

**City of Keene**  
**New Hampshire**

**HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE MEETING AGENDA**

Monday, October 5, 2020 at 5:00 PM  
ZOOM Invite, Online Meeting

- Due to the COVID-2019 State of Emergency, this meeting will be conducted using the online meeting platform, Zoom. The public may view the meeting online by visiting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84045782865> with Meeting ID 840 4578 2865
- If you are unable to attend the meeting online, you may call (603) 766-5646 and enter Participant Code 981441 to listen to the meeting
- If you encounter issues accessing this meeting, please call (603) 757-1835 during the meeting

Members:

Bill Hay, Chair  
Jennifer Carroll  
Dr. Dottie Morris  
Janis Manwaring  
Dr. Mohammed Saleh  
Nancy Salwen  
Sofia Cunha-Vasconcelos  
Dr. Shaun Filiault  
Ritu Budakoti

Staff:

Andy Bohannon, PRF Director

Guests:

Agenda:

1. Welcome and Call to Order
2. Approval of September 14, 2020 Minutes
3. Finance Report
4. Mayor's Call for Board and Commission Nominations
5. Monadvocacy Continued Discussion
6. MLK Breakfast
7. June Events
8. Board Terms
9. New Business
10. Adjourn – Next Meeting Monday, November 2, 2020

1 City of Keene  
2 New Hampshire

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5 HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE  
6 MEETING MINUTES  
7

8 **Monday, September 14, 2020**

**5:00 PM**

**Remotely via Zoom**

**Members Present:**

Sofia Cunha-Vasconcelos  
William (Bill) Hay, Chair  
Janis Manwaring, Councilor  
Dr. Mohammed Saleh, Vice Chair  
Nancy Salwen  
Ritu Budakoti

**Staff Present:**

Andrew Bohannon, Parks, Recreation, and  
Facilities Department Director

**Members Not Present:**

Dr. Shaun Filiault  
Dr. Dottie Morris  
Jennifer Carroll

9  
10  
11  
12 **1) Welcome and Call to Order**

13  
14 Chair Hay read a prepared statement explaining how the Emergency Order #12, pursuant to  
15 Executive Order #2020-04 issued by the Governor of New Hampshire, waives certain provisions  
16 of RSA 91-A (which regulates the operation of public body meetings) during the declared  
17 COVID-19 State of Emergency. He called the meeting to order at 5:14 PM. Roll call was  
18 conducted.  
19

20 **2) Approval of August 3, 2020 Meeting Minutes**

21  
22 Councilor Manwaring made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of August 3, 2020. Ms.  
23 Salwen seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.  
24

25 **3) Mayor's Call for Board and Commission Nominations**

26  
27 Mr. Bohannon stated that the finance report should have been an agenda item. He continued that  
28 nothing has changed. The City added the \$500 that they typically give to the HRC each year.  
29 The account balance is \$4,597.43.  
30  
31

32 Mr. Bohannon stated that at the last meeting there was some consideration and thought process  
33 about the Mayor's call for board and commission nominations. He continued that he met with  
34 staff from the Community Development Department, which is the department that does the  
35 majority of the City's meetings. This was something the Mayor wanted to promote and get  
36 moving on, to have more people serving on City committees. He (Mr. Bohannon) wrote to him  
37 (the Mayor) following the last meeting, making sure the HRC is a resource to all City  
38 committees, not just the ones with openings, which immediately places a barrier on the process.  
39 What he thinks, in talking with the Community Development Department and making a proposal  
40 to the Mayor, is that the HRC should look at barriers to becoming a City committee member.  
41 There are some challenges. If someone wants to serve on a committee such as the Bicycle  
42 Pedestrian Path Advisory Committee, the Human Rights Committee, Ashuelot River Park  
43 Advisory Committee, or another, they have to submit a resume about why they want to be a part  
44 of it. That can be a challenge for someone, or a matter of timing – if someone has been retired  
45 for 30 years, it might be a barrier for them to have to suddenly create a resume to serve on a  
46 committee that meets once a month. The HRC might want to discuss that. Also, the other piece  
47 is utilizing the HRC networks to recruit for and promote the various committees and discuss  
48 ideas for better recruitment methods. For example, could they use a hybrid model? Sometimes  
49 college students want to join committees but their class schedules may not align with the  
50 committee meetings, and those students may be better able to participate if the committees  
51 continue Zoom meetings or have a hybrid model. Those are some things for this committee to  
52 look at – the barriers of becoming a committee member, and bringing that thought process  
53 forward. Would someone be better able to commit to being a committee member if they did not  
54 have to be physically present? Those are some thoughts he had and he welcomes discussion  
55 about this.

