

Needham Human Rights Committee

Emergency Meeting

June 2, 2020 - 12pm

Meeting via Zoom

Members in attendance: Marlene Schulz, Amelia Klein, Cynthia Ganung, Julie Venables, Albert Schram, Jennifer Howard-Schroeder, Ashok Mehta, Christina Mathews, Kerry Hurwitch

Others in attendance: Moe Handel, Sandy Cincotta

Members not present: Jared Pizzutto

The meeting was called to order at 12:03pm.

NHRC Statement addressing the police killing of George Floyd and ongoing police violence and systemic racism.

The statement was outlined and reviewed amongst the members. There was some discussion on whether to include police violence against all people of color, but it was ultimately decided that this statement should focus on the very distinct experience of black people.

The statement was approved by unanimous vote.

Collaboration with Needham Public Schools

There will be an upcoming meeting later this week with NPS Asst. Supt. Mary Lammi and other community groups to collaborate on a community wide event around systemic racism. We requested other members to join in the planning. Bud Schram and Julie Venables volunteered to take part.

Compiling a resource list to share on the NHRC page

We are seeing that there is great interest from the community to learn more about issues around systemic racism. We will compile a resource list. Christina and Amelia will work on compiling this.

Upcoming Diversity & Discussion Book Group - June 17

We suggested a change to the upcoming book for this discussion from Educated to something more relevant to the issue of systemic racism. Library representatives said it would be challenging to get necessary approvals, and ensure the library had the books, and that participants could read it in time. They suggested that perhaps there is a way to link themes in Educated to themes around racism and education.

Community Resilience/Response Meeting with Overzero

We canceled the meeting from this past March due to COVID-19. We discussed the need for the committee to find out from town leadership when we can plan to host this, virtually perhaps in the fall.

It is clear from the current community outpouring of support for anti-racism work and a need to collectively respond to hate and racism, that this workshop is extremely important in investing in the town of Needham.

Some of our Committee members expressed their frustration that the Human Rights Committee is unable to respond quickly in these moments, especially at these times when the community is seeking leadership and a response. Various community groups including Progressive Needham, Needham Diversity Initiative and faith communities have partnered on the most recent vigils, with Progressive Needham taking the lead role.

Human Rights Committee Leadership

Currently, Christina and Jen are unable to lead the committee for another year due to other commitments. Christina has resigned from the committee, and Jen has resigned from the Co-Chair position, both effective June 30, 2020.

No other members on the committee are currently able to lead. The workload is growing as the needs of the community are growing, which has made it challenging.

The Committee will have 2 open positions that we need to fill. Sophia Dedek, a NHS student has applied to join the committee and is awaiting final approval. Sandy will work on this after Town Meeting on June 8.

Committee members asked Moe for help in recruiting members.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:14pm.