

Needham Human Rights Committee

Minutes – October 16, 2014 7:30pm
Broadmeadow School Conference Room
Recorder - Cynthia

In attendance: Abdul Cadet Asmal, Cynthia Ganung, Amelia Klein, John Schlittler, Marlene Schultz. *Guests:* JoAnne McCormick, Jeremy Sutherland

Minutes of September 18, 2014 were approved with correction of spelling of names.

Old Business

Committee Membership – Jeremy Sutherland, a Needham High School student will apply for membership on the committee. JoAnne McCormick attended and is interested in the committee and working on human rights issues. Several other names of possible members were mentioned. It was suggested that the Needham School Dept. be asked about having a representative as a liaison or member of the committee.

Needham Times – Sept. 21, 2014 Guest Editorial

The committee expressed its appreciation to Olly Harari for drafting the original writing of this article about the human rights committee and asking people to join. It was revised and approved by the committee at its May meeting. The co-chairs Marlene and Amelia asked to have the NHRC as the author of this guest editorial but gave their names to satisfy the requirement of the Needham Times policy.

Brochure – now complete, has approved email address for NHRC(nhrc@needhamma.gov). 50 copies will be made for the display at the Needham Diversity Summit. Sandy Cincotta, Support services manager, created this. All emails that come to this address are part of the public record. Email can be used to distribute information to NHRC members.

November 6 program: *Human Rights Are Local: Issues Facing Older Adults in Our Communities.* Olin College, Milas Hall 7:30-9 pm. Doors open at 7:15pm. A flyer was handed out which committee members are asked to distribute. The flyer might be changed and will be available in digital form. A press release will be sent to the newspapers. Caitrin Lynch, Olin College (associate professor of anthropology) and a Needham resident has been coordinating this program with NHRC. She has involved Olin College and North Hill, and possibly the Needham Council on Aging as sponsors with the NHRC.

The speaker will be Betsey Crimmins, senior attorney at the Elder Abuse Project of Greater Boston Legal Services. Sources of funding for her honorarium - \$100 from the town of Needham. Olin and North Hill might contribute. Following the speaker there will be 15-20 minute breakout sessions led by 9 students from Caitrin's class, then debriefing as a total group, followed by a reception with refreshments. NHRC members might be invited to attend a "dress rehearsal" for the students during their class on Oct. 31.

Follow Up on Domestic Violence – Marlene reported that Needham’s Harvest Festival had a table about responding to domestic violence with the Needham police officer, Sgt. Belinda Carroll who specializes in this work. On Oct. 17 the Needham League of Women Voters will have a forum on “domestic violence, with a local perspective” Speakers include Donna Carmichael, RN, Acting Director of the Needham Board of Health, Jessica Teperow, Director of Prevention Programs, REACH, Johanna Crawford, founder of Web of Benefit, and Deb Jacob, Needham Domestic Violence Action Committee. Needham High School has the “Take Back the Night” program on Nov. 6. It was decided not to have a NHRC program on domestic violence because other community groups are addressing this concern.

James Hugh Powers –

Amelia contacted James Hugh Powers about his request that the NHRC support his proposal to introduce an amendment to change the wording in the US constitution from “men” to “human beings”. She told him that this type of action is beyond the scope of our committee. He will be contacting members of the US congress about his proposal. Members of the NHRC admire James Hugh Powers’ work and leadership.

Reports

Needham Diversity Summit - Oct. 18, 2014 – Pollard Middle School, 9am – 2:30pm, registration and refreshments at 8:30am. co-sponsored by NHRC.

Amelia and Jeremy, members of the Needham Diversity committee presented the program of this third annual summit – information and registration are on the NDS website. The program includes a new video “I am Needham” by filmmaker Amara Mesnik and Nathan Rosin, (former NHRC member), both recent Needham High School graduates. Breakout sessions will include ”cuz he’s black”, video poem by Javon Johnson; a case study of an event in MA, led by Amelia; a session on responses to Ferguson, with a video, led by new Needham resident Gretchen Cook-Anderson; and a session on METCO. NHRC will be one of ten groups with displays in the lobby. Committee members were asked to come at 8:30am to be at the NHRC display and other times during the day.

The Diversity committee will be planning other events, including the MLK Day program in Jan. In the spring there will a program with Debbie Irving, author of “Waking Up White”, co-sponsored with the Needham Public Library. Cynthia suggested that the committee sponsor a diversity fair, modeled after Needham’s volunteer fair.

Needham Area Immigration Justice Task Force – Nov, 13 program, NHRC a sponsor.

Cynthia reported on the Nov. 13 IJTF program “Massachusetts new domestic worker rights law: What does it mean for you?” Needham Public Library, 7pm – Meet and greet with refreshments; 7:30-9pm Forum. Speaker – Lydia Edwards, attorney who advocated for this new law. New law extends workers protections to nannies, housecleaners and adult care assistants. This program is co-sponsored by NHRC and the Needham League of Women Voters. Flyers were handed out and will be sent out electronically. NHRC is being asked to help with publicity and to come early to help with greeting people. Amelia and Abdul will help on Nov. 13.

Public Forum on Affordable Housing - Sept. 23, by town of Needham.

Amelia reported on this very interesting forum and its projections for the future. Two groups are a special concern: seniors downsizing and low income senior citizens. Seniors who have large single family style houses can't convert into apartments and there is a need for housing for seniors who would like to live independently. The location of affordable housing raises issues with zoning and balance. We might want to ask the presenter Karen Sunnarborg (Needham's community housing specialist) to come to a NHRC meeting.

Recorders for future Meetings

Nov. 20 – (some members will be asked)

Dec. 18 -

Jan.15 – JoAnne

Feb. 26 - Amelia