

City of Keene
New Hampshire

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, April 3, 2019

5:00 PM

Room 12 Rec. Center

Members Present:

Mohammad Saleh, Vice-chair
Nancy Salwen
Pam Knight
Jan Manwaring
Dottie Morris (via telecom)

Staff Present:

Andrew Bohannon, Parks & Rec. Director

Members Not Present:

Bill Hay, Chair

1) Call to Order and Roll Call

Acting Chair Saleh called the meeting to order at 5:07 PM. Roll call was conducted. Introductions were made and guests Lisa Abohatab, Gail Zachariah, and Jen Alexander, of the Keene International Festival were welcomed.

2) Approval of Minutes – March 6, 2019

Ms. Manwaring motioned to approve the minutes of March 6, 2019 as submitted. Ms. Salwen seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

3) Finance Report

Mr. Bohannon reported there were no expenditures for the past month; the current balance of \$4,574.70 remains the same. By consensus, the Committee accepted the report as informational. By consensus, the Committee agreed to hear agenda item #5 and then move onto regular business.

5) Committee Charge

- a. Future Action – Discussed in agenda item 5.b.**
- b. International Festival**

The festival will feature multicultural music, storytelling, crafts, games, and performances presented by community members from various countries of origin. There will also be an international exhibition hall and a display of artwork from local students. Food will be available

to purchase from vendors representing an array of countries. The event is free, open to the public, and appropriate for all ages. We would all love to invite the Human Rights Committee to our next meeting at Jonathan Daniels School (Community Education part of the building) on Tuesday, April 9 at 3:45 PM.

Ms. Alexander provided the historical background of the Festival. The Festival was an idea she and Jack Timmons conceived. Ms. Alexander noted there was a lot of discussion about immigration and building a wall after the last Presidential election. Ms. Alexander continued there was a lot of negativity around the children regarding immigration. People were being told to go back to their own countries which was something unwanted in the schools and community. Wanting positivity instead of negativity they came up with the idea to host a celebration that would highlight Keene's international community. Ms. Alexander explained there are 25 different countries represented in Keene's Adult Learning classes. She shared information on the Harrisburg, Virginia International Festival and noted they wanted to replicate it on a smaller scale. Ms. Alexander explained it took a year to organize and then was put off for a year. Ms. Alexander shared the success of the first festival and added they want to replicate it again. She continued we want the spirit of celebrating our immigrants to stay front and center so we worry sometimes about scaling up and that getting lost in the jumble.

Ms. Zachariah said the Committee has not had a lot of meetings this year. We are just structuring and we have a lot of Committees that have space for this Committee's members to get involved. Discussion ensued with regards to the involvement of the Keene Immigration and Refugee Partnership. Acting Chair Saleh commented he thought this festival had been going on for years as it is so well organized. Ms. Zachariah noted there was a festival 30 years ago but it was very different. Mr. Bohannon shared the Mayor's desire to create more diversity in Keene noting this is why he reached out to the Festival organizers. He continued we want everyone to feel welcome here.

Acting Chair Saleh asked what kind of support would be expected of the Human Rights Committee. Ms. Alexander replied just Committee support and explained how the event was structured last time. She noted they had a budget of \$1,500.00 and did not spend it all. Ms. Abohatab explained the biggest challenge was food; they had expected food trucks to be present. She discussed the venue at Jonathan Daniels School regarding parking, playgrounds where families felt safe, the all-purpose room, and the stage which were all advantages. The food challenges were licensing and electricity. As the discussion continued Ms. Morris asked if a caterer could participate. Ms. Abohatab replied in the affirmative. Acting Chair Saleh asked if the electricity was regulated by the School District or the City. Ms. Abohatab suggested it might be the School's responsibility and noted safety issues involved. Continuing she suggested they had assumed the food trucks would have their own generators which was not the case. Ms. Salwen suggested food truck owners might be willing to collaborate on the event with ethnic type foods.

