

City of Keene
New Hampshire

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Monday, August 3, 2020

5:00 PM

Remote Meeting via Zoom

Members Present:

Dr. Mohammed Saleh, Vice Chair
Jennifer Carroll
Dr. Shaun Filaault
Janis Manwaring, Councilor
Sofia Cunha-Vasconcelos
Ritu Budakoti
Nancy Salwen
Dr. Dottis Morris

Staff Present:

Demitria Kirby, Youth Services Manager

Members Not Present:

William Hay, Chair

1) Welcome & Call to Order

Demitria Kirby, filling in for Andy Bohannon, conducted roll call. Vice Chair Saleh called the meeting to order at 5:05 PM. He 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. Dr. Morris joined at 5:10 PM.

2) Approval of July 6, 2020 Minutes

Vice Chair Saleh asked if everyone reviewed the minutes. Councilor Manwaring made a motion to approve the minutes of July 6, 2020. Dr. Morris seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous roll call vote.

3) Mayor's Call for Board & Commission Nominations

Vice Chair Salah stated that the meeting minutes detail Mayor Hansel's recommendation that the HRC look at the different committees and see if the HRC has recommendations for names to fill the vacancies. He asked if anyone has anything to share or thoughts on this topic. He does not think the HRC needs to come up with recommended names today, but the Mayor wants them to look at this. Discussion ensued. Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos spoke about how the Mayor had

expressed the urgency of this task. Vice Chair Saleh asked Ms. Kirby if Mr. Bohannon gave her any information about this to share with the HRC today. Ms. Kirby replied no, but she can relay the message to him and he could bring information next time. Discussion continued about the process. Vice Chair Saleh stated that the recommendations have to be made in the monthly meeting, so the names are coming from the HRC as a group, not from individual members. Dr. Morris asked if it is correct that the HRC cannot use email to talk with each other about this, because group emails create a quorum. Dr. Filiault replied that Dr. Morris is correct that that is not allowed, and yes, the recommendations should come from the full committee and not individuals. He continued that given the expedited nature of this, they could consider calling a special meeting in two weeks.

Vice Chair Saleh stated that they will seek guidance from Mr. Bohannon and once he confirms the open positions the HRC should consider this as a priority action item. They will do it at the next meeting unless they get a recommendation from the Mayor's Office that they need to do it sooner. That sounds like a reasonable plan. He asked if anyone had any other comments before they move on.

4) Monadvocacy Continued Discussion

Vice Chair Saleh stated that at the last meeting Pastor Nie Penaranda gave a wonderful presentation on a social game she created to educate people about challenges people face based on their social positions in life. He continued that the HRC discussed multiple possibilities for bringing her and the game to Keene. They did not take any concrete action on this. He asked if anyone has any more information about this and if anyone has talked about a development on this issue. He asked if Dr. Morris has anything to add, since she was considering Ms. Penaranda's game for her students. Dr. Morris replied that she does not have any updates about this; they were thinking of maybe having Ms. Penaranda come in, say, a year.

Ms. Salwen stated that she thought that the way it was left was Ms. Penaranda was about to do her first online version of the game and she was going to get back to someone and share about whether it was successful or not, and if so, she was going to explore the possibility of having more online sessions of it for people to play. Vice Chair Saleh replied that he thinks Mr. Bohannon was the one she was going to give the update to. They should ask him for an update next time. Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that they had a bunch of ideas for people to participate but were limited by COVID-19 and talked about how they could not do much until the pandemic was over. Ms. Kirby stated that Mr. Bohannon reached out to Ms. Penaranda to see how the online game went and to discuss whether she was open to coming to Keene and he is awaiting a response.

5) MLK Breakfast

Vice Chair Saleh asked to hear from Dr. Filiault. Dr. Filiault stated that the HRC has not been making progress with this by discussing it in meetings, so he again thinks there should be a

subcommittee for this. He is hopeful that the June events can be live, which would be a mixed event for LGBTQ+ Pride and Juneteenth.

Dr. Filiault made a motion for the HRC to create a subcommittee to plan for mixed event(s) for LGBTQ Pride month and Juneteenth, with the aim to have the events be live (as opposed to virtual), for June 2021. Vice Chair Saleh seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

Vice Chair Saleh asked who wants to be on this subcommittee. Discussion ensued. Dr. Filiault, Councilor Manwaring, and Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that they will join. Ms. Carroll stated that she would love to help with this without serving on the subcommittee, due to her other commitments.

Vice Chair Saleh asked that the subcommittees give a report at the next HRC meeting about how the work is going. Ms. Salwen asked how the subcommittees meet/get started. Dr. Filiault replied that subcommittee members can now email each other because it is less than a quorum.

6) June Events

Ms. Budakoti stated that as a new member, she suggests that it would be helpful for the committee to have some sort of orientation. She continued that this would help new members understand what the events they are talking about are, so the new members can better decide what to volunteer to help with. Vice Chair Saleh replied that that is a good point and probably true of all the City committees. He spoke of how he felt similarly the first year he was on the committee, regarding the MLK breakfast event. He asked Ms. Kirby to pass along to Mr. Bohannon that they would like Mr. Bohannon to provide new members with a broad summary of the committee's goals, existing events, and possible future events.

Ms. Kirby stated that that if Ms. Budakoti visits the HRC's webpage, it talks about the goals of the committee but not the history, direction, or vision. Councilor Manwaring stated that the committee has never had an orientation for new members, but when she was new she caught up by reading all of the committee's meeting minutes from the past year, which are on the HRC's page on the City's website.

Vice Chair Saleh stated that part of the reason the committee is made up of a diverse group of people is so they are not bound by only what the committee has always done before. He continued that they should always share their ideas with each other and it is possible for them to expand what they do.

7) New Business

Ms. Kirby stated that Mr. Bohannon wants to know when the committee wants to meet next month, September 8 or 14, because Labor Day is September 9 and that would have been their

regularly-scheduled meeting day. Discussion ensued. The group decided on Monday, September 14.

8) Adjourn – Next Meeting Monday, September 8 or 14, 2020

There being no further business, Vice Chair Saleh adjourned the meeting at 6:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker