office and the Board of Directors. The feedback from the National Level is that the main obstacles observed when contact was established are (1) a lack of available coaching expertise, and (2) a lack of facility interest in adding and supporting USMS programming.
- c. As a follow on to the previous item, further USMS engagement is sought with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).
- d. Establishment of more Cultural and Heritage-themed events as an introduction of USMS programming to outside communities that might not otherwise support aquatic fitness activities.

4. While items 3a and 3b above are proceeding at a good pace, there were several other issues that have diverted the attention of USMS and this Committee from pursuing the remaining objectives to a desired extent.

- a. The first issue stemmed from an incident that occurred at Relay 2024, held in Houston in October 2024. Specifically, a USMS member provided promotional items from municipalities in her LMSC. One of these items was judged to be racially offensive by one of the other members in attendance. The majority of the Committee members voted in favor of supporting a Club filing a Grievance with the National Board of Review. The Grievance was heard by the NBR. It was dismissed and the matter was referred to the Board of Directors.

- b. The North Texas LMSC voted to enact time limits/cutoff times for longer events hosted by their LMSC. The rationale put forth by the North Texas LMSC concerned itself solely with the logistics and economics of longer meets, especially with respect to the burdens on extending facility usage and rentals, and staffing. This topic generated lively discussion within the Committee when it was brought forth, specifically as to whether or not it was within the jurisdiction of this Committee to dictate policy towards an LMSC. There are no further updates at this time.

5. Executive Session was invoked at this time in order to discuss legal matters, although the guests were allowed to remain online. As noted in the attendance list above, 7 Committee members and 3 Ex Officio members were present, with one absence. Recording of the meeting was halted. This is a standard legal practice when ongoing litigation is involved. The minutes recorded in this section are therefore very brief, and for further detail, the reader is referred to [www.usms.org/suits](http://www.usms.org/suits) for approved updates and communications.

Dawson provided updates to USMS's Interim Eligibility Policies, and on legal actions in Texas and Florida. Following his updates, Dawson fielded questions from the Committee. Jeff shared a listing of USMS Values, which are available on the USMS website, noting that this situation is dynamic and evolving rapidly. No actions were taken during Executive Session.

At this point, with the legal updates concluded, Executive Session was ended, and recording was turned back on.

6. An update on the proposed Diversity and Inclusion Peer to Peer Webinar was presented. The P2P Webinar subcommittee prefers a roundtable discussion, vice a webinar lecture. Such a meeting is envisioned to discuss wins, challenges faced thus far, best practices and how to keep the process of establishing LMSC D&I Chairs moving forward. Given that the Annual Meeting is scheduled in September, and Relay 2025 will be in October, the best times to schedule this Peer to Peer webinar look to be late October or November.

7. Jeff announced that he will be terming out as D&I Committee Chair this year. He has been in this position since the Committee was established in 2019. He feels it is time for new blood to take the reins, reminding attendees that following the Annual Meeting, members may apply for committee seats and chairs.

8. The floor was opened to the Guests so that they could make inputs.

a. A guest expressed extreme disappointment over the updated USMS Competition Policies which came into effect of July 1, 2025, going so far as to threaten separation from USMS as a result.

b. Another guest asked about privacy concerns, with specific interest in registering gender at birth. Dawson replied that USMS believes in respecting member privacy and personal perspectives.

c. A Committee member voiced opposition to the current USMS Interim Policies concerning Transgender Competition in USMS events, noting that there is no such thing as “fair” for a member of a group whose existence is at risk and under threat and advocated for legal pushback.

d. Another Committee member reacted to the statements above, noting that the issue at hand concerns fairness in competition. It is not a matter of political or social exclusion based on bias or bigotry.

Discussion concluded, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:20 pm EST.