56  
57 Councilor Manwaring stated that the City's website has job opportunities listed. It is too bad  
58 they do not have volunteer opportunities listed. She continued that committees could post – or  
59 the Community Development Department could, since they have the most committees – and give  
60 a brief blurb about which committees need members and what a person might bring to those  
61 committees. She does not need to see the resumes; they do not mean anything to her. She wants  
62 to know why a person wants to be on a committee and what they think they can bring to the  
63 committee. Mr. Bohannon asked if she would prefer a cover letter stating why someone wants to  
64 join a committee, instead of a resume. Councilor Manwaring replied yes, and what they might  
65 bring to the committee they seek to join. Mr. Bohannon stated that there is a place on the City  
66 website for people who are interested in joining a committee; people can give their name, and  
67 that starts the process. He continued that City staff are now starting to put things out via  
68 MailChimp to get more people interested in the committee meetings. With that, a bullet should  
69 say "If you are interested in joining this committee, please click here," so it gives people an  
70 invitation and opportunity. Councilor Manwaring asked how to get to a "volunteer  
71 opportunities" section on the website. Mr. Bohannon replied that he will look for it.

72  
73 Chair Hay stated that what Councilor Manwaring was talking about is usually what is included in  
74 a cover letter – why a person is applying for a job and why they think they are qualified. He

75 continued that it would be more of a narrative than a resume. Mr. Bohannon replied that he  
76 agrees; something like that would work. He continued that they could create it from a template  
77 on the website. Under “My City Government” on the City’s website there is a link that directs a  
78 person to click if they are interested in joining a City board or committee. He does not think a  
79 person should need to submit a resume to be a part of a committee. He asked if anyone believes  
80 a resume should be needed. Others replied no.

81  
82 Ms. Budakoti stated that she would not have known this committee existed if she had not met  
83 people already involved with it. She continued that at the end of the day, parents are tired, and  
84 have so much to handle already – they are not likely to actually go to the City website and click  
85 on all those tabs. It would help to simplify it. The City’s website has the boards and  
86 commissions neatly listed. Maybe at the top there could be a generic message like, “Are you  
87 interested in joining?” They could also put that on the City’s Facebook page so people can see it  
88 and gravitate toward the commission or board they are most interested in. Retired teachers and  
89 educators could bring experience but do not know that these committees exist. It would help to  
90 have a simplified version, some simple thing to fill in. That is her perspective as someone just  
91 starting on this committee. Mr. Bohannon replied that that is great information. He continued  
92 that yes, those are the things they need to change. Staff can talk about this internally, but if it is  
93 expressed by a committee member, it carries more weight. It is important to hear perspectives  
94 like this.

95  
96 Chair Hay stated that they all probably have their own versions of how they heard about this  
97 committee, like word of mouth. He continued that he was at a breakfast and a committee  
98 member told him about the HRC and said she was stepping down and asked if he wanted to take  
99 her place.

100  
101 Mr. Bohannon stated that he will pass those recommendations on. He asked if anyone had  
102 questions.

103  
104 **4) Monadvocacy Continued Discussion**

105  
106 Mr. Bohannon stated he spoke with Pastor Nic last week. He continued that she is very  
107 interested in providing the HRC with an outline of what she could provide via the online  
108 platform. He agreed with her on that. She is not interested in driving to Keene anytime in the  
109 next six months; she is waiting for [COVID-19] to settle down travel-wise to minimize the risk  
110 to her health. She will provide an outline for the HRC to discuss at the next meeting. She has  
111 done a few online sessions with others and says it has gone well - although it is not the same as  
112 doing it in-person, it is still impactful. She recommends not having more than 15 or 20 people  
113 on a program, otherwise the screen of faces gets too small. Participants need to be able to see  
114 each other well enough. She will put together a proposal for whatever she needs, in terms of  
115 finances, webhosting, and so on and so forth. He does not know what that will look like but they  
116 can talk about it once they receive it.

117

118       **5) Martin Luther King, Jr. (MLK) Breakfast**

119  
120 Mr. Bohannon stated that the committee has to make a decision on how to do this in January. He  
121 continued that he thinks it will still be too soon to have the event in person, since they would not  
122 be able to social distance unless the room was very large, but they could have an online  
123 community forum via Zoom or Facebook live. It may not be as engaging or meaningful as  
124 hearing someone live, but having it online means potentially having greater access to a speaker  
125 from anywhere in the country.

