

NEEDHAM HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

October 20, 2016

Chair 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, Jennifer Howard Schroeder (chair), Lt. John Kraemer, Jo-Anne Coffey-McCormick, Matt Schroeder, Ashok Mehta and Marlene Schultz (vice-chair).

Committee members absent: Helen Giragosian, Kerry Hurwitch, Amelia Klein, Bud Schram

Guests: Margaret Pantridge, Rick Hardy, and Stan Hitron

1. **MINUTES** of the September 15, 2016 NHRC meeting were unanimously approved.

2. **Public Participation**

Library trustees Margaret Pantridge and Rick Hardy, and Board Member Stan Hitron presented information they learned from a study the library did. One of the outcomes was the desire for Needham to appreciate diversity. In their strategic plan they have decided to be at the center of that conversation. They will focus on inclusiveness as well as diversity and target those who live and work in town. In addition to providing space for programs they have funds to sponsor educational forums. One idea is for a high profile speaker series. Examples for speakers might be Cornell West, Henry Louis Gates, and Margaret Marshall. The committee is very interested in collaborating with them and possibly include the Diversity Initiative and the Immigration Justice Task Force in the work.

3. **OLD BUSINESS.**

Follow-up Forum on Islam We have not heard from Amira and are not counting on having a program with Wellesley College. There will be a program at North Hill on Islam next Thursday. This program is a direct consequence of the program we held last year.

Meeting with Dan Gutenkanst Jennifer, Barry and Marlene had a very cordial meeting with the superintendent and the school committee chairperson. They discussed the goals around diversity. Teachers and Administrators attend professional development programs concerned with diversity. A survey went out to parents, teachers and students and a discrepancy in the response was noted and discussed. The district is looking into the results of the survey.

Outcomes: a possible meeting with students and teachers on a regular basis to discuss the culture and climate in the schools; involvement with STAY (Students Taking Action: A Day of Sensitivity, Tolerance and Awareness) Day at Pollard in November 16, 7:30-11:00am; discussion of the process the school has if there is a complaint regarding bias or diversity; wondering if we could take professional development courses with the teachers so we could get a better understanding of what they are learning.

October 26 is an all school read at the high school, *The Other Wes Moore*. There will be 33 workshops offered. Matt is running a workshop focused on the school to prison pipeline. Jennifer will contact the head of the history department at the high school about involvement.

Human Trafficking Program Marlene, Abdul and Joanne attended the last meeting. The next meeting to discuss trainings will be held on October 25 @ 7:30pm at First Parish.

4. NEW BUSINESS

Diversity Initiative Summit: Will be held on November 19, 2016. After Cynthia distributed the agenda for the day, we discussed whether we wanted to offer a workshop and we decided that they had enough planned. We will continue to be a co-sponsor of the event. One of the ideas was to have a session based on the statement that the Wellesley Chief of Police recently made. We brainstormed additional ideas for workshops. Cynthia proposed speaking to NPD about participating in the event.

Pollard STAY Day: We discussed our involvement in the day and decided to present a workshop focused on "What are Human Rights." The workshop is presented 4 times; 30 minutes are allotted for each workshop. Barry, Jennifer, Jo-Anne, Kerry and possibly Cynthia are interested in being involved in the planning and presentations. It was suggested that we might want to use the video we have used in the past, which is geared to teens, as a starting point for the workshop. Jennifer will follow up with staff at Pollard and email interested members to plan a workshop.

Massachusetts Association of Human Rights and Relations Committees (MAHRC) Jennifer announced that they meet the 2nd Friday of the month, 9:30-11:30 in Medford. The next meeting is December 9. It is a great opportunity to learn about what other groups in the area are doing. Marlene is on their email distribution list and many of the events she sends to the committee come via MAHRC emails. It would be great to have one of our members be a part of that group.

Publicizing events of interest to the committee and the friends group

Jennifer asked if people were happy with the volume and content of forwarded emails or if they felt they received too many. The committee seemed pleased with what they are receiving.

5. **REPORTS**

Refugee Resettlement Training Session The training/orientation session was held on Thursday, October 6, 7:00-8:30 PM at the Center at the Heights. There was an article in the Boston Globe that highlighted the executive director and the work of the group. Needham was mentioned in the article as having been instrumental in helping with the latest wave of refugees coming to New England. Amelia, Cynthia and Marlene attended the training. The group is still figuring out next steps since the majority of the refugees are living in Lowell.

Needham Schools Matt reported on the 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 said there was nothing to report related to human rights.

6. **Announcements:** Marlene reported on visiting the Forced From Home exhibit at Long Wharf in Boston. It is simulation what it is like to be a refugee sponsored by Doctors without Borders. She encouraged all who could to go see it before it leave on Sunday.

Meeting adjourned at 9:10 pm.

NEXT MEETING: THURSDAY, November 17, 2016 7:30 PM. Recorder: Cynthia

*Respectfully submitted,
Marlene Schultz (Recorder)*