

**Needham Human Rights Committee
Minutes of March 15, 2018 meeting
Highland Room, Needham Town Hall**

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

Committee members in attendance: Abdul Cader Asmal, Cynthia Ganung, Jennifer Howard Schroeder (chair), Kerry Hurwitch, Matt Schroeder, Amelia Klein

Committee members absent: Nancy Fitton, Ashok Mehta, Dan Rubin, Bud Schram, Marlene Schultz, and Nadaa Ali

Police liaison present: Lt. John Kraemer

1. Quorum not met in the beginning of the meeting to approve minutes of February 18, 2018.
2. No one present for public participation.
3. Old Business

Jim Hirsch event: April 9, 2018, 7-9pm at Eliot. NHRC co-sponsor with Needham Diversity Initiative. NDI would like members to attend and bring waters, help with publicity. Amelia is working on publicity through Town Hal. Cynthia has snack bars she can bring to the event (left over from MLK event). Kerry will help format flyer for distribution. Committee brainstormed ideas for publicity.

Diversity and Discussion book group with Needham Library: Jennifer will co-lead May 24 discussion on the book *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas. No one from NHRC interested/able to lead discussion on June 21 meeting on the *Underground Railroad* by Colson Whitehead. Book discussion same night as last NHRC meeting before summer break. Will revisit what to do about June meeting.

Proposal to use gender neutral language for Needham Board of Selectmen: special hearing rescheduled due to snow. Hearing will be March 20, 8-8:30pm. Amelia will read the statement Marlene drafted for this hearing. NHRC members encouraged to attend to show support for the proposal.

Pollard STA Day: Matt, Cynthia and Jennifer will lead workshops at Pollard Middle School on behalf of the NHRC. The topic is Implicit Bias. The workshop will mirror the outline used for the NHS event in January. Jennifer will email NHRC members a link to the video that will be used, Verna Myers TED talk, *How to Overcome Our Biases*

https://www.ted.com/talks/verna_myers_how_to_overcome_our_biases_walk_boldly_to_ward_them

Pollard students will use their ipads to take the Harvard Implicit Bias Tests.

4. New Business

Follow up to January Inter-racial Potluck Dinner: Committee discussed feedback from event. Over 120 attendees. Mostly positive feedback. Some disappointment it was not a very diverse group of participants. Many requested more time for discussion. The planning committee is proposing the next potluck using the Needham Schools Equity Report as a tool to generate discussion in small groups. With a quorum available at this point in the meeting, the Committee voted unanimously to support NHRC co-sponsoring this follow up event. Jennifer, Marlene, and Amelia will continue to represent NHRC on the planning committee. Date still undecided, looking to make it happen before summer.

Possible fall event with Progressive Needham focused on protecting rights of Transgender people in MA. There is a referendum coming to repeal 2016 law protecting transgender people in public places in MA. Committee discussed whether NHRC could participate if this was a political advocacy position (though committee members generally very strongly support protecting transgender people and defeating repeal)? Will get more information about the event and table discussion.

5. Reports

Membership update. Nancy Fitton is not longer able to remain on the NHRC. Jennifer will reach out to Needham Housing Authority to see if they might have anyone else interested. Two new potential candidates being interviewed by Board of Selectmen. Matt is looking for a student to take on his position as he transitions out of the role in June.

Town: Lt. Kramer reported that there has been another incident of graffiti in the parking garage on 1st Avenue. Again employees found a swastika was found. Police are investigating but it is difficult to find out who is doing this. Lt. Kramer also updated the committee about the frequency of opioid overdoses in Needham; all NPD carry Narcan. There is interest on the committee in thinking about programming around the drug epidemic as it relates to mental health and human rights as they pertain to treatment. The committee will discuss this at a future meeting.

Schools: Matt reported on the walk out in support of the Florida students impacted by the mass shooting. He is not sure if there will be any follow up. Matt will try and bring a prospective new student member to the next committee meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 9:10pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Jennifer Howard Schroeder