

NEEDHAM HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

January 19, 2017

Chair Jennifer Howard called the meeting to order at 7:35 pm in the Highland Room of Needham Town Hall.

Committee Members in Attendance: Abdul Cader Asmal, Cynthia Ganung, Jennifer Howard Schroeder (chair), Kerry Hurwitch, Jo-Anne Coffey-McCormick, Matt Schroeder, Ashok Mehta, Bud Schram and Marlene Schultz (vice-chair).

Committee Members Absent: Barry Ehrlich, Amelia Klein, and Lt. John Kraemer,

Guests: State Representative Denise Garlick, Anne Weinstein, Joseph Tierney, and Chip Wilder.

Police Representative: John McGrath

Minutes of the December 8, 2016 meeting and December 15, 2016 were unanimously approved.

Public Participation:

State Representative Denise Garlick brought her concerns to the committee and explained that she was worried about the bullying and treatment of vulnerable people. She clarified that we should not be reactive, but Bud disagreed and argued that we should be ready to react. Representative Garlick's main idea was to model a coalition after the one which was used years earlier in order to confront the issue of youth suicide in Needham. The coalition would bring together a diverse group of people in to help efforts to achieve human rights for everyone. In addition, she has already reached out to the town manager about the logistics of forming a coalition. She also brought up and explained the Sampson model which has been used to fight bullying in the past. Likewise, she introduced the Facing History Event which will take place February 2nd and invited the Committee members to assess the curriculum to see whether or not we think it would be successful in Needham. Jennifer weighed in that she believes that white privilege needs to be an important part of the mission and also included institutional racism. The group also agreed that a member should be chosen to represent the Committee, however everyone agreed that selecting someone might be too far along. Bud then made a motion to support the beginning initiative to form a coalition in order to promote "up standers" who confront attitudes that impinge on human rights. Marlene volunteered to represent the committee on the coalition that is being formed by Representative Garlick.

Chip Wilder brought news of the Witness for Justice Vigil and Empowerment Fair. The vigil will be held January 20th and the Fair will be held January 29th. The vigil is for support of people who may feel uneasy about the inauguration. The Empowerment fair will be held at the UU Church and will be a chance to offer residents different support groups and will serve as a sort of networking opportunity for those who wish to feel empowered in Needham. Cynthia asked if the committee could co-sponsor the event.

Marlene made a motion that the NHRC support the efforts of the Empowerment Fair that will promote social justice and humanity in our community. This motion was unanimously approved.

Old Business:

Marlene updated the Committee on the Human Trafficking event that the Committee is co-sponsoring that will take place on March 9th. This event will promote awareness of human trafficking and will explain the signs of potential human trafficking.

Marlene updated everyone on the follow up Islam forum. The Committee agreed we would no longer pursue Dr. Feldman, and Marlene has organized NHS grad Craig Considine to come back to Needham for the event. Mr. Considine is highly qualified and lectures at Rice University. The date right now is May 11th but that may be subject to change due to conflicts with other town events.

Reports:

Matt reported on his recent meeting with Mr. Sicotte, the principal of the high school. They discussed a potential student focus group in order to identify potential problems in the schools. Matt also gained insight on the forms of communication and promotion of the committee's agenda in the high school. In addition, Mr. Sicotte and Matt discussed the relationship of the Committee and NHS and both agreed we need to cooperate and collaborate with one another.

Meeting adjourned at 9:10pm.

NEXT MEETING: THURSDAY, February 16, 2017 7:30 PM. Recorder: Kerry

Respectfully submitted,

Matt Schroeder (Recorder)