

City of Keene
New Hampshire

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Monday, November 2, 2020

5:00 PM

Remote Meeting via Zoom

Members Present:

William Hay, Chair
Dr. Mohammed Saleh, Vice Chair
Sofia Cunha-Vasconcelos
Dr. Shaun Filiault
Jennifer Carroll (until 6:00 PM)
Councilor Jan Manwaring
Nancy Salwen
Dr. Dottie Morris
Ritu Budakoti

Staff Present:

Andrew Bohannon, Parks, Recreation and
Facilities Director

Members Not Present:

Chair Hay read a prepared statement explaining how the Emergency Order #12, pursuant to Executive Order #2020-04 issued by the Governor of New Hampshire, waives certain provisions of RSA 91-A (which regulates the operation of public body meetings) during the declared COVID-19 State of Emergency.

1) Welcome and Call to Order

Chair Hay called the meeting to order at 5:13 PM. Roll call was conducted.

2) Approval of October 5, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Dr. Filiault made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of October 5, 2020. Dr. Morris seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

3) Finance Report

Mr. Bohannon stated that the finance report is unchanged from the last time.

Dr. Morris made a motion to accept the finance report as informational. Ms. Carroll seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

4) KSC Community Email

Mr. Bohannon stated that he received this email from Dr. Morris. He asked her to bring the committee up to speed.

Dr. Morris stated that three former Keene State College (KSC) students approached KSC President Melinda Treadwell about concerns they had, about life in Keene as a person of color. She continued that these former students were asking if they could do something. For the past two months or so she has been meeting and talking with them. One thing that came up is these former students want to do a public forum for the City of Keene to talk about what they learned while they were in Keene and how they are using that, and their concerns about how the city is engaging people from diverse backgrounds. Two were athletes. They approached their former coaches about wanting to do something. They will do a series of talks and lectures. One is a teacher who works with middle school kids and they are really excited to do something. This idea came up about two weeks ago and she told them she would be willing to reach out to the HRC to see if the HRC would be interested in co-sponsoring something, or having these former students be part of the MLK event, or something like that. She did not promise them anything; she just told them she would bring it before the HRC and see what everyone thinks about how they could somehow be integrated into events that the City is planning.

Ms. Carroll stated that that sounds great. Chair Hay agreed. He asked about the middle school teacher. Dr. Morris replied that he coaches middle school basketball, she thinks. The two athletes are really active in their communities and want to give back to Keene and KSC.

Chair Hay asked if they are still in the area. Dr. Morris replied that she thinks they are both in the Boston area; it would have to be virtual. Ms. Carroll asked if they could come to a future HRC meeting to speak. It would be great to get them involved but she is not sure how. Dr. Morris replied that she will let them know and see if they are available for the December meeting if that is okay with everyone. HRC members replied yes. Mr. Bohannon stated that if Dr. Morris wants, he would be happy to join one of her meetings with these former students. Dr. Morris replied that is great and she will send him the information about the next meeting with them.

Dr. Filiault stated that there might be good synergy here; they might be good speakers for the MLK breakfast. He continued that he and Ms. Salwen were talking about who would be good speakers for the MLK panel. It would be excellent to have these former students to speak about the issues they would naturally be talking about for the MLK panel. If the former students are interested, they could talk about what they have learned and staff the MLK panel if the committee thinks that is a good idea. He asked if Ms. Salwen has thoughts.

Ms. Salwen stated that she and Dr. Filiault had talked about how they do not feel equipped to run the MLK event just the two of them and they are just in the role of brainstormers. She continued that she never heard back from the author of Raising White Kids, Jennifer Harvey. When she

heard Dr. Morris mention these people she had thoughts along those lines as well, regarding having them speak at the MLK event. Maybe they can brainstorm more about this during the agenda item about the event. Dr. Filiault stated that he was trying to gauge if the HRC thinks these former students would be appropriate for that venue, and it sounds like the general sense is “maybe.”

Dr. Morris stated that if Mr. Bohannon could come to her next Zoom meeting with these three former students he could get a sense of them. Ms. Salwen asked what that meeting is. Dr. Morris replied that she meets with them on Monday nights because they are discussing five different projects these three people want to do, and this was one of them they wanted to do for the City of Keene. Ms. Salwen asked if she and Dr. Filiault could come. Dr. Morris replied yes, she will send them the meeting information.

5) Monadvocacy Continued Discussion

Mr. Bohannon stated that he needs direction on how to follow up about Monadvocacy. He continued that that was not clear at the last meeting. There was some discussion about maybe the cost was too much. They would have to pay someone to facilitate this and train folks if that is the direction they want to go. He reached out to Pastor Nic as a follow up but they were unable to connect. He needs direction. Does the committee want to table this until the spring and go from there?

