

City of Keene
New Hampshire

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Monday, January 4, 2021

5:00 PM

Remote Meeting via Zoom

Members Present:

William Hay, Chair
Ritu Budakoti
Dr. Dottie Morris
Sofia Cunha-Vasconcelos
Councilor Janis Manwaring
Nancy Salwen

Staff Present:

Andrew Bohannon, PRF Director
Marti Fiske, Library Director

Members Not Present:

Dr. Mohammed Saleh
Dr. Shaun Filiault
Jennifer Carroll

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 5:08 PM. Roll call was conducted. Mr. Bohannon welcomed Marti Fiske, who within the next month will be an official new member of the committee as liaison for the library. He also welcomed members of the public: Eli Rivera, Sarah Harpster and Sarah Benning.

2) Approval of December 7, 2020 Minutes

Chair Hay requested clarification from page 3 regarding the statement of Keene State alumni “wanting to work with Keene students.” Does this refer to Keene State students, or students in Keene public schools? Mr. Bohannon and Dr. Dottie Morris confirmed this is meant to refer to students in Keene public schools.

Councilor Manwaring made a motion to approve the minutes of December 7, 2020, with the aforementioned correction. Ritu Budakoti seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

3) Election of 2021 Chair

Mr. Bohannon stated every year it's a responsibility of the committee to appoint a new Chair and Vice Chair. Currently, Bill Hay is the Chair and Dr. Mohammed Saleh is Vice Chair. A motion was made by Dr. Dottie Morris for Bill Hay and Dr. Mohammed Saleh to remain Chair and Vice Chair, respectively, for 2021. Councilor Janis Manwaring seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

4) Finance Report

Mr. Bohannon reported no changes to the finance report, accepted as informational and no motion needed.

5) Keene State College Alumni Outreach

Mr. Bohannon wondered if any follow-up was needed on this and if Keene State College alumni outreach will be impacted by the students not returning until February? Dr. Dottie Morris suggested they plan something for the end of February so students on campus can take part. She will reach out the 3 individuals involved to see if there's a date that works for them. Mr. Bohannon requested Thursday nights be avoided due to other meetings using the city zoom account, but is available to facilitate any time otherwise. Dr. Dottie Morris stated she will include Mr. Bohannon on email correspondence moving forward.

6) Martin Luther King, Jr. Breakfast

Mr. Bohannon stated that he previously reached out to Dr. James Waller, who has agreed to be a speaker for this event and is available to participate any time during the day. Mr. Bohannon apologized he was not able to follow up with Dr. Waller prior to this meeting to go over specifics. He will have more information for everyone by week end or early next week, allowing time to publicize the event.

Dr. Dottie Morris asked how they can maximize advertising for this event. Mr. Bohannon replied that the event will be on the City of Keene website, in the Keene Sentinel and on the Facebook pages for the City of Keene, Parks and Recreation Department, and Library. Chair Hay suggested everyone spread the word individually through word of mouth and by sharing Facebook links or referring people to the platforms where the information is being advertised. Mr. Bohannon stated those three Facebook pages alone will reach several thousand people. He will follow-up with Dr. Dottie Morris to confirm some last minute details. Nancy Salwen clarified that a Facebook event will be made. The answer is yes.

Chair Hay went on to ask what the focus of the event might be. Dr. Bohannon stated it will likely be tying together the Black Lives Matter movement with Dr. Waller's experiences locally in

Keene and globally, as well as his vision with regards to Martin Luther King in history. He will send a blurb out to the committee once these details have been finalized.

Chair Hay mentioned a book by Vincent Harding titled “Martin Luther King: The Inconvenient Hero,” which he personally recommends as a way to refresh perspective of Martin Luther King.

7) Pride Month

Sofia Cunha-Vasconcelos stated there are no updates as of now. We have time because the event will take place in June. Brief discussion ensued about potentially shifting the date to May, this will be a future conversation.

8) Juneteenth

Councilor Jan Manwaring started off by stating she would welcome working with public member Sarah Benning, who stated via chat that she’d be willing to help. Councilor Manwaring’s vision is something similar to the music festival, held downtown with food and music. Black Heritage Trail had someone last year who did a mini seminar on soul food with a twist. Councilor Manwaring thought it could be a good idea to bring this individual in for Juneteenth and also see if restaurant owners would participate and cook soul food with a twist. Other ideas she has are having historical figures present so people have a chance to obtain some history and understanding, and possibly holding a ceremony of sorts where people “take off their chains,” (i.e. paper chains). Councilor Manwaring stated now that the holidays are over she wants to get going with this project and find 5 or 6 people to help out.

Mr. Bohannon stated he will reserve Railroad Square and Central Square for this event. He suggested that Councilor Manwaring reach out to Beth Wood in the Keene Economic Development/Parking Office, who would be connected with downtown businesses and restaurants. There’s also a restaurant group that’s been meeting with the Mayor which could be another opportunity.

Dr. Dottie Morris suggested checking in with Gail Zachariah and stated that the Keene State alumni have several ideas, she will put them in touch with Councilor Manwaring. She will also reach out to JerriAnne Boggis, who has presented in the past on historical women of African descent living in NH. A brief discussion ensued about her presentation on Sojourner Truth last year, which Ritu Budakoti and Dr. Dottie Morris attended and found to be very powerful. Dr. Dottie Morris will see if she can obtain a recording of this particular presentation for the committee.

Ritu Budakoti stated the Historical Society of Cheshire County could be another resource. Nancy Salwen stated she has been to the Portsmouth Black Heritage Trail and notes that their office might be a good resource as well. Other suggestions included the book *Our Nig* by Harriet E. Wilson from Milford, NH and the film *Shadows Fall North*. Mr. Bohannon noted that the NH

Food Alliance is doing an online showing of *Shadows Fall North* later in the month. This information was obtained from Sarah Harpster who put the link for this showing in the chat.

9) New or Other Business

- a. 2021 Calendar with upcoming dates for committee meetings (1st Monday of the month at 5pm)
- b. Mr. Bohannon asked for any public comments, no discussion ensued.

10) Adjourn – Next Meeting is February 1, 2021

There being no further business, Chair Hay adjourned the meeting at 5:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Nicole Cullinane, Minute Taker

Respectfully reviewed by,
Andy Bohannon, Staff