

NHRC March 16, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Present:, Bud Schram, Amelia Klein, Tina Burgos (Chair), Finn McKeon, Emme Ward, Kerry Hurwitch, Nate Hyman, Cynthia Ganung, and Katie King.

Not Present: Lt. Belinda Carroll

Excused: Jen Howard, Rinaz Mala Mohamed

February 16, 2023 meeting minutes:

Approved. Nate and Marlene abstain.

Public Participation:

No public participation sought tonight.

Hate Crime Needham Public High School (Finn/Emme)

- High School Principal sent email to school regarding racial slur graffiti. No other communication or follow-up response. 4th incident this year. Each addressed with an email and no further response. High School students note that emails of racial/antisemitic incidents of vandalism, threats, and slurs have increased compared to previous years.
- Dr Gutekanst joined meeting to address Needham school system process for addressing antisemitic, racially motivated incidents and vandalism. While he does not feel as though he/school “owns” all the behavior, he does feel responsible to respond. Agrees that it appears to be more incidents compared to previous years, which could be a result of great public announcements, including those that happen outside of school. It is intentional that these incidents are being shared more publicly to denounce the behavior. Important that all feel welcome, empowered, and actively involved across community.
- Role of the school is not a battleground for ideology, but rather to help students sort through what is accurate or not, but not push viewpoints on others. We educate all no matter where they come from or what they believe.
- Additional proactive work in progress
 - Elementary School: Racial Literacy curriculum and other programs
 - 9th & 10th: Courageous conversations on race
 - More promotion at Middle & High school of affinity programs and groups for students to express and reflect the community, as well as the national dialogue
 - Every PTC now has a DEI committee.
- On June 1: Clergy, Superintendent, Principal meeting. (First in 3 years due to covid). Opportunity to discuss shared values. School has kids during the day and clergy on afternoons and weekends.
- Dan wants to meet more regularly with students.
- Dan also supportive of HRC Discrimination Complaint Process.
- Desire for Dan to join for NHRC more meetings in the future.

MAHRC Meeting on March 10th (Lisa)

Presenter at Meeting: Jean-Luc Pierite, Board of the North American Indian Center of Boston, President of the Board of the North American Indian Center of Boston (NAICOB). For more information about the organization, their website is: <http://www.naicob.org/>.

- Overview of 5 Bills currently on the MA Indigenous Legislative Agenda:
 - **Honoring Indigenous Peoples Day**, Bill Numbers: HD.468/SD.268
 - **An Act to Protect Native American Heritage**, Bill Numbers: HD.1611/ SD.1410
 - **Prohibiting the Use of Native American mascots by Public Schools in the Commonwealth**, Bill Numbers: HD.3026/SD.857
 - **An act relative to celebrating and teaching Native American Cultures and History**, Bill Numbers: HD.2237/SD.387
 - **An Act providing for the creation of a permanent commission relative to the education of American Indian and Alaska Native Residents**, Bill Numbers: HD.932/SD.1826
- See full meeting minutes [here](#)
- Katie shared that if HRC wants to take a position. Make recommendation to Select Board to take a position. Need to promote organization as opposed to the bill.
- Promote speaker on FB and educate ourselves in the meantime and submit proposal to the select board in parallel
- Action Steps:
 - Draft email for Select Board for submission in order to work within current process specific to recognizing Indigenous People's Day and asking for select board since the support is already working on it. Board has yet to take official action.
 - Promote organization on FB (Kerry)
 - Reach out to Denise Garlick to better understand timing of bills in order to prioritize (Tina)
 - Send MAHRC minutes to NHRC committee (Lisa)

8:34 PM - Nate takes over notes.

Marlene: should we be waiting for the Committee to change the name to guide us?

Tina: it's no longer active.

Cynthia shakes head.

Marlene: can't take on another thing - would love to see someone else take this on.

Tina: Let's put up the facebook page - read the statutes/bills. Think about potential next steps. Then we can figure out what we want to do going forward. Then we can discuss further in May.

Marlene: sounds good.

Tina: meeting on Tuesday - we were given some feedback from the Select Board. Going to continue to refine this. Basically - we're going to simplify it. There's a lot of anxiety about

the process, about anonymity, about potentially accusing orgs/individuals of things that may or may not have happened. Investigation scared people - gave the feeling of judge/jury. We're not going to do those things. Hard to conceptualize. Speaking in hypotheticals. At this point - where we left off, based on suggestions from board - someone contacts HRC - one member from HRC is assigned to have conversation ("Complainant") to get a sense of what the situation is. Assigned member reports back to committee in general/anonymous manner. Make sure it falls within our purvey. If not - gets referred out. If we can take it on - the person assigned gathers info from all persons involved - try to get some sort of communication/resolution going. Understanding among the parties. If member of HRC doesn't feel that is possible - will get referred out to external resources. Housing authority, school board, etc. Incident is considered "closed". Report back to committee - findings, resolution, logged for historical record-keeping purposes. Marlene and I feel like that approach satisfies a lot of the concerns.