126  
127 Ms. Salwen stated that she and Dr. Filiault met and came up with ideas, but Dr. Filiault was the  
128 note-taker and she does not have those notes today. She continued that she was counting on him  
129 to present those notes today. They were definitely not thinking of doing anything in person. Dr.  
130 Morris was supposed to be part of that working group, too, but she was unable to meet when she  
131 and Dr. Filiault did. She has not received Dr. Filiault's notes yet. Mr. Bohannon asked if he  
132 should follow up with Dr. Filiault. Ms. Salwen replied yes and asked to be copied on that email.

133  
134 Chair Hay stated that he agrees that it is not safe to have in-person events at this point. He  
135 continued that Mr. Bohannon is right, the sky is the limit, regarding who they could get to be a  
136 speaker for an online event, since the speaker would not have to travel or have lodging.

137  
138       **6) June Events**

139  
140 Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that she and other working group members met and discussed  
141 things they wanted the committee to weigh in on. She continued that first is the timing. The  
142 college had wanted to participate in a Pride event. The working group feels it is not necessary to  
143 have Pride in June. It can be in May, so the college can participate. Also, a lot of surrounding  
144 communities do June events, so if Keene's is in May, it allows for participation from people  
145 outside of the immediate community. Their idea was a May 1 launch date. Regarding activities,  
146 they thought of asking local businesses if they would be willing to hang a rainbow flag in their  
147 windows during the month of May. Dr. Filiault talked with the Director of the Rochester Pride  
148 event, Matt Wyatt, and he felt that this encouraged businesses to create their own Pride events,  
149 so it becomes a community-based, energized event. Another idea is a block party. Parades are  
150 great but not very feasible. The idea would be to have an online-only contingency if COVID-19  
151 is still a problem. They considered asking the Mayor to read a resolution and asking the Library  
152 to do a curated display of LBGTQA books during the month of May.

153  
154 Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos continued that the working group realized, in their discussions, that  
155 Juneteenth and Pride are very different and both deserve the full focus of a working group, so  
156 they feel that it should be two different working groups. Juneteenth should be planned  
157 independently. She and Dr. Filiault are not very familiar with Juneteenth practices. They need  
158 to be educated, and research ways of celebrating Juneteenth. She asked for committee members'  
159 thoughts on splitting into two working groups, and the idea of moving Pride to May.

160

161 Chair Hay stated that he likes the idea of bifurcating it, because Juneteenth is in June but Pride  
162 could move. He continued that it is a good idea to have it while the college is still in session.  
163 Ms. Salwen agreed. She continued that if the June Events working group says two working  
164 groups is better, she agrees with that, too.

165  
166 Mr. Bohannon asked about the block party location. Were they thinking of Railroad Square?  
167 Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that they thought of the Recreation Center or a City park. Mr.  
168 Bohannon replied that the park in front of the Recreation Center is great for that, or downtown at  
169 Railroad Square. He continued that it depends on what they want for visibility. Railroad Square  
170 is closer for KSC students to walk to. Maybe a downtown business would be willing to block off  
171 their parking lot or something to that effect, as they have done in the past.

172  
173 Ms. Salwen stated that visibility is an important element and it makes sense to her to do it  
174 downtown. Councilor Manwaring stated that she agrees. She asked if they could talk to some of  
175 the folks on the Ad Hoc Racial Justice and Community Safety Committee (AHRJSC), and see if  
176 they have thoughts. Mr. Bohannon asked Chair Hay if it would be appropriate for the committee  
177 to ask Dr. Morris for a report on the progress or outputs from the AHRJSC, since she is Co-Chair  
178 of that. Chair Hay asked if he should talk to her about that. Mr. Bohannon replied that he will  
179 let her know it will be on the next HRC agenda.

180  
181 Mr. Bohannon stated that it was great for the HRC to form working groups to get things moving,  
182 but technically they are supposed to be open to the public. He continued that he will find out  
183 more information about that and they will hear from him at the next meeting.

184  
185 **7) New Business**

186  
187 Chair Hay stated that at one of the Black Lives Matter gatherings at Central Square, a number of  
188 people spoke. He continued that it seemed like every time a young person of color spoke,  
189 alongside of the point they were making, they would also refer to the bad experiences they had in  
190 school, right from the get-go. Even in elementary school - they talked about the racial  
191 harassment they experienced from other students. It seems like schools are not handling this  
192 well. It is a form of bullying. There ought to be a curriculum. Even if it makes teachers  
193 uncomfortable, they have to deal with this. Since racism is based almost entirely on bad  
194 information, it seems like a great teaching opportunity, to teach students, "No, [that] isn't true,  
195 and [that] isn't true, and [that] isn't true." Listening to these young people of color, he wondered  
196 if schools are aware that this is an across-the-board issue.