Dr. Filiault spoke in favor of tabling it. He stated that Mr. Bohannon not knowing what to do with this is probably a reflection of the fact that the committee does not know what to do with it, either. It is an expensive endeavor, a one-time event until they have more people trained here to do it, and in reality they probably cannot do this during the COVID-19 situation. In light of the logistical difficulties, financial difficulties, and seeming lack of will of the committee, he proposes tabling it until June. Councilor Manwaring replied that she agrees and feels the same way.

Dr. Filiault made a motion to table the Monadvocacy topic until the June 2021 meeting of the Human Rights Committee. Councilor Manwaring seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

6) MLK Breakfast

Ms. Salwen stated that regarding potential speakers for the event, Jennifer Harvey did not reply. She continued that she and Dr. Filiault had not spoken in a while and she found herself thinking about how to simplify this and what could be useful. An online Black Lives Matter event she attended played a powerful, 4-minute video by Robin D’Angelo, who addresses white fragility. There is so much out there on YouTube that people have already put together. They could compile a little collection of stuff and have a facilitated break out, as long as they have good facilitators, such as the people Dr. Morris just mentioned. A panel could be interesting and lead

to facilitated break outs. She does not know if they would be able to get one of those authors, who are currently very busy.

Ms. Carroll stated that there are lots of great clips out there. She asked, what about local testimonials as introductions? The young people Dr. Morris was mentioning could be a part of that. Ms. Salwen agreed and added that also, maybe the folks from Stand NH, but she is not sure because they did not get much of a chance to speak at the last HRC meeting and the HRC does not know them well. None of this seems like it would be highly scripted. It sounds like the HRC would be taking chances and seeing what it turns into. People will speak their minds. It could be dynamic. But what makes her feel uneasy is: who is the curator? Who puts it together and facilitates all of this? She talked about keeping it simple, but to her it also feels so complicated.

Mr. Bohannon replied that it would most likely come through the Parks, Recreation, and Facilities Department. He would be using a webinar format, which is much easier to facilitate. With that platform the assigned panelists are the only folks able to speak and you can call on people. Last week, the National Recreation and Park Association conference was devoted to subjects like race, equity, resilience, social justice and there were some powerful, amazing speakers. A couple people came to mind and he does not have their names right off the top of his head. One is a professor at UNH who speaks to the subject matter on a frequent basis and the other one is from Franklin Pierce University. He may be on the Ad Hoc Racial Justice and Community Safety (AHRJCS) Committee. He wanted to throw those two suggestions out there. Dr. Filiault's idea of having the former KSC students as panelists is great; they could reflect on their time in Keene and give a really interesting perspective. He asked if Dr. Morris knows the names.

Dr. Morris stated that the Franklin Pierce person is Pierre Morton. She asked, have they ever had James Waller from the college speak? He just wrote a paper titled "The Escalating Risks of Mass Violence in the US." She has not read it yet because she just got it today. It looks very interesting. He could talk about a wide range of topics. Or what about Peter McBride, the new person at the Cohen Center? He is from Northern Ireland so he probably has a lot to say about these topics.

Mr. Bohannon stated that if there is an opportunity to tie in former students from KSC it would be really great to have someone like James Waller facilitate a discussion. He would be intimately related to the students and the community of Keene, so he could help facilitate that conversation a little more and understand people's perspective in a way that someone from out of town might not. He works with these students day in and day out.

Dr. Morris stated that she thinks Mr. Morton might live in Keene. She knows him from the AHRJCS Committee. Chair Hay stated that it could be a great panel discussion. Mr. Waller does great work.

Ms. Salwen stated that in terms of the overall format, if you zoom out there are three potential elements: prerecorded, short videos from nationally known authors and speakers; panel discussions; and/or breakout sessions. She continued that those feel like the three elements they could do over Zoom. She does not know if they want to include all three. There would have to be a facilitator to put all this together, and it sounds like Mr. Bohannon is saying he could do that. They need a person who introduces everyone. Sometimes there is one person doing the technical end and another person doing the verbal hosting, like the role that Dr. Morris often does (and might be willing to do for this), and a bunch of people to gather all the elements, gather the videos, ask the panelists, set the timing, see who is coming, design it, and so on and so forth. Does that make sense?

Dr. Morris replied yes, it makes sense. Mr. Bohannon replied yes, and he thinks it would be a matter of getting the speaker that they choose. He continued that if they want to stay local he or someone else could reach out to Mr. Morton or Mr. Waller. Ms. Salwen stated that she is misunderstanding. She thought they were taking the idea of one main speaker off the table, and having prerecorded content and a panel instead. Having a main speaker is a fourth possible element.

