

NEEDHAM HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

April 26, 2018

Jennifer Howard 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), Amelia Klein, Christina Matthews, Ashok Mehta, Bud Schram, Matt Schroeder, Julie Venables. *Police liaison:* Lt. John Kraemer
Committee members absent: Kerry Hurwitch, Marlene Schultz.

1. **MINUTES** of the February 15, 2018 meeting were approved. Minutes of the March 15, 2018 meeting were approved as amended.
2. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION** None
3. **OLD BUSINESS**

Diversity and Discussion Book Group The following two events will be co-sponsored by the Trustees of the Needham Free Public Library and the Needham Human Rights Committee

- May 24 Book Discussion: The Hate U Give Facilitator: Jen Howard
- June 21 Book Discussion: Underground Railroad Facilitator: Gretchen Cook-Anderson. (The Committee will decide at its May meeting whether to cancel or reschedule the meeting on June 21 if members want to attend the book discussion. If this meeting is cancelled, then the May meeting will be the last meeting in FY 2018)

Report on Public Hearing: Gender Neutral Language for Board of Selectmen

Committee members who attended the public hearing all agreed that presentations to the Board members provided strong arguments for the name change of the governing body. Amelia read a statement on behalf of the HRC (prepared by Marlene). Other group representatives speaking in favor of the change were the Representative Denise Garlick (former member of the Board of Selectmen), League of Women Voters, the Needham School Committee, and NHS students. All members of the Board agreed to support the change, which will be voted on at a Town Meeting. (Jen will ask Dan Matthews if it is necessary for members of the Committee to be present.) Following, official changes will be made on a State level.

Inter-Racial Potluck Dinner – May 6, 5:30-7:30 Committee members were encouraged/invited to attend the next in a series of Inter-Racial Potluck dinners, to be held at First Parish in Needham *Sunday, May 6, 2018 5:30-7:30*. The title of

the Potluck Dinner Conversation is: AND HOW ARE THE CHILDREN? A CONVERSATION ON RACE, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION. The focus of the evening will be the Needham Equity Audit Report and how the community can follow up to ensure that the Needham schools and community are welcoming and safe for ALL children. The program will begin with a presentation by two parents who were part of a parent group that challenged the placement practice of children of color. Their initiative was the impetus for the Equity Audit. Following, small group discussions at individual tables will be led by table leaders. The number of participants will be limited, and further effort made to invite people of color and others of diverse backgrounds.

Fall Event with Progressive Needham The Committee discussed co-sponsoring an event with Progressive Needham which is focused on the rights of Transgender people, and related to the November referendum which seeks to repeal the 2016 law protecting transgender residents in public places. The Committee voted unanimously to co-sponsor an event as it is intended to raise awareness, meeting the mission of the NHRC. A point person from the Committee is needed, perhaps someone who has been involved in LGBT activities and organizations.

4. NEW BUSINESS

Representation on NPS Committee: Portrait of a Needham Graduate Ashok reported that he will have specific information to share with the Committee at our next meeting.

May Meeting: Planning for Next Year The Committee will brainstorm about potential events that it hopes to organize over the next FY. Possible co-sponsorship of events will also be addressed.

NHRC Elections and Leadership Committee members will discuss and elect Committee leadership positions for Fiscal Year 2018. Jen indicated that continuing as chair will be challenging because of work obligations. Amelia noted that the Committee may want to consider having co-chairs again because of the growing number of activities and events that the NHRC now pursues. The Committee will explore other configurations and vote on leadership positions and candidates. Jen asked Committee members to let her know if they have an interest in serving in a leadership role.

5. REPORTS

Race, Sports & Protest event Members attending this event on April 9, 2018, reported it to be an interesting presentation due to the topic and the special guest panelists. Presenters shared personal experiences and viewpoints from their professional

perspectives, and provided insight into the complicated task of addressing major issues in light of media coverage. The event attracted a more diverse audience in terms of gender, age range, and racial background. The event was well-attended. To view the program, see:

<http://vp.telvue.com/preview?id=T02953&video=333095>

Pollard STA Day Bud, Cynthia, Jen and Matt conducted NHRC workshops at the Pollard Middle School STA (Students Take Action) Day event on April 12, 2018. Four 35-minute sessions were held which focused on the Implicit Bias Test recommended by Nadaa. The workshop leaders found the exercise meaningful and provocative, especially for the older students. Differing points of view were expressed about using the test in future workshops. Nadaa suggested a TED Talk resource which focuses on how individuals can confront their inner biases. All agreed to replicating the workshops - with modifications – next year. Cynthia and Jen shared student responses (sticky notes and a list of responses) from the workshop.

Membership Update Jennifer welcomed the Committee's two new official members: Christina Matthews and Julie Venables.

Town Updates (Lt. Kraemer) Lt. Kraemer indicated that there were no incidents to report.

Needham High School (Matt Schroeder) Matt will be finishing his 2-year term on the NHRC in June and is reaching out to potential student candidates at the High School to serve on the Committee. Amelia shared a recent Needham Times article which highlighted NHS sophomore Sameena Ghogawala and her advocacy work. Matt will contact her to see if she is interested in serving on the Committee. The Committee has not had a female student representative.

6. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Cynthia shared information about an up-coming event:

- ***The GEC Together***

The Needham High School Gender Equality Club (GEC) is hosting the GEC Together on April 27 from 7-9 p.m. in the NHS cafeteria! Please join us for a night of feminism and empowerment featuring keynote speaker Boston Globe columnist Shirley Leung. The event includes entertainment from NHS a cappella groups, free food, and interactive and informative booths, and more. Admission is free, and attendees are encouraged to bring two pieces of new or gently used clothing to be donated to Rosie's place, a local women's shelter. The event is open to the whole community!

Bud Schram announced that it was Jen's birthday and provided dessert in honor of the occasion. (He did not mention that it was his birthday as well.)

Meeting adjourned at 9:00 pm. *Respectfully submitted, Amelia Klein (Recorder)*

NEXT MEETING: Thursday, May 17, 2018 at 7:30 pm *Recorder: Christina Matthews*