

Needham HRC Minutes – 19 June 2014

Present: Marlene Schultz (chair), Abdul Cader Asmal , Cynthia Ganung, Olly Harari, Mike Vaughn

1. Minutes

- Minutes of May 15, 2014 HRC meeting approved as circulated.

2. Old Business

- Renewal: The renewal of Olly's appointment is pending.
- Chinese Friends of Needham: One of the chairs will contact Jenny Gao in August to inquire about the possibility of joint work.
- High School Representative: The search for a high school student to replace Nathan Rosin is continuing. Nathan has mentioned a couple of possibilities to the chairs.
- Web Page: Amelia, Ashok and Marlene have met with Sandy Cincotta to discuss the web page. Sandy to arrange for a contact with someone knowledgeable, but no decisions have been made.
- Fall Event: After much discussion, it was decided that we should not try to run an event of our own until Spring, instead working with the Diversity Summit and the Immigration Justice Task Force on their Fall events. It might be possible to work with Olin College on an event; Caitlin from Olin is to be contacted.

3. Reports

- Diversity Summit : The planning group would like The HRC to run a breakout event at the summit scheduled for 18 October. There was a discussion of possible topics:
 - (i) What are Human Rights?
 - (ii) Discussion of the civil rights movement
 - (iii) Washington Redskins issue

The relevance of the Redskins issue to Needham was questioned, but the other two possibilities should be discussed further over the summer. There was a proposal to have MLK events as part of the Diversity Summit. This seemed reasonable to the HRC members present.

- Public Housing at Captain Robert Cook Drive. The Committee was concerned about the question of how well residents of Needham public housing are integrated into the community. Amelia, Marlene and Mike visited the office of the Needham Housing Authority at Captain Robert Cook Drive and met with Debra GUYOT and Penny KIRK to obtain information related to our concerns. [Details of the housing units overseen by the NHA can be found on pp. 121 *et seq.* of the 2013 Annual Report of the Town of Needham.]

There are various connections with the community – Cradles to Crayons is a program that provides materials for pre-school students; Olin and Babson Colleges have educational programs accessible to residents; there are after-school enrichment programs.

There is a monthly tenant newsletter, and a tenant advisory board, but these have received minimal response from the tenants. We learned that the delivery of the Needham Times to the Captain Robert Cook Drive complex consisted of a single copy delivered to the office. We suggested that enough copies should be delivered to provide at least one for each unit. Ameila will contact the Needham Times to request that this should happen. We need to follow up.

3. New Business

- Immigration Justice Task Force: Should we have a formal representative to that committee? Cynthia and Olly have attended some of their meetings, but are less active.

There is a subcommittee of the task force that is involved with welcoming events for town newcomers. There is a family picnic scheduled for 17 August to be held at Claxton Field. Other ideas have been events for new students in the schools system, and providing tutors for new students. The possibility of co-sponsoring an event was raised.

- Future HRC events: A number of ideas were raised. One suggestion was to have a screening of a documentary film *Traces of the Trade* (see <http://www.tracesofthetrade.org/>) in which “Producer/Director Katrina Browne tells the story of her forefathers, the largest slave-trading family in U.S. history. Given the myth that the South is solely responsible for slavery, viewers will be surprised to learn that Browne’s ancestors were Northerners. The film follows Browne and nine fellow family members on a remarkable journey which brings them face-to-face with the history and legacy of New England’s hidden enterprise.”
- Nathan Rosin came from a meeting of the Exchange Club at which he was awarded a scholarship. He was presented with a small gift from the NHRC in recognition of his outstanding work on the committee. He reported that Needham High School is planning a Diversity Day, and there will be a Culture and Climate Committee including both teachers and students.

Future HRC Meeting Dates: Next meeting will be *September 18, 2014* at Broadmeadow.

Marlene has reserved the Broadmeadow Conference room for the dates through June 2015 as announced in the agenda: September 18, October 16, November 20, December 18 (2014) and January 15, February 26, March 19, April 16, May 21, June 18 (2015).

Recorders for upcoming meetings will be Abdul for September and Cynthia for October.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 PM.

Recorder: Mike Vaughn

