

NEEDHAM HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE

June 20, 2019

The meeting was called to order at 7:30pm.

Committee members in attendance: Cynthia Ganung, Jennifer Howard Schroeder (Co-chair), Amelia Klein, Christina Mathews (Co-chair), Ashok Mehta, Julie Venables, NHS rep – Jared Pizzutto

Committee members absent: Kerry Hurwitch, Marlene Schultz, Bud Schram, Nadaa Ali, Tracy McKay

1. **MINUTES** from the May 16, 2019 meeting were approved
2. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION** – Rick Hardy from Needham PATH (People Against Trafficking in Human) presented about the work of PATH and asked our committee to co-sponsor a community education event with them in January 2020. They need our help with publicizing the event. There was a discussion about one of the short films on the program to be shown at this event – “I am Little Red”, which addresses the 4 tactics a “wolf” (trafficker/pimp) will typically use to lure a Little Red off their path. The issue was raised that the symbol of the wolf is a positive one in Native American cultures and the story of Little Red Riding Hood may be offensive to Native American cultures. We will watch the Little Red video, research further, and provide more input. PATH will consider this point, and discuss at their July 8th meeting. A question also came up about how they would respond to audience questions about Robert Kraft and his participation in these activities that may have involved trafficking. It was suggested that organizers should be prepared to answer questions about this issue.

It was decided that NHRC will reserve Powers Hall for this event and will await more information about the specific programming for this event.

3. **UPDATE ON RACE AMITY DAY CELEBRATION FROM JUNE 9** – 2 of our members were present at this event co-sponsored by NHRC, NDI and World of Wellesley. NHRC helped to ensure that the posterboard with the Governor’s Race Amity Proclamation is posted upstairs in Town Hall for the month. The program included Denise Garlick and Becca Rausch, Bahai children’s choir, NHS Treble Rebels, and a moving film, 50 Years of Metco in Needham. It was suggested that in future events, there should be less presentation and more fellowship, as that is the purpose of Race Amity Day. As NHRC is reviewing our current commitments as we take on more, we will not co-sponsor this event next year.

4. **UPDATE ON SUITCASE STORIES EVENT FROM JUNE 12** – Stories about immigration and life as a refugee told by local people. There were probably 150 people present and the event was very authentic, educational and engaging.
5. **PRIDE MONTH** – We had several community members reach out and ask us to help advocate for a Pride banner to be hung at Town Hall in celebration of Pride month. The Select Board stated that they do not allow any banners to be hung aside from those advertising municipal events. The NHRC wrote a letter of support to the Select Board. The Board decided that it will issue a Proclamation declaring June, Pride month, at the next Select Board meeting on Tuesday, June 25. NHRC members are invited to attend. The community would like to plan a Pride event for next June.
6. **COMMUNITY RESPONSE NETWORK** – Four of our committee members, along with members of Needham Diversity Initiative, met with Nichole Argo from the Overzero project to discuss how to organize a community response network so that we can have more connection and a coordinated response, if need be, to acts of hate, hate crimes, or other incidents in town. The aim of this coordination would be to have more linkages amongst groups in town and further our community resiliency. This is not a new group, but rather a systematic way to connect. Jen will lead the planning from the NHRC end to organize an initial meeting with everyone for September. Marlene, Amelia, Cynthia and Christina would also like to assist with this project in the months ahead.
7. **2019-2020 PROGRAM** – The primary work of the NHRC includes:
 - Educating the community about human rights related issues. Below are our educational activities planned for the coming year.
 - Responding to community needs and requests for support – Organizing the Community Response Network will be a big part of our work for the coming year.
 - a. Diversity & Discussion Book Club with the Needham Public Library – We need to lead the discussion for June 2020 – Educated by Tara Westover.
 - b. Community Response Network kickoff – September
 - c. Needham Public Schools – MetroWest Health Foundation grant to help share the work of the students trained in courageous conversations with the Needham community. Fall 2019
 - d. Needham Diversity Summit – NHRC partnership event – Nov 2019
 - e. Community Potlucks – Amelia would like to continue being involved in these. Fall/Spring

- f. Pollard Students Take Action Day – Cynthia & Julie will coordinate this. April 2020
- g. Tabling at Town Fairs – October & June
- h. Human Trafficking Educational event with PATH – Jan 2020
- i. Pride event – June 2020 – Tracy will be involved in this.

Meeting adjourned at 9:10pm.

Next meeting: September 12, 2019 at 7:30pm.