

NEEDHAM HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

December 15, 2016

Chair Jennifer Howard called the meeting to order at 7:35 pm in the Highland Room at Town Hall. Marlene and Jen provided holiday nutrients.

Committee members in attendance: Abdul Cader Asmal, Barry Ehrlich, Cynthia Ganung, Jennifer Howard Schroeder (chair), Kerry Hurwitch, Lt. John Kraemer, Amelia Klein, Ashok Mehta, Marlene Schultz (vice-chair)

Committee members absent: Jo-Anne Coffey-McCormick, Matt Schroeder, Bud Schram

MINUTES of the November NHRC meeting were unanimously approved.

1. Planning for NHRC 2017

Jen raised the need for us to prioritize and focus on a few things to do out of many possibilities. She asked us to consider:

- What brings you to these meetings?
- What is one thing you'd like to see us accomplish in the coming year?

We put our responses on post-its, Jen will review and discuss with us at a future meeting. At that time we'll also discuss organizational structures that can help increase our efficiency.

2. Elementary School complaint update

Marlene informed us that the couple who had come to our meeting last year regarding a complaint of racial insensitivity at an elementary school have moved out of the district. She contacted them about the possibility of further discussion, which they expressed interest in. There was discussion as to the value of follow-up, with concerns expressed as to what could be accomplished given that we'd only have one side of the dispute. The decision was made that Marlene will reach out to them in an open-ended fashion, giving them the opportunity to share as they feel comfortable.

3. MLK Day

The MLK Day program will take place on 1/16. Cynthia asked for volunteers to help with food pick-up and delivery. She got them.

4. Follow up forum on Islam

Abdul sent a note to Noah Feldman re his involvement in this program, but got no response. He will try again by contacting NF's secretary.

5. Collaboration with Needham Public Library

There will be a meeting on 12/17 to continue this planning. Ashok raised the concern that a focus on ISIS alone may be too narrow. Abdul discussed the need for a counter-narrative to the misunderstandings about Islam. Jen raised the importance of knowing which issues the community is most concerned with and interested in hearing about. It's important to address fears and dispel the myth that ISIS can be equated with Islam.

6. Human Trafficking program update

Nothing to report. A recent incident in Framingham was mentioned. There is a PATH meeting on 12/19; there will be a UN speaker in March.

7. Statement for the Board of Selectmen - we decided that:

- The shorter statement (that Jen wrote) will be sent to the Board as the statement we want them to adopt. Jen will do this.
- The longer statement (Let's Resolve to Build a Nurturing Community) will be sent to the Needham Times - hopefully to run as a guest editorial rather than a letter to the editor. Amelia will do this.

8. Town Issues

We discussed the letter from Capt. Schlittler regarding a comment made to Lt. Kraemer at the Diversity Summit. This turned out to be a misunderstanding involving a comment that was not intended as it was heard. The letter also mentioned concerns about a stereotyping activity at the Summit which may have inappropriately focused on police. John also mentioned a situation in which he was concerned about the welfare of one of the teenage participants.

It was decided that we (Jen?) will respond to John by:

- Explaining about the misunderstanding involving one of our committee members
- Making clear that the day was planned by the Diversity Committee, and so any concerns about programming should be raised with them directly.

9. Photo for end of the year report

It was taken. We looked smashing.

Meeting adjourned at 9:15 pm.

Next meeting: Thursday, January 19, 2017

7:30-9:00pm

Highland Room Town Hall

Recorder: Matt Schroeder

*Respectfully submitted,
Barry Ehrlich (Recorder)*