Returning to this Committee's participation Ms. Alexander said she did not know if it would be as a group or as interested individuals. She asked if the Committee had any ideas regarding the role they want to play noting they need help with the organization. Ms. Alexander said the Recreation Center would solve the issue if there was inclement weather; the festival could still be

held indoors. Mr. Bohannon provided information regarding the parking noting there are ways to overcome the smaller parking area. He shared his vision of food trucks lined up on the Washington Street side opening up into the park, you have the wide open space for vendors and tents, the playground, indoor space with bathrooms and multi-purpose room, with other things around as needed. Discussion ensued regarding use of the kitchen; Mr. Bohannon explained it is a prep area. Ms. Alexander noted the possible use of the Community Kitchen for prepping food and its proximity to the Recreation Center.

Raising the issue of the venue Acting Chair Saleh asked if their Committee would be discussing this. Ms. Zachariah replied in the affirmative noting the increased visibility and area for food trucks. Ms. Zachariah reiterated the invitation to their next meeting. Mr. Bohannon suggested that he attend the meeting on April 9th and email this Committee the findings. He continued the group could be invited back to the May 1st meeting to work out the details. Committee members were in agreement with this suggestion.

4) City Ordinance

Mr. Bohannon distributed copies of the draft Ordinance for discussion noting the following changes were made:

- Name changed to Human Rights Committee
- Sec. 2-991 – Membership eliminated “one member shall be a student” leaving “one member shall be an educator”. Ms. Morris satisfies that position on the Committee. Also in this section is one member shall be an ex-officio member representing the Keene Public Library.
- Sec. 2-993- Purpose and in Sec. 2-994- Powers and Duties change the word “equality” was changed to “equity”
- Change the word “minorities” to “under-represented groups” (back page of document). This term was agreed upon by Committee consensus.

Mr. Bohannon noted a definition for “under-represented groups” would need to be determined by next Friday. Acting Chair Saleh asked about changing the word “purpose” to “mission”. In response to Ms. Knight Ms. Manwaring indicated the word “purpose” is standard language. Mr. Bohannon clarified this is ordinance language we cannot change and he will discuss adding mission to a different section with the City Clerk. Mr. Bohannon then outlined the adoption process for the Committee. Ms. Manwaring referred to Sec. 2-993-Purpose and suggested adding another sentence describing what “under-represented groups” means to the Committee. Acting Chair Saleh suggested this might be hard to define and that it could be left up to the Committee for interpretation. Continuing he said Ms. Morris’ example of women as an under-presented group captures the essence of our mission more closely.

Acting Chair Saleh raised the issue of the words “in the year of our lord”. Mr. Bohannon explained that was in the Resolution that was already passed and that the Committee’ opinion was shared with the City Clerk.

Ms. Salwen motioned for the Human Rights Committee to accept the changes discussed. Ms. Manwaring seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

6) **Upcoming Events**- Discussed under agenda item 4.

7) **Membership** – Discussed above in agenda item 5.

Mr. Bohannon reported the Committee has nine seats with three openings. The term is for three years and members can serve two consecutive terms with the option to resign at any time. Mr. Bohannon clarified the terms do not start over with the renaming of the Committee.

8) **New Business**

1. Mr. Bohannon distributed copies of the Mayor's 2016 Proclamation designating June as Gay Pride Month in response to the nightclub shooting in Orlando, Florida. Mr. Bohannon noted his thoughts to bring this Proclamation back with June designated as LGBTQ Awareness Month. This Committee could bring the Proclamation forward within the City of Keene. He commented on the Resolution, Ordinance, and possible event on the horizon. Mr. Bohannon suggested having this on the next agenda for updating to reflect what the Committee wants to say noting this should not reflect on the past event but simply be about awareness. Ms. Salwen noted the students are away from college at that time. Mr. Bohannon explained this month is designated nationally. Suggestions to remember for next month:

- Change “celebrate” to “commemorate”
- Change “Gay Pride” to “LGBTQ (Pride or Awareness)”
- Remove the 4th paragraph

9) **Adjourn**

There being no further business Acting Chair Saleh adjourned the meeting at 6:05 PM.

Next meeting date: May 1, 2019

Respectfully submitted by,
Mary Lou Sheats-Hall, Minute Taker
April 4, 2019