

NEEDHAM HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

December 21, 2017

Jennifer Howard Schroeder, chair, called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm in the Great Plain Room, Needham Town Hall.

Committee members in attendance: Abdul Cader Asmal, Cynthia Ganung, Jennifer Howard Schroeder (chair), Matt Schroeder, Marlene Schultz (vice-chair) Dan Rubin and Bud Schram., Ashok Mehta, Kerry Hurwitch, Nancy Fitton

Committee members absent: Bud Schram, Nadaa Ali, Amelia Klein

Police liaison: Lt. John Kraemer

Jennifer opened the meeting with introductions and a welcome to newly appointed committee member, Nancy Fitton

1. **MINUTES** of the November 16, 2017 meeting were accepted and approved as presented
2. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION** None
3. **OLD BUSINESS**

February NHRC program: Diane Levin, Children and the Media

We discussed publicity for the program Kerry will use social media mid-January to announce and promote the program. Marlene will have 150 flyers copied at Town Hall for distribution at MLK program, library, and for Kerry to distribute to PTC presidents. Kerry, Cynthia, Marlene and Jennifer have agreed to work on publicity for the program based on the list of tasks generated by Amelia.

January 31 Needham High "One Day" workshop

Nadaa is not available to be present at the workshop but she can help plan it. Kerry will work on it along with Dan and Matt. The focus is on implicit bias.

4. **NEW BUSINESS**

NHRC role in rapid response to incidents that happen in the community

Marlene raised the question based on the community response to the recent graffiti incidents. A discussion ensued with lots of questions. We wondered if we have to check with the town first in order to response. Should be organizing vigils? Should we write an article? It depends upon the incident. Should we be the ones making a statement or just be sure that there is an adequate response from the community even if it does not come from NHRC? We should share the

information we receive with our larger “friends of NHRC” list. We might make a generic statement – we want to be a presence, be at the table. Might we can to take the longer view. If time sensitive, we should email the committee to call a special meeting and have it posted as well. We might ask Dan Matthews about our ability to make a rapid response. We should invite him to come to one of our meetings so we can discuss it and get clarity on our role.

Jim Hirsch event: Race, Sports & Protest in America

The Diversity Initiative invited us to co-sponsor the program. We had a discussion and decided that we needed additional information which Jennifer will get so we can make a better informed decision.

Race Equity Audit report for Needham Public Schools

We decided to table the discussion until our January meeting when Dr. Gutekanst will be at the meeting.

MLK Day

We discussed our role in the day, which has been primarily to organize the food for the program. Cynthia has agreed to once again coordinate the food. Marlene, Jen, and possibly Ashok offered to help Cynthia.

Racial Justice Book Group with the library

Jennifer reported that the library was very excited by the idea. While there was a clear interest in the book group, when she asked for others to work on it with her, but no one volunteered at this time. She will continue to pursue it with the library.

- Jennifer is in conversation with the library to co-sponsor an anti-racism book club that would meet on a monthly basis.
- Jennifer is also looking into an NEF grant for to reinstitute a peer leadership program at the high school that they used to have in 2006.

5. REPORTS

Town Issues Lt. Kraemer reported an incident at Pollard where there was graffiti in the boys’ bathroom. They had a well-executed “teach-in” at Pollard to discuss the issue. There was another incident at the high school with graffiti in the boys’ bathroom. The Chief is talking with the District Attorney about these but they are not considered hate crime. In order to be a hate crime there has to be an action. They aren’t able to prove that the incident was motivated by hate. There is a difference between a hate incident vs. a hate crime.

Jennifer and Marlene will work on a community forum to discuss graffiti in the town. There are going to be a series of discussions based on the information presented in the Boston Globe Spotlight Series on Racism. The Unitarian, Baptist and Congregational Churches are taking the lead on this. We will co-sponsor the discussions. Jennifer will communicate this to the organizers.

Community Interfaith Inter-racial Potluck January 28, 2018
All are invited. The focus is a discussion about racism.

Change in Name of Selectmen

Marlene reported that she followed up with Marianne Cooley about using gender-neutral names for the Select Board. Marianne will be calling a public hearing about the issue before her term as Chair is up in April. She would like us to make a statement during the hearing. Marlene is willing to read the statement but would like help in drafting it.

Needham High School Matt reported that the Principal was holding an open meeting for students beginning on Friday. He plans to have monthly meetings in order to address some of the findings in the equity audit.

Meeting adjourned at 9:15 pm.

*Respectfully submitted,
Marlene Schultz, Recorder*

**NEXT MEETING: Thursday, January 18, 2018 at 7:30 pm, Highland Room,
Town Hall
Recorder: Cynthia**