

NEEDHAM HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

June 19, 2018

Marlene Schultz 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, Kerry Hurwitch, Amelia Klein, Christina Matthews, Ashok Mehta, Marlene Schultz (Vice Chair), Julie Venables *High School liaison:* Jared Pizzuto

Committee members absent: Nadaa Ali, Bud Schram, Jennifer Howard Schroeder *Police liaison:* Lt. John Kraemer

1. **MINUTES** of the May 17, 2018 meeting were approved as amended.
2. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION** None
3. **OLD BUSINESS**

Portrait of a Needham Grad No updates from Ashok, reported that next meeting will be in the Fall.

Needham Freedom Teams The Committee discussed its role in facilitating a Freedom Team in Needham, and if it would be equal partners or leading the team. The Committee decided to move forward with something like a Freedom team, and agrees that some members will be part of a larger coordinating and collaborating group, running the group in a lead role. Christina Matthews, Amelia Klein, Marlene Schultz, and Cynthia Ganung volunteered to lead the team and will begin to do brainstorming in the Summer months.

The committee agreed that the overall message of a Needham Freedom Team will be to be a more proactive, not reactive, community. The Natick Freedom Team's website may serve as a model for now. Ashok noted that the Committee can shape the Needham Freedom team as it sees fit, and Cynthia added that it will look different and have different issues than other towns. The committee discussed having Jamele Adams work as a pro-bono consultant if he would be willing.

Christina, Amelia, Marlene, and Cynthia will begin discussing ideas and contact attendees from the original Freedom Team meeting to share that members of the Committee will be taking the lead. Kerry noted that it should be clear that this is not under the Committee umbrella, but a separate entity.

Diversity and Discussion Book Group It was reported that 13 people attended the May book group about The Underground Railroad.

The “all-town read” will be the next book group meeting, discussing Life Animated on September 13 at the Library. The book is available for free at the Library across from the circulation desk.

It was also noted that the “all-school” read is The Hate U Give.

Moving forward, the Committee will continue to co-sponsor all book clubs.

4. NEW BUSINESS

Coffee with the Editor Amelia reported that the editor of the *Needham Times* will be at Starbucks to talk to anyone from the community. Amelia plans to meet with the Editor and discuss how the Committee might get better coverage in the newspaper. Christina suggested bringing the Editor a handout on what the committee does. Marlene posed the idea of a series of pieces on human rights issues.

NHRC Elections and Leadership Committee members were asked if anyone is interested in co-chairing the committee for the following year. Marlene and Amelia explained the co-chair model, that each chair shares responsibility and it is an egalitarian, sharing-based system. Christina Matthews volunteered for the position. The Committee voted yes to elect Christina Matthews as a co-chair with the incumbent chair (Jen Howard Schroeder) for the following year.

The Committee reviewed the current clerk/secretary model with a rotating clerk vs. electing one person to be the clerk for the year. The Committee voted yes to keep the current model. Committee members signed up to be a recorder at any given meeting and all meetings are covered. It was noted that it is very important that if a Committee member has the clerking duties for a meeting and cannot attend, they must find a replacement rather than leave the obligation to the co-chairs.

Needham Green Collaborative Request The Needham Green Collaborative reached out the Needham Human Rights Committee to see how the committee could pledge to be “greener” in the following year. The Committee discussed making sure there is a green component to every event it hosts, such as recycling table cloths and making sure there is a recycle bin available. Additionally, the Committee agreed to the immediate action of no longer printing meeting agendas for its members; individual members may choose to print the agenda if they would like to, but others may look at it on computers and tablets.

Transgender Conversation The Committee voted yes to add its name to the Freedom Massachusetts website as a supporter of efforts to protect transgender individuals in MA.

Kerry will attend the next Transgender coalition meeting in Cynthia's place.

Potential Programming for 2018-2019 The Committee discussed potential programming for the coming year. The conversation was centered on the current human rights crisis at the United States border. The Committee voted yes to release a statement against the US separating families at the border. The Committee also discussed how refugee crises may enter next year's programming.

An additional suggested topic for programming next year is "how to get involved/how to be an activist". This could be presented at the High School as well as local colleges.

5. REPORTS

Town Updates (Lt. Kraemer) Lt. Kraemer was not present to provide this report.

Needham High School (Jared Pizzuto) Jared will be the new liaison to Needham High School. Jared reported that there were no updates on the swastika hate crime from the Spring. Jared also suggested that proactive programming at the HS rather than that responding to incidents would be useful.

6. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The next pot luck with the CMM will be October 21, 2018 at 5:00PM at Temple Beth Shalom.

The Diversity Initiative summit is November 17, 2018.

All of the 2018-2019 Committee meetings are listed in the agenda so Committee members may keep track.

Meeting adjourned at 9:08 pm. *Respectfully submitted, Julie Venables (Recorder)*

NEXT MEETING: Thursday, September 20, 2018 at 7:30 pm