197  
198 Mr. Bohannon stated that he is not a teacher but has many friends who are teachers, and yes, this  
199 is a problem. Some teachers know how to deal with it better than others. Perhaps there is some  
200 educational (initiative) to do. He would not want to speak for all the teachers out there. Chair  
201 Hay replied yes, maybe sometimes teachers just do not know what to do, and a curriculum would  
202 help.

203

204 Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if there are teachers on the HRC. Ms. Budakoti replied that she  
205 teaches middle school. Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that there are curriculums out there. She  
206 asked if the HRC should do research on the best curriculums and best practices elsewhere. Ms.  
207 Budakoti stated that she just joined the middle school last year. She continued that what the  
208 middle school has is: they put together yearly themes that staff roll out. They do professional  
209 development around the theme and then teachers break the theme down to the level of their  
210 students and bring it into the classrooms. Through different activity groups and in focus study  
211 groups, they run the theme, every day. Last year's theme was "sense of belonging." Teachers  
212 approached that from many different perspectives. This year they are using the theme "Ubuntu."  
213 It is African and means "I am because we are." It is being applied in advisory/homeroom, and  
214 community-related projects, like the after school social justice club. The students come up with  
215 magnificent ideas for how to roll projects out in communities. The middle school does not have  
216 a set aside curriculum for social justice and human rights but teachers are bringing in those  
217 components, in different ways, through how they do things.

218  
219 Chair Hay stated that he was talking with a young woman part of a group called STAND. They  
220 were talking about the history. He knows people with doctorates who never heard of the incident  
221 in Tulsa, which is a huge event. It is not enough to have Black History Month, which is actually  
222 the shortest month of the year. Does that mean the rest of the year is white history? Let's  
223 incorporate it into the rest of the year and have it be ongoing, and talk about reconstruction, and  
224 the migration from the south to the cities, and have Black history be woven into history. He did  
225 not hear about a lot of this stuff [in school]. It was more like "Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther  
226 King, Jr., *next*." He heard these students talking about it and began thinking about what the HRC  
227 can do. Ms. Salwen replied that she does not know right now what the HRC can do but she is  
228 glad Chair Hay brought this up.

229  
230 Mr. Bohannon asked if what Ms. Budakoti is talking about happens in the high school, too, and  
231 across the elementary schools, or if it is school-focused. Ms. Budakoti replied that she thinks it  
232 is school-focused. She continued that her daughter goes to the high school and her son is in  
233 elementary school. She hears that they do things from time-to-time. She does not think it is  
234 SAU-wide and does not know what the themes are.

235  
236 Mr. Bohannon stated that this is a good discussion and they can add it to a future agenda. He  
237 continued that maybe it becomes part of the conversation that they try to roll out at the breakfast  
238 and push the information out to the schools. They could have endless number of people on a  
239 Facebook live event and this might be a great conversation piece. Chair Hay replied that the  
240 young woman from STAND is a Keene native and could maybe come to the next HRC meeting.  
241 Mr. Bohannon replied yes, he should tell her about this committee. He continued that this is  
242 partly what the Mayor wants – for the HRC to use their networks and try and bring people in,  
243 whether to this committee or others. Chair Hay asked if there is room on this committee. Mr.  
244 Bohannon replied that there is an opening for an alternate. He continued that some members'  
245 terms will be expiring in December, so they will need new members. It would be great to have

HRC Meeting Minutes  
September 14, 2020

246 new people come to meetings for a while instead of jumping in cold on issues. Chair Hay stated  
247 that he will invite her to next month's meeting.

248  
249 Mr. Bohannon asked if anyone from the public had comments. Hearing none, he asked Chair  
250 Hay to continue.

251

252 **8) Adjourn – Next Meeting is Monday, October 5, 2020**

253  
254 Chair Hay stated that the next meeting is October 5, 2020. Brief discussion ensued about Zoom.  
255 There being no further business, Chair Hay adjourned the meeting at 5:59 PM.

256

257 Respectfully submitted by,  
258 Britta Reida, Minute Taker

259

260 Edits respectfully submitted by,  
261 Andy Bohannon, Staff

262

