

Town of Acton

Town Manager

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Town of Acton Hosts Community Conversation About Welcoming Incoming Migrant Families



Town Manager John Mangiaratti greets 100 residents who attended a community conversation and panel on welcoming incoming migrant families to Acton on Tuesday night. (Courtesy Town of Acton)

ACTON — Town Manager John Mangiaratti is pleased to report that the Town of Acton, in collaboration with the Acton Boxborough Regional School District and Acton-Boxborough United Way, hosted a community conversation and panel on welcoming

incoming migrant families to the Town of Acton.

On Tuesday night, 100 residents gathered with Town Manager Mangiaratti and representatives of Police, Fire, Community Services and Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Departments, the Acton-Boxborough Regional School District, the United Way and several social services agencies for a panel discussion and community conversation about dozens of Haitian asylum seekers who will soon be housed in the Minuteman Inn in a state emergency shelter.

Held at the Human Services Building, the panel discussion was moderated by Rebecca Manseau Barnett, and included Fania Valerie J. Alvarez, a local resident and Haitian immigrant; Acton Police Officer Monicka Jean-Baptiste; Andrea Woehler of Dignity in Asylum, a volunteer agency that seeks to assist asylum seekers, and Colby O'Brien and Jeffrey Handler of Making Opportunity Count, which will supervise the shelter.

Town Manager Mangiaratti told those in attendance that Making Opportunity Count will be on site at the shelter 24 hours a day, seven days a week, providing supervision and assistance to migrants.

State Representatives Dan Sena and Simon Cataldo also spoke, noting that the Town of Acton, the school district and all other stakeholders were notified well in advance of the state's plans to use Minuteman Inn as a shelter, which enabled all of those agencies to begin preparations.

"We're getting a really big and important head start, and every stakeholder has stepped up in a major way," Cataldo said. "The fact that so many of you are here and learning about the situation and finding ways to help and figuring out and learning and listening is incredibly important."

The shelter is expected to open to migrants on Monday.

The discussion also focused on Haitian culture, and Officer Jean-Baptiste taught those in attendance several basic phrases in Haitian Creole, the language spoken by most of the migrants who will be coming to Acton.

The panel discussion was followed by a question-and answer session with town officials and members of the panel.

"I am proud to work in a such a welcoming and caring Community," said Town Manager John Mangiaratti. "Thank you to Laura Ducharme and Wanjiku Gachugi for their efforts to coordinate this event with our community partners. Thank you to Rebecca Manseau Barnett for moderating the discussion, and a special thank you to Acton Police Officer Jean-Baptiste for bringing her personal perspective and helping to educate our community on Haitian culture."

For more information and for the latest updates about Acton's Emergency Shelter [click here](#).

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State Rep. Simon Cataldo speaks to those in attendance as four members of a panel look on at right. From left are Rep. Cataldo, Haitian immigrant Fania Valerie J. Alvarez, Andrea Woehler of Dignity in Asylum, Acton Police Officer Monika Jean-Baptiste and Colby O'Brien of Making Opportunity Count. (Courtesy Town of Acton)



Town Manager John Mangiaratti addresses those in attendance. (Courtesy Town of Acton)

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