

Needham Human Rights Committee
December 21, 2018
Highland Room, Town Hall

Attendance: Jennifer Howard Schroeder (Co-Chair), Christina Mathews (Co-Chair), Cynthia Ganung, Ashok Mehta, Lt. John Kraemer, Jared Pizzuto, Nadaa Ali, Julie Venables, Marlene Schultz, Amelia Klein, NPS Superintendent Dan Gutekanst
Absent: Abdul Cader Asmal, Kerry Hurwitch, Bud Schram

The meeting was called to order by Co-Chair Christina Mathews

1. Minutes from November 15, 2018 meeting were approved unanimously, as presented.
2. Public participation – None
3. Old Business

Portrait of a Needham Graduate – Ashok attended the meeting on November 16. He reported that the meeting was well attended by parents and educators. There was a lively discussion on skills needed for Needham Graduates of 2032 – with emphasis on analytical skills, adaptability, social interactions and civic duty. The final report based on discussions and input from educators will be released by the Portrait Committee at the School Committee meeting in the spring of 2019. NPS Superintendent, Dan Gutekanst acknowledged and thanked Christina and Ashok (representatives of NHRC) for active participation.

4. New Business

Amelia Klein provided an update on concerns regarding implementation of the Equity Report. She received the following feedback from one of the parents:

- Lack of confidence in implementation of the Equity Report recommendations
- Minimal transparency in implementation plan
- Parents are generally uninformed
- METCO parents are not involved

On the contrary, Cynthia Ganung and Amelia Klein also reported that the presentation from Assistant Principal, NHS, Johnny Cole at the Diversity Summit on the Equity Report was very well received.

A discussion regarding this feedback followed with NPS Superintendent Dan Gutekanst. He explained that parents and community was made aware about the progress on The Equity Report via emails, Town Cable TV and School Meetings. He was open to suggestions for additional ways of increasing awareness and timely dissemination of information. He will raise this issue at the school committee. Jen will also bring this up at the REAL meeting.

Ideas for 2019 Programming

Group suggestions compiled in the Google doc were reviewed and the Committee decided to focus on the following (with members signing up to participate):

- Jen Howard will lead the book discussion (Refugee by Alan Gratz) in March, 2019
- School Equity - Cynthia, Nadaa, Julie, Christina, Jen
- Listening Sessions - Marlene, Nadaa, Jared, Julie, Amelia
- Book Discussions - no one
- Attend School Budget Hearing - Marlene? Cynthia?

MLK Day – NHRC will provide refreshments.

Cynthia Ganung provided update on the MLK Day program. Ashok and have volunteered to help with refreshments.

5. Reports

☐ Town Issues (Lt. Kraemer)

3 separate incidents of hate speech found in Needham: in a classroom at Pollard Middle School, bathroom at Needham High and a swastika on a truck parked in town. All investigated by Needham Police. Media has been giving the incidents attention. Discussion followed about impact on community.

Lt. Kraemer will be retiring in June 2019. The NHRC will be very sorry to say good bye!

☐ Needham Public Schools

Dr. Gutekanst in attendance to hear feedback about equity audit questions. Reiterated steps the administration has taken to keep the community informed.

☐ Needham High School

No additional report.

Adjournment: 9:00pm

Ashok Mehta, Recorder