

NEEDHAM HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE

MEETING MINUTES

May 20, 2021

7:30pm meeting

Chair: Tina Burgos

Recorder: Ashok Mehta

In attendance: Bud Schram, Tina Burgos, Sophia Dedek, Jared Pizzuto, Marlene Schultz, Cynthia Ganung, Julie Venables, Jen Howard Schroeder, Amelia Klein, Ashok Mehta, Kerry Horwich, Kathleen King and Lt. Belinda Carroll

Absent: Marcus Nelson

Approval of Minutes (April 15, 2021): Approved

Public participation: Seema Rathod (Guest) and Micha Bernat (Guest)

Micha Bernat who is working with Decriminalize Nature MA and Baystaters for Natural Medicine made a presentation to the Committee members. Micha spoke about: (1) decriminalizing possession of all controlled substances, (2) cultivation, exchange, and ceremonial use of psychedelic plants. Micha had provided a document addressing these issues to the Committee members ahead of the meeting. Micha was seeking support from the Committee. The Committee decided to take up these issues for discussion on a later date.

- Community Observance of George Floyd's Murder, May 25

The Committee members unanimously agreed to sponsor the event. Cynthia made a suggestion to invite the Select Board Members for the event. Tina requested Katie to extend the invitation to the Select Board Members.

- Discrimination Complaint Process (Tina, Marlene, Julie)
 - Update
 - Meeting with Chief Schlitter (Amelia, Marlene, Cynthia)

Amelia/Marlene/Cynthia provided updates from their meeting with John Schlitter, Needham Police

Chief. Their meeting was cordial and the Chief was supportive of creating a process for addressing discrimination complaints with a role for NHRC. John will be contacting neighboring towns (including Arlington, Wellesley & Natick) Police Chiefs to understand their process. John did caution that criminal cases should not be taken up by the Committee. John and the NHRC team members will continue the dialogue in future.

Julie is working with the sub-Committee of NHRC to create a form for submitting discrimination complaints to NHRC. Tina will be checking with the Select Board to make sure that such a form is legal.

- NHRC General In-Box (Amelia)
 - Process

Amelia raised issues of accessing and monitoring of the NHRC General In-Box (Gmail account). Ashok, who had initially set up the Gmail account for NHRC, will work with Kerry & Tina to resolve the issue of accessing the account. Kerry also offered to setup a file system for NHRC on Google Drive. Katie asked that the town must be given access to the Google Drive file system of NHRC when that is available.

- Needham Accessible Reservoir Trail Renaming

Tina / Cynthia reported that in the NDI meeting, it was made clear that David Summergrad's family did not want Needham Accessible Reservoir Trail renamed after David's name. Katie mentioned that the name suggested to the Select Board was Amity Path. Amelia said that in the last NDI meeting, members did not want to use Amity in the name. Marlene also advised against using "Amity" in the name.

- NUARI (Jen, Marcus)

Jen reported that NAURI meeting was not held in May and the coming-up meeting was re-scheduled. Katie did mention that the upcoming meeting was scheduled for June 7th.

- Rapid Response Network (Katie)

Katie reported that Nicole had applied for a Federal Grant on behalf of NDI and requested the Town to support her grant application. Tina did comment that Nicole had a very exciting and powerful ideas. Tina is hopeful that Nicole will somehow find funding for the project.

- Indigenous People's Day Initiative (Amelia, Cynthia)
 - School Committee
 - Next steps

Amelia reported that students were not sure about next steps. She is hopeful that students will continue with discussions. Cynthia pointed out that the idea of holiday is just one of the initiatives, the other big initiative is to increase awareness about indigenous people.

- Policing community forum (Jen)

Jen reminded members of the conversation about the Police Reform Legislation education with Denise Garlick. Jen also mentioned about the Select Board discussion some time ago seeking input from the Community Policing Forum. Belinda mentioned that the Chief is working on educating community about the Police Reform Legislation. Jen further mentioned that as time passes people are solidifying their views about policing in Needham. Katie requested that it would be helpful if some of NHRC members help in defining end goals for events/forums leading to discussions with the Police Chief. Amelia suggested that a presence of a mediator when meeting the Chief will be very helpful. Tina will get back to Katie after conversation with Jen /Marlene and others on her request.

- EJA/NDI/NHRC Joint Sessions (Tina, Jen, Cynthia, Marlene, Amelia)
 - NDI News: Race for Amity Day, June 13 (Cynthia)

Tina will continue working towards joint sessions of EJA/NDI/NHRC. Cynthia said that no further action is needed from NHRC for Amity Day.

- Juneteenth

Katie asked if the Committee wants to do something for Juneteenth. Jen suggested that the Committee put a for series of recommendations for celebrating Juneteenth starting from June 1 to June 19 on NHRC's Facebook. Furthermore, the Committee unanimously approved to create a proclamation for Juneteenth by leveraging proclamations of NAACP and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. NHRC's Juneteenth proclamation will be posted on the town's website (HRC Page), Facebook page and shared with other organizations of town.

Reports

- **Select Board (Katie):** None
- **Town Issues (Belinda) :** None
- **Needham High School (Jared & Sophia) :** None
- **Needham Schools - REAL Coalition (Jen) :** None

Jared announced that it was his last meeting. Sophia also mentioned that she might not be returning for

future meetings.

- **Future NHRC Meeting Dates and Recorders**
 - Jun. 17 - Marcus