Ms. Carroll asked if Ms. Salwen and Dr. Filiault could figure that out and come up with ideas. Ms. Salwen replied no. Dr. Filiault replied no, they are out of time. He continued that they need to pick a stream and run with it, and the simple approach is to get a speaker, ask them to speak, and run with that. It did not work to get an author. The simplest option possible would be to get a speaker, and maybe the students could speak afterwards as a panel. They need a real decision and plan tonight; this cannot go back to the subcommittee.

Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that they do not have a speaker identified. She continued that the simplest path might be a prerecorded presentation that serves as a catalyst for a panelist discussion. Because it sounds like they have panelists readily available. That might be easier than getting a speaker. Dr. Morris replied that it probably would not be too hard to get either Mr. Morton or Mr. Waller to be on the panel.

Ms. Salwen asked who facilitates the panel and asks the questions. Dr. Morris replied Ms. Salwen and Dr. Filiault. Dr. Filiault replied anyone from the HRC could. Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that she thinks it should be a maximum of two people. Ms. Salwen replied that she is unable to be in this role.

Councilor Manwaring stated that she attended the public forum (via Zoom) that the AHRJCS Committee did the other night and it was really poorly attended. She suggested the HRC have someone from that group either moderate or be on the panel or be a speaker at the MLK event. She continued that the HRC needs to support them. It was very clear that they are just kind of out there all by themselves and the HRC owes it to support them any way they can. That committee includes Rick Van Wickler, Dr. Morris, and Mr. Morton. Mr. Morton could speak if the committee wants. But she really wants to see the HRC supporting them in a bigger way.

Mr. Bohannon stated that Dr. Filiault's point is very valid. He continued that he can contact Mr. Morton and Mr. Waller this week and solidify one of them. He will be on the Zoom call with Dr. Morris's former students and hopefully secure them by Wednesday of next week. If that is the direction the HRC wants to go, it is the simplest and most direct and they can work on the topic with them through this process. Chair Hay replied yes, and they can work on it with each other, too, if/when they sign on. They probably have ideas. He continued that they should remember that they are celebrating Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr's birthday. People think of him as frozen in time from his 1963 "I have a dream" speech, but he went way beyond that, addressing not just racism, but also militarism and capitalism/rampant greed. He irritated a lot of people when he came out against the war. They are not just addressing one issue here. Those speakers would probably have ideas. Mr. Waller is involved in Rwanda, and wrote a book about genocide. It would be interesting to hear what he and Mr. Morton and the former students have to say.

Dr. Filiault made a motion to delegate to Mr. Bohannon the authority to do all things necessary to carry out the 2021 MLK breakfast. Dr. Morris seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that they can help Mr. Bohannon with things if he lets them know what he needs. Dr. Morris stated that she can get in touch with Mr. Morton or Mr. Waller for him if he needs help with that.

7) **Pride Month**

Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that they talked about having Pride in May instead of June to involve the students, and they talked about a couple events. She continued that the biggest issue is the need to divide the June subcommittees into two: one for Pride and one for Juneteenth. She continued that the HRC had discussed this and seemed to be on board with it but they never actually passed a motion about this. They also needed clarity about whether the subcommittees have to be public.

Mr. Bohannon replied that they should be notifying the public when they have a subcommittee meeting (with the date, time, and agenda) if there is more than two people meeting. He continued that if it is just two people going back and forth it is different. Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if they would do that notification through him. Mr. Bohannon replied yes.

Dr. Filiault stated that he spoke with Mayor George Hansel, who put him in contact with the Monadnock International Film Festival (MONIFF) and Machina Arts. He continued that MONIFF wants to be involved with Pride in May and wants to show relevant films and Machina is interested in doing a welcoming reception at the beginning of the month. He spoke with them about what that would look like, given the COVID situation - maybe an outdoor event. MONIFF has the ability to get films the HRC would not be able to get independently, so they want to

know what the HRC is looking for. And Machina wants to know about numbers of people. It would be a cost to rent that space but Machina is willing to work with them on that and there could be a per person charge. That is a 21+ venue because of the alcohol. So this is a way to get community partners involved. Maybe they could get other community places and other businesses involved too. The more they can get others involved the more it is a community event.

8) Juneteenth

Dr. Morris stated that maybe for Juneteenth they could team up with the Black Heritage Trail and plug into something they already have in place and make it Monadnock relevant. It would be fun. She continued that before COVID they used to have Tea Talks on Sundays, mainly at the Portsmouth Library. They tried to do a couple outside. One on campus was well attended. They are trying to do more on this side of the state. The reading of the Frederick Douglas speech is something they do throughout the state.

