

City of Keene
New Hampshire

AD HOC RACIAL JUSTICE & COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, October 15, 2020

5:30 PM

Remote Meeting via Zoom

Members Present:

Dr. Dottie Morris, Co-Chair
Pierre Morton
Julia Atkins
Eli Rivera
Aditi Saleh
Gail Somers

Staff Present:

Rebecca Landry, IT Director
Shane Maxfield, Police Lieutenant

Members Not Present:

Rick Van Wickler, Co-Chair
Tia Hockett
Councilor Catherine Workman
Stacey Massiah

Co-Chair Morris 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.

Co-Chair Morris called the meeting to order at 5:35 PM. Roll call was conducted.

1) Meeting Minutes of Last Meeting

Ms. Atkins made a motion to accept the meeting minutes of September 24, 2020. Mr. Morton seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

2) Bucket Reports

Ms. Atkins reported that the Education group had a good session – she, Mr. Morton, and Ms. Hockett met on October 2. She continued that they talked about seeking information on the following topics:

* The curriculum for the high school and information as it relates to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

- * Inclusive supports, whether disciplinary structures [or others]
- * Demographics
- * Staffing diversity
- * What type of professional development do teachers receive? (for K to 12 and at the university level)

Ms. Atkins stated that she and Ms. Hockett will meet with Ms. Landry to issue a formal letter to SAU Superintendent Rob Malay. She continued that she has spoken with him informally and he is willing to come talk to the committee and provide as much data as possible. Mr. Morton was connecting with Co-Chair Morris to get on the agenda to talk about what is happening at their institutions, and he was going to work with Ms. Landry on survey guidance.

Co-Chair Morris thanked Ms. Atkins and asked if anyone had feedback. She stated that they are getting more data and information about what is happening, so they can have that in mind when they get public input.

Ms. Landy asked if they want her to reach out to Mr. Malay and ask him to attend the next meeting, or wait until after the forum. Ms. Atkins replied that the Education group wanted to see if he could come to the next committee meeting, but first they want to make sure they clarify the specifics of what information they are asking him to bring, so he is not taking up the whole hour, because he could, with this information. She continued that she and Ms. Landry can get together to draft something to formally invite him. Co-Chair Morris replied that community members would probably attend that meeting because they would want to hear that information.

Co-Chair Morris asked to hear from the Policing, Policy, and Law bucket group. Mr. Morton stated that they have not met since the last meeting. He continued that regarding the work that they did with introducing the mental health benefits and issues and resources, they need to compile those as part of a recommendation package and submit it to the group, via Ms. Landry, prior to the next meeting.

Co-Chair Morris asked for a report from the Social Justice bucket group. Ms. Landry stated that Councilor Workman was planning to come tonight but at the last minute was unable to attend, and she probably would have been the one to speak about this, or Co-Chair Van Wickler. Co-Chair Morris replied okay, they will talk about this bucket group at the next meeting.

3) Public Forums Plan Discussion

Co-Chair Morris stated that this agenda item is not just public forums, but public input. She continued that last time they talked about several things they wanted to do. Ms. Landry was going to look into getting a form up to get community members to give feedback. She asked for an update.

Ms. Landry stated that she will give her thoughts and would love feedback on this. She continued that what she understands, based on Co-Chair Van Wickler's comments and emails, is that he spoke

with Dan Mitchell and there will be the opportunity for committee members (fewer than a quorum) to talk with Mr. Mitchell on the radio. This would be a good chance to announce the three public forum dates and agendas and topic information so people can plan to come. She gave proposed dates for the public forums, stating that they could have one per week for three weeks, or one every week. She continued that she was trying to avoid conflicts with other committee dates, Election Day, Christmas, or Thanksgiving. Putting out the information on social media and creating an input form for people would be fine, too – the top of the form could tell people about the public forums and say that if they cannot attend or prefer to submit something in writing, they can give input via the form. That is pretty easy to set up.

Ms. Atkins asked if it possible to do a date other than a Tuesday. She continued that she has meetings every Tuesday. Maybe other people have a similar issue, so if they put at least one meeting on a non-Tuesday, that might be appreciated by people who are tied up every Tuesday. Discussion continued about possible meeting dates. Co-Chair Morris agreed with Ms. Atkins's idea to have them on different nights of the week. Discussion continued.

Co-Chair Morris asked how far in advance they need to announce the public forum dates in order to get participation. Ms. Landry referenced page 4 of the agenda packet, Public Forum Concept for Committee Discussion. She stated that based on what she has heard the committee discussing, she wrote the goal as: "Get input and ideas from local people who are affected by systemic racism including those who may not otherwise participate in other input opportunities." She continued that people have strong feelings about the term "implicit bias" versus "systemic racism," so that language is something they can fine tune. And the ultimate goal is to consider the public input when the committee makes its recommendations to the City Council, so they are making informed recommendations. The format would be to pre-release three or four questions from each bucket, for the public to consider. Then people can talk about those in the forum. There will be other topics that people bring up, like complaints or reports, and that is