Marlene: Only other thing - referrals not limited to those. AGO, MCAD, you need a lawyer, etc. May be other resources. Simplification - but this is better. Gone to select board twice and been frustrated - but if they will agree to this - want a place for folks to be heard. Want this to be a welcoming place. Assuming this goes through - going to take a while to get it publicized - one other piece - have sort of a trial period - 18 month pilot. Good to have a significant amount of time to iron things out.

Kerry: Want to thank you both for doing this.

Marlene: you're welcome.

Amelia - i know you put a lot of time and energy into it. I felt more positive about this at the end of the meeting. Opened the NARI vision statement (spelling?). Two comments: one from Marlene: what is the purpose? Tina: we have a long way to go. Racial equality statement for town of Needham. We will work collaboratively, etc. Identify and change, etc. We will create opportunities. Intentionally create spaces for dialogue and change. Something we have to remind the board of. Important step in the right direction. Not just procedural - the role of the org is this.

Cynthia: thank you. Two things: whole-heartedly agree, and happy i wasn't sitting in one of your seats. Thank you to Tina and Marlene. Are you planning to have another meeting of the working group before bringing back a revised version? If you are - would be useful to have another selectboard member. Kevin or Heidi - they're in a reasonable manner able to translate some concerns from different portions of the community. Adding another voice. The other thing - they are reacting - to being attacked. Really suffering from having had painful situation. Tuned in to not wanting to have this happen. Community/national issue. More concern for that than in the past. Third thought: having a list of comparable towns that have something like this.

Bud: Helpful to have what Amelia just read to us - re-iterating what the town has put forth.

Marlene: Maybe start with NARI when next we go to the Select Board. I just sent Tina today - in their Google docs - shows what different towns are doing. When they report out. Not going to work to just say "we don't have this," but could be helpful.

Tina: other comments/suggestions?

Marlene: you can watch the recording of the selectboard at around 7:45 - 8:00 PM. Thank you to Katie for helping - legal process questions.

Katie: I know this has been a long process. The ways these things have been addressing concerns nevertheless retains the underlying goals that NHRC has had.

Tina: if anything comes to mind - email me/Marlene. Want to keep it moving as we enter year 3.

Cynthia: sharing draft with this group?

Tina: yes - just want to make sure Marlene and I are on same page.

Tina: Amelia - can you run down - what is happening on Sunday - and anything you need from us at the last minute? Name tags are with Rinaz.

Amelia: Those of you who are coming - even if you are not volunteering - wear nametags. Need volunteers between 11AM - 1PM. Need folks to set up tables. Will need a lot of help. Elevators too. Lot of busy work going on over a short period of time. Also advertised on "next door" - 437 views about the multicultural festival.

Tina: There's a group doing some set up tomorrow. Do you need help with that?

Marlene: No. Custodian is going to do the set up. One group is going to come rehearse.

Bud: Going to make some calls to see if we can get some press coverage.

Tina: Program looks fantastic. Maryanne is going to be there, Denise Garlick is going to be giving some remarks. Looking forward to it.

Marlene: Rinaz has worked like crazy. Committee is phenomenal. Very connected. Fun to be on planning committee.

Tina: questions? Hope to see you guys there.

Marlene: You can drop in if you'd like. It's from 1-5 PM. Buzz - learn a little bit about the cultures.

Tina: Name tags - information table. Rinaz has everything.

Amelia: we'll put them at the information table.

Tina: Reminder - meeting starts at 7PM next month. Going to send an invitation to Rebecca Drill so that they can invite NDI and the select board. 7PM next month.

Cynthia: still don't know if we'll be in person or zoom?

Katie: Feeling very optimistic - house and senate passed extensions, but they got caught up in larger bill on other stuff. It's going to happen, but not clear when. Since next meeting isn't until the end of April - should be fine to proceed remote.

Tina: Ok to zoom him in?

Katie: Yes - Powers Hall is so big that we have some audio in issues.

Cynthia: Alright to invite 5 people from clergy organization? I have invited some folks. Won't be more than a few. Don't want to uninvite them. Rabbis.

Marlene: of course.

Cynthia: masking for various reasons - Powers Hall gives folks the opportunity to spread out a bit more. Some people may not care as much anymore.

Katie: 95% confidence level that we will be able to proceed via Zoom.

Tina: Reminder for May - we are hosting the book discussion. Jen is looking for help with that. If anyone is able/interested/willing -

Kerry: already signed up.

Amelia - would also be interested.

Tina: She was looking for 2-3.

Kerry: really enjoying.

Bud: Told Tina I would help.

Tina: Not sure if they're at the library.

Kerry: discussion over Zoom - not an in-person discussion.

Tina: questions or comments?

Cynthia: Pride events - first parish unitarian universalists - Needham has pride parade/celebration.

Tina: Planning stages?

Cynthia: The day before Juneteenth - 18th? The day before is race amity day. NDI is moving forward. Town committee - didn't come together for this year. June 18th. Father's Day.

Tina: Need to decide whether we want to move forward with Pride/Juneteenth events.

Bud: Postings from last year could be done again this year.

Tina: Like to tweak - throw in new concepts.