Dr. Filiault stated that they need to get these subcommittees separated. He continued that he does not have the cultural competency or the time to do both of these events.

Dr. Morris suggested C&S as a possible financial sponsor for Pride events. Ms. Salwen stated that maybe the HRC could use some of their budget, if they are not spending much for the MLK event.

Mr. Bohannon stated that he will look into the Black Heritage Trail idea. He continued that if there is a speaker they might be able to use the front of the Recreation Center. That is a great place to have an audience in lawn chairs or something like that. He will look into that and report back at the next meeting.

Councilor Manwaring stated that she would like to join the Juneteenth subcommittee. She will be registering voters tomorrow with Marti Fiske from the Library so she will see what the Library is thinking about.

Chair Hay asked who is on the Pride subcommittee. Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos replied her and Dr. Filiault. Dr. Morris stated that Hunter Kirschner from the college wants to join that group. Mr. Bohannon asked her to email him about that, and he can send the information to Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos and Dr. Filiault.

Dr. Filiault made a motion to separate the Pride and Juneteenth subcommittees and nominate Dr. Morris to be the chair of the Juneteenth subcommittee. Mr. Bohannon stated that they are two separate agenda items. Chair Hay agreed that the two subcommittees are separated.

Ms. Carroll asked how they move forward on Holi Fest. She continued that that was a separate thing. Mr. Bohannon replied that he always saw that as a separate event that the HRC was supporting but not planning/hosting.

Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if Dr. Filiault has spoken with the Library about Pride. Dr. Filiault replied no, that would be a next step. Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if it would be okay if Councilor Manwaring asked Marti Fiske about both. Councilor Manwaring replied yes.

Dr. Filiault asked if they want to spend money on the Machina Arts reception/Pride event and if so, how much. It would cost less outdoors. He gave more details.

Ms. Carroll left at 6:00 PM.

Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that she favors an outdoor event. She is okay with using HRC funds but does not want to charge the public. Ms. Salwen and Chair Hay agreed. Dr. Morris asked if they have to pay for part of a film if the HRC suggests one. Dr. Filiault replied that he has not gotten to that stage of the conversation with MONIFF. He could ask them that. Hopefully they could get a freely available film.

Ms. Budakoti stated that something to keep in mind is contracts, and how everything plays out regarding COVID-19. For example, does the money get forfeited if they contract for an indoor event and then have to have it outdoors because of COVID? Dr. Filiault replied that they could put an escape clause in a contract, for in case they are still under a state of emergency in May. He continued that if they are still under a state of emergency then, one clever suggestion Machina had was: they could still run whatever event was planned, like the drag performer, there at Machina and livestream it out and Machina can sell goodies to people who want to watch it at home. They have to think about it as it goes forward. Keene might still be in this situation in May. Thankfully theaters have gotten really good at streaming.

Ms. Salwen stated that it does not seem wise to be thinking about planning indoor events right now. Dr. Filiault asked if he should talk with Machina about an outdoor event. HRC members replied yes.

Dr. Morris stated that she has a film suggestion for Pride – Rafiki, created by a Kenyan director, whose agent lives in Dublin, NH. Dr. Filiault asked if it is something, they could get the rights to screen. Dr. Morris replied probably. Chair Hay stated that he heard about this film on NPR; it sounds great.

Mr. Bohannon stated that streaming does really well right now. He continued that the Youth Services Department just did a streaming event and had over 160 participants, which was really good for a first time event. They got people from across the state, which can happen when these events are virtual. Others replied that by May people will probably be glad to get outside for an event.

9) Stand NH

Mr. Bohannon stated that he did not hear from A'ja or Sam prior to this meeting. Chair Hay stated that they will get in touch with Stand NH.

10) New Business

Mr. Bohannon stated that Dr. Morris is Co-Chair of the AHRJCS Committee, and in the future they will be looking for an update from the HRC. He encourages HRC members to be engaged in the upcoming public forums.

Dr. Morris stated that the next forum is about education. She continued that the Superintendent of SAU 29 will be in attendance at the AHRJCS Committee meeting on Thursday at 5:00 PM. Then there will be a forum for public comments. She continued that Mr. Bohannon sent the email out with the dates of the public forums.

11) Adjourn – Next Meeting is Monday, December 7, 2020

There being no further business, Chair Hay adjourned the meeting at 6:11 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

Edits respectfully submitted by,
Andy Bohannon, Parks, Recreation and Facilities Director