

NEEDHAM HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

March 30, 2017

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

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), Matt Schroeder

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

Special guest: Marianne Cooley, Needham Board of Selectmen

1. Discussion with Board of Selectmen Member, Marianne Cooley regarding the role of the Needham Human Rights Committee in addressing complaints of human rights concerns in Needham.

The group turned to the official Charge of the Human Rights Committee, which says in pertinent part, it is the role of the Needham Human Rights Committee:

To advocate appreciation and respect for human and civil rights (Education)

To organize and/or recommend community events to promote respect for human and civil rights (Community Outreach)

To provide advice and assistance to the Town Manager, Chief of Police, and/or other Town offices in response to issues that challenge the human and/or civil rights of any individual or group in Town (Community Response)

Upon considering this, we determined it is within the purview of the NHRC to engage in “fact finding,” which is to say it can call in interested parties to hear their concerns. Moreover, the NHRC should aim, where possible to gather facts from parties representing both sides of the presenting concern. The NHRC may attempt to facilitate resolution between the parties and where appropriate, make recommendations to other Town Departments and the Board of Selectmen. The NHRC make take an advisory, not an advocacy role. The NHRC must simultaneously remember it represents the Town.

The NHRC may advocate for human rights positions that impact concerns that involve issues broader than the Needham community. It would be permissible, for example, for the NHRC to organize local residents to attend a rally in Boston.

The NHRC may also co-sponsor events, even ones that may raise money, depending on the issue presented, keeping in mind the NHRC’s unique role as a Town Committee.

The NHRC may convene joint meetings with other organizations/Town Departments for the purpose of addressing common concerns.

It was suggested that NHRC members meet annually with the incoming Vice Chair of the Board of Selectmen to maintain open lines of communication.

It was also suggested that the NHRC annual report be linked to the Committee's webpage so that the community can access information about projects and progress of the Committee.

Respectfully submitted by,
Jennifer Howard Schroeder

NEXT MEETING: THURSDAY, APRIL 27, 7:30pm, Highland Room, Town Hall

RECORDER NEEDED!!