

NEEDHAM HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE
Minutes June 16, 2022

The meeting was called to order by Chair Tina Burgos at 7:30pm

In attendance: Marlene Schultz, Cynthia Ganung, , Amelia Klein, Tina Burgos, Kerry Hurwitch, Bud Schram, Rinaz Mala, Katie King, Belinda Carroll, Jennifer Howard Schroeder.

"Absent: Finn Mckeen, Emee Ward"

Minutes from 05/19/22 were approved

Public participation – two members.

Amelia Klein will be preparing the annual report for the HRC , she will not be a recorder for the upcoming year-2022-2023

Recruitment, six people would like to join NHRC , two of them are attending the public meeting.

Community Conversations on Policing

Cops and community series 3rd session: Jen explained that the third session was intended to be more discussion than the previous two sessions, people were focused about how to build more communication between Needham police and residents. The guest speaker was Mr. Quentin Williams former FBI agent , a lawyer , and he does community work .He started by telling an extremely compelling story when he was traveling as a young man to Newport to meet with friends in a summer house when he was pulled aside by the police where he was hand-cuffed and held for a few hours ,at the same time there was a report of an assault of a black man carrying a gun that same afternoon. Once he convinced them who he was and they were able to identify him and that he was not the person they were looking for, he was released. Mr. Williams proceeds on by the story saying he wishes he had more clarifications as why he was being hand-cuffed and an apology at that time would have helped him heal from that experience. We had an amazing turnout participation from the Needham Police Department, their presence added a tremendous layer to the discussion and how sitting together face to face and having the human interaction helps in tackling the issues we stumble on. Jen left feeling hopeful. Marlene added that she also attended the session, she was impressed by the police presence and their willingness to engage in further communication and one of the police officers on her table shared his email address with the people in the group. Amelia proceeded to talk about the session, one of the police officers on her table was very articulated and perceptive although he was new on the job, Amelia believes the evening was relaxed and we were comfortable with one another although we discussed some controversial points, but it was not an argument. She is very proud of NHRC taking this initiative and wishes if other towns would do something similar. Katie hopes next time we have better attendance.

Belinda felt that the session was good and talking to people in a different environment outside the job felt good. Belinda appreciates that the community knows that they are human beings too and they do make mistakes. It was good to get others 'perspectives and vice versa. She agrees that there is a mutual feeling of fear but in Needham there is partnership, and the community does not really know how many partnerships we have and how many sub-partnerships within those partnerships and how everyone is working together. Belinda said there are many officers who would spend their own money to help kids that need things for their dorms and other things. Cynthia attended all three sessions, she liked how the sessions moved in a good order, starting by introducing a history of policing then the role of the school resource officers. She was impressed by how the speaker set a tone and developed a container that we all fit in because of his background and perspective. Cynthia suggested since Needham has a lot of block parties, it would be one way of getting to know the police officers more by having them over. Also many cities and towns have a civilian police review board , they look into some cases where people are not happy about what went on, maybe NUARI have a variety of perspectives built into it that if you have a group like that then you would work on getting representatives of the groups that are really concerned about getting their voices heard .Jen said even though they spent one year trying to plan , there have been some challenges, in terms of attendance a.(who is in the room and who is showing up for these events) b.(the impact of these discussions, she is not sure if we have the mechanism to get the perspective of black residents and people who come through Needham, it is one thing for her to say I walked not feeling fearful because she wasn't fearful to start with .

Pride and Juneteenth updates.

Tina has the "Pride Wishing Tree" put up in the Needham Town Hall "for the month of June.". Marlene saw the tree when she was in the townhall and felt very proud of the NHRC endeavor, she is also very happy to know that the town offices will be closed on Juneteenth as well as the Synagogue in observance of this holiday. Kerry added that it is an official Massachusetts' holiday, and it is a federal holiday.

Race Amity Day

Rinaz said there was so many diverse people, she knows people from the Muslim community here in Needham attended and enjoyed the day with their children and walked around the amity path, Amelia said it was very relaxed day, people were mingling and walking casually in and out. The highlight was the rock painting table which brought families together, also the refreshment table . We had a wonderful gospel music group, they were excellent – thanks to Ramin Abrishamian from Needham Diversity initiative – we had more than a hundred people. Also Kim Marie Nichols get so much of the credit she worked for a month.

EJN/NDI/NHRC meeting

Per Cynthia, some people in EJM said there weren't included in NRN , but when Cynthia asked Nicole she confirmed that EJM are represented in the NRN . Amelia wants to acknowledge the great job that EJM is doing with their videos, highlighting the different groups on town.

Voices in Unity

Per Amelia , Sisi is planning a major event, to include all the groups in town , to send a message regarding what is happening now in the world (it was general discussion between Amelia and Sisi) where they talked about each group can have a representative ,she made a video , and people were brain storming ideas . Per Marlene, there was some people who would like the work to be done on a local level.

Massachusetts Human Rights Commission

Per Marlene , Mass HRC meets once a month, shares great information , she suggests if we can take turns to attend the meetings which take place on the second Friday of every month at nine o'clock. We can tell them about us and bring useful information back to NHRC. Cynthia suggested that we should have it on September agenda that this is something we are doing this coming year so people can sign up.

Next group photo

We will wait until September to have everyone.

Needham Resilience Group

Per Cynthia, building the network relationship is important at this stage with the idea on later on that we will be able to fulfill communication skills to discuss important issues. We will have a community calendar where we can add our events.

Mapping Project

David Sherman reached out to Rinaz on Race Amity Day as he knew she is on the board of HRC , he was very upset and communicated by email that he doesn't feel safe , he would like NHRC to have a statement to condemn this project that targets Jewish schools, temples, businesses. He was wondering if Needham took the right measurement to make the Jewish people living in the community feel safe? Marlene suggested we make a statement, and State Representative Denise Garlick had made a statement. Bud suggested that a statement should be made and we can publish it on our website, Facebook . Per Belinda, we are always around the temple, and we have great communication with all the temples. Katie referred to an article in the Globe regarding the same topic. Jennifer suggested if we facilitate a meeting with this citizen with the chief of the police in Needham just to give him some space so he can communicate his concerns with the police. Marlene talked with the rabbi, and she suggested a statement that would be appropriate.

Our statement is

"June 16, 2022

Recently, many Jewish organizations in Massachusetts have been the focus of hate through an online published list which contains harmful anti-Semitic rhetoric. Specifically, the aim of the Mapping Project is to "dismantle" and "disrupt" the entities that are targeted on this list.

Given this, the Needham Human Rights Committee declares that we stand in solidarity and support of the Jewish community, as hate, in all forms, does not belong in our communities."

Memorial "for Enslaved and Indigenous Peoples" Committee at First Parish

Per Cynthia, Katie King asked us to look at the select board goals and to see if we would like to contribute in a particular goal, the goal number is 4.12 *"Gather information about appropriate acknowledgement of the history of slavery in Needham; ask HRC if this is something that they can take the lead on"* Cynthia is involved as a resource person with the Memorial Committee. She has been communicating with the chief of the Natick Praying Indians, who are descendants of native people who lived in our area. They are very interested in being involved. Cynthia is following up with Rev. Catie Scudera about this Select Board goal. Katie King clarified that the SB goals are actionable items that are revisited every 6 months. When the Memorial Committee has a specific request for the town it can come first to the NHRC before going to the SB. The NHRC can show our support by encouraging the Select Board to continue to support this goal.

Recorder: Rinaz Mala Mohamed

This meeting was recorded and can be viewed at:

[Human Rights Committee 06/16/2022 - YouTube](#)