

Needham Human Rights Committee

Minutes: September 15, 2022

In attendance: Marlene Schultz, Rinaz Mala, Emee Ward, Amelia Klein, Nate Hyman, Lisa Mesciek, Jennifer Howard Schroeder, Cynthia Ganung

Liaisons: Katie King, Belinda Carroll

Absent: Tina Burgos, Kerry Hurwitch, Bud Schram

The meeting was called to order at 7:35pm by Rinaz Mala (chairing for Tina Burgos)

- The minutes from 6/16/22 meeting were approved as presented,
- Public participation: Anna Geiraldo-Kerr presented information about an incident she was involved in on Friday, August 12, 2022. There was a group of people getting signatures outside Roche Bros. opposing a ballot petition that supported the Work Family Mobility Act. The act states that all families in Massachusetts should be able to get to work, bring children to school, and make it to medical appointments. She was there with her family in support of the ballot petition. She was asked to sign the petition and cordially declined. People from communities outside of Needham came to sign the petition and they were not kind. Due to the disruptive nature of the incident, the store manager told those opposing the petition to leave. They explained to the manager that they were within their legal rights but the manager called the police who came and dispersed everyone. Anna reported that the manager was belligerent, there was no neutrality. The anti-immigration petition was a violation of human rights. Anna talked to the marketing manager at Roche Bros. who said that they were looking into the incident. Anna reported that things were mismanaged and violated her rights. Two other citizens spoke in support of Anna, emphasizing that we must stand up against this kind of hate in Needham. Gerry Rovner, chair of the Immigration, Justice Task Force asked if there was a police report or a video? Witness statements? He asked NHRC to take a stand and make a public statement.

Action: a motion was made and passed to set up a sub-committee to study the incident. Rinaz, Marlene, Lisa and Nate volunteered to be on the sub-committee. They will meet as soon as possible.

- New committee members, Lisa Mesicek and Nate Hyman introduced themselves and were warmly welcomed to the committee.

- Amelia reported on the Needham Harvest Fair which will be on October 2 at Greene's Field. There will be a booth for Voices in Unity of which we are a part. Rinaz volunteered to staff the booth that day and to develop a QR code that would take people to our website where they can see what we do as well as read the recent statements we have made. Katie will send the brochure to Marlene to edit before reproducing copies for the fair.
- Rinaz reported on the Multicultural Fair that we are sponsoring on March 26, 2023, 1-5pm at Powers Hall. The planning is going well. There was conversation about applying to the Mass Cultural Council for a grant to help support the cost of the Fair.
- Discrimination Complaint Process

Marlene reported on the Training workshop that she proposed earlier and asked for feedback. There was a general consensus that Liora Norwich's proposal was a good place to start. We want to be sure that we have an additional training addressing the legal aspects of any complaint and especially when something is criminal and should be handled by the police. Katie felt that town Counsel would be happy to provide that training. Marlene will contact Liora to find some mutually convenient dates.

Katie and Tina met with Dan Gutekanst during the summer. It was a good conversation. He wanted to be sure that if there was a complaint involving the schools that he would be contacted. He also wanted to be sure that when marketing the complaint/discrimination process, the school resources be listed in those materials.

- Cynthia and Rinaz reported on the Needham Resilience Network. The main thrust now is to get people to fill out their survey so they can understand the concerns in the town. The Network is made up of a very diverse group of citizens. They plan to set up a Rapid Response network. For example: if there is a hate incident, they might do mediation or have a dialogue. They will be in close contact with NHRC for these incidents.
- Marlene asked if anyone attended the September MAHRC meeting, Lisa attended and found it very interesting. She did not take notes to report back to the committee but she suggests that those attending take notes and report back in the future.

- Jen reported on the upcoming Needham Community Education program: What Is Critical Race Theory? It will meet for 4 Thursdays.
 - <https://nce.reg.eleyo.com/course/619/adult-fall-2022/what-is-critical-race-theory-anyway-and-why-are-so-many-people-suddenly-talking-about-it>
 - **Reminder: The October 20 session of this course will replace the October NHRC meeting.** There was a question about what we will do with the agenda items that need to be addressed. We need to talk with Tina about the possibility of having the October meeting at another time so we can continue to address important business items.

NDI Diversity Summit: Sunday Nov. 5, 1-5pm, Pollard Middle School and Zoom. Theme is “Building Our Future Together: Act for Justice”.

Amelia and Cynthia reported that NHRC is one of the sponsors. We had a discussion about offering a breakout session and what that might look like. A few ideas were discussed. Jen will research a possible CRT workshop and try to submit a proposal by the Oct. 1 deadline.

Cynthia reported that the **Needham Interfaith Clergy** Thanksgiving service will once again take place but no date or place has been determined yet.

Jen reported on the **Needham Connects** book discussion group and asked if anyone would like to help with the Spring 2023 planning. It has been a popular offering.

- • Meeting Minute Takers
 - ◦ October 20: N/A
 - ◦ November 17: Cynthia
 - ◦ December 15: ?
 - ◦ January 19: Lisa
 - ◦ February 16: Nate
 - ◦ March 16: Jen
 - ◦ April 27: Rinaz
 - ◦ May 18: Tina
 - ◦ June 15: Bud

• Announcements

- **Join Needham Connects... Building Empathy Through Books and Conversation** to discuss

our ONE Community Read, *Thank You, Mr. Nixon* by Gish Jen
Monday, October 3 at 7 pm via Zoom. New members are always welcome! We are reading *Thank You, Mr. Nixon*, as a participating library for the Metrowest Readers Fest! Registration is required to receive the Zoom link for the Oct 3 session:

<https://needhamma.assabetinteractive.com/calendar/needham-connects-book-club-thank-you-mr-nixon/>

- • You are also invited to attend the Oct 6 virtual session that will include readers from 20+ sponsoring towns. The author will be in attendance. Registration to come soon at <https://needhamlibrary.org/events/>
- • Needham Police Department Citizen's Police Academy: Weekly sessions begin Wednesday, October 19th. Application deadline is October 3. For more information visit [https://www.needhamma.gov/5039/Community-Engagement?ct=t\(EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_5_18_2021_14_31_COPY_01\)](https://www.needhamma.gov/5039/Community-Engagement?ct=t(EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_5_18_2021_14_31_COPY_01))

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10pm. Rinaz was thanked for running the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Marlene Schultz