

## **Needham Human Rights Committee Meeting Minutes September 17, 2015**

The meeting was called to order at 7:40pm in the conference room of the Broadmeadow School.

Committee members in attendance: Amelia Klein, Cynthia Ganung, Jennifer Howard, Jeremy Sutherland, Barry Ehrlich, Marlene Schultz, John Schlitter

Committee members absent: Abdul Asmal, Albert Schram, Askok Mehta, Jo-Anne Coffey-McCormick, Zahra Haghighatijoo

Special Guest, Sheldon Hampton, Director of The Center, an afterschool program at the Congregational Church, for Needham sixth graders.

Mr. Hampton introduced the committee to The Center and explained an idea he had for a diversity event called a literary culture ball, where Needham residents would attend a party dressed as their favorite character from a book that represents their personal culture. He proposed that kids could attend a separate Halloween party happening concurrently with the Ball. He is seeking collaborators to market and sell tickets to the event for Halloween time next year. The Center has a facility to use.

- Cynthia suggested perhaps making this a multigenerational event where the parties would be joined.
- While the committee thought Mr. Hampton's idea was terrific, it questioned whether the Diversity Committee would be a better collaborator for this project. Mr. Hampton will keep the committee apprised of the planning.

1. **Minutes** of the June 18, 2015 NHRC meeting were unanimously approved.

2. **Old Business**

**Webpage:** NHRC agenda and minutes are now posted on the town hall website.

**Event**—Needham Diversity Summit to take place October 17, 8:30-3:00pm. The Diversity Committee is meeting next Monday to finalize the schedule/agenda.

- NHRC continued discussion about whether to present a break out session. Barry suggested a speaker named Barbara Dougan, the Massachusetts Project Director of the Families Against Mandatory

Minimums, to come and speak at the Summit to talk about reforming sentencing laws. She agreed she would come speak for free.

- Perhaps this is a stand-alone event that the NHRC could sponsor later in the year.
- Families for Justice as Healing is a group that raises awareness about the impact on families and could possibly also be included in a new event. Question is who is our audience? Would we be able to fill the room? How would we frame the event?
- Perhaps we could partner with the high school, it was suggested that we reach out to Mr. Plasko, the head of social studies.
- Committee will continue to explore this idea as a possible event for maybe the spring.
- Considering the full agenda currently planned by the Diversity Committee, the NHRC will not present a break out session.

#### **Event---Immigration Task Force**

NHRC discussed possible event featuring Aseem Mehta, a fellow with the Immigration Justice Core, a group in Texas trying to prevent human rights abuses at detention camps. Clark Taylor of the Immigration Justice Task Force approached the NHRC to co-sponsor an event. Perhaps there could be a panel. NHRC will continue to consider this.

- Another idea for an event—a panel of Needham High alumni who are working on behalf of human rights. NHS may be very interested in this. Cynthia will report back to IJTF that NHRC is considering the event, but wants to consider broadening the topic to cover more immigration issues.
- Barry raised the idea of Needham becoming a “receiving town” for refugees, like Cambridge. Perhaps houses of worship could sponsor families, Immigration Task Force is looking into this. There are models out there providing shelter. If not shelter, what else could Needham do? Probably have to research this and bring it to Town Meeting—could approach Denise Garlick with ideas.

### 3. Reports

**Needham Diversity Committee:** 4<sup>th</sup> annual Needham Diversity Summit will be held October 17. Theme is The Time Is Now. NHRC is a co-sponsor of this event. The event will run 8:30-3:00pm. Event will include panel presentation, musical interlude, guest speaker, two break-out sessions (repeat sessions), video sessions and lunch. There will also be a display area for groups who work with diverse populations in the community. The event will be publicized through local media and Facebook, with on-line registration.

- Needhamdiversity.org.
- Special guest: William 'Smitty' Smith, the Executive Director of the National Center for Race Amity (at Wheelock) will lead a discussion of race amity.

**Immigration Task Force**—IJTF presentation on Domestic Worker Rights law presentation for both employers and domestic workers on YouTube, by local Needham Channel, organized by Eleanor Shore. Karen Price will be the moderator/facilitator. Lydia Edwards, a rep of the AG's office and a rep of a provider agency will be one of the presenters. A small audience of six will be in attendance to ask questions. This video will be used throughout the state.

- See a Boston Globe article on the abuse of domestic workers by employers.  
[www.evernote.com/l/ANRDg91DbyhB07k8vZTQwQeK1wR\\_6y4yja4](http://www.evernote.com/l/ANRDg91DbyhB07k8vZTQwQeK1wR_6y4yja4).
- Family Detention Centers in TX and PA, immigrant parents and children detained while seeking status as refugees, event could call attention to abuses in the centers and push to close them.
- Wage Theft00IJTF members joined labor action, Aug. 6 to put pressure on employers to pay wages due their workers.
- Welcoming Needham—a booklet of info and resources for newcomers to Needham will be translated into different languages.

**Needham Schools**—Just getting back, Joe Barnes is the interim principal. There is continuing talk about cultural proficiency due to some on-going issues at school. There is a movement to address this and a committee for school culture on the Student Council. The NHRC believes addressing

diversity issues should be an important piece in the search for a new principal.

**Town Issues**—quiet over the summer. John has just been named to be the Chief of Needham Police. He may still come to some NHRC meetings though will probably also appoint another representative.

**4. New Business**

**Committee Handbook**---each NHRC member must bring a copy of the signed form acknowledging receipt of the town committee handbook to Town Hall.

**Sponsorship of an education program**---see notes above.

**5. Other**  
**NHRC will attend the Diversity Summit in lieu of the October 15 meeting.**

Cynthia has volunteered to be the recorder for the next meeting, November 19.

Committee members still need to sign up to be recorders for the following meetings:

December 17  
January 21  
February 25  
March 17  
April 28  
May 19  
June 16.

Meeting adjourned at 9:00pm.

**NEXT MEETING THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19<sup>TH</sup>, 7:30PM.**