

## NEEDHAM HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

September 15, 2016

Jennifer Howard called the meeting to order at 7:35 pm in the conference room of the Broadmeadow School.

*Committee members in attendance:* Abdul Cader Asmal, Barry Ehrlich, Cynthia Ganung, Helen Giragosian, Jennifer Howard Schroeder (chair), Kerry Hurwitch, Amelia Klein, Lt. John Kraemer, Jo-Anne Coffey-McCormick, Bud Schram, Matt Schroeder, and Marlene Schultz (vice-chair). *Committee members absent:* Ashok Mehta

1. **MINUTES** of the June 16, 2016 NHRC meeting were unanimously approved.

2. **OLD BUSINESS**

**Committee Members Update** Jennifer welcomed new (Kerry, Helen and Matt) and previous members (including Jo-Anne who was on leave) to the first Committee meeting in September. Jennifer assumed her role as the new chair and facilitator of the meeting. Marlene will serve as the vice chair. The Committee looks forward to working with Jennifer and Marlene as its officers and is pleased to now have *full active membership as a committee!*

**Protocol for Public Participation** The revised policy statement was reviewed based on suggestions from the Board of Selectmen. Jennifer, Marlene and Amelia met with Marianne Cooley in June to discuss the statement which will be posted on the NHRC webpage and given to guests who wish to present information at a Committee meeting. Marianne Cooley suggested using elements of the Needham School Committee protocol as a model. One further change in a segment of the document was suggested as follows:

*7. The Chair will promptly report the Committee's response and/or actions to the individual making the initial public comment, including notice that the issue raised will appear on future Committee agendas.*

A motion to vote on the above revision was made and seconded, and was unanimously approved.

**Follow-up Forum on Islam** Marlene reported on a follow-up she had with Amira Quraishi (Muslim Chaplain at Wellesley College) about a forum on Islam. At a previous meeting with Amira and Committee members, Amira proposed that the HRC collaborate with Wellesley College and invite Noah Feldman as a guest speaker. Amira's dean has agreed to hold the event at Wellesley College. A date will be set when the speaker can find time in his schedule. Suggested dates are Nov. 17 or 18. The focus will be on ISIS. Amira's sister, Asifa Quraishi-Landes will also be a presenter. It has not been determined whether the HRC will be a co-sponsor of the event.

**Meeting with Dan Gutenkanst** Jennifer, Barry and Marlene will meet with the Superintendent on September 26 to discuss ways that the HRC can collaborate with and support NPS efforts to address issues of diversity, tolerance and cultural proficiency. The Committee hopes this meeting will be the beginning of an on-going dialogue and collaboration with the NPS.

### 3. **NEW BUSINESS**

**Summer Events** Jennifer reported on two events that occurred during the summer months when the Committee does not officially meet. A DIVERSITY AND DESSERTS community building event, sponsored by the Needham Diversity Initiative and the NHRC, took place on July 21 at Memorial Park. The goal was to cultivate relationships and to celebrate the diversity of Needham. Seven members of the Committee attended the event and brought refreshments. The event, which featured the Needham Community Band, was well attended and provided an opportunity for Needham residents to learn more about the work of the NHRC and the Diversity Initiative.

The second summer event was the meeting with Board of Selectmen Marianne Cooley (reported above).

**Complaint to NHRC** A complaint was received about the shut off of outdoor water sources at the Needham Housing Authority Chambers residence. This occurred during the water ban and drought period in Needham. Although not intended, the ruling had an impact on immigrant families who maintain vegetable gardens as a source of food. Information from the Town about the availability of outdoor water sources was unclear according to some residents. Residents expressed discomfort addressing issues with Town authorities. A compromise is being sought. Helen indicated that educational funds are available for events at the Needham Housing Authority, and this may be a way to educate the Needham Community, including youth groups, about cultural differences.

**Human Trafficking Program – Update from Summer Planning** Abdul attended a meeting during the summer on behalf of the Committee to gain information about efforts to combat human trafficking in the region. A serious violation of human rights, human trafficking can take place in every community and in familiar public spaces without being recognized. Models have been developed, such as one in Cape Cod, to form group programs and to educate the public about human trafficking in their communities. Participants at the meeting will continue to meet and to form a committee. The next meeting is scheduled for September 19 at First Parish. The HRC will consider how it can support the process as it receives more information.

#### 4. REPORTS

**Refugee Resettlement Training Session** The training/orientation session has been rescheduled for Thursday, October 6, 7:00-8:30 PM at the Center at the Heights. Committee members are invited to attend this training and orientation conducted by the International Institute of New England (IINE), an agency that has been working to settle refugee families in Lowell. Participants do not have to make a commitment but will receive information about multiple ways to assist refugees in the resettlement process. Cynthia and Amelia stressed the urgency of meeting the needs of the refugees.

**Needham Diversity Initiative Summit** Amelia reported that the Needham Diversity Initiative will finalize plans for the November 19, 2016 DIVERSITY SUMMIT at its September 26 planning meeting. Information will be shared with the Committee as it becomes finalized.

**Needham Schools** Matt reported that he contacted the Vice Principal and asked that he be informed about student events. A highlight at the beginning of the school year will be a day devoted to discussions at NHS related to a summer required reading: The Other Wes Moore: One Name, Two Fates. On Wednesday, October 26 students, faculty and Community members will facilitate book discussion groups during the day. On the same day in the evening, the Needham Diversity Initiative will conduct book discussion groups for parents at 7:30 PM.

**Town Issues** Lt. Kraemer thanked the HRC on behalf of the Needham Police Department for its words of support and respect in a letter published in the local media. The letter highlighted the work the NPD does to support human rights. The letter was posted throughout the department.

Upcoming recorders:

Oct. 20 - Marlene

Nov. 17 - Cynthia

Dec. 15 – Barry

Jan. 19 - Matt

Feb. 16 - Kerry

Mar. 16 - Helen

Apr. 27 (4<sup>th</sup> Thurs.) -

May 18 - JoAnne

June 15 - Bud

Meeting adjourned at 9:00 pm.

**NEXT MEETING: THURSDAY, October 20, 2016 7:30 PM.**

*Respectfully submitted, Amelia Klein (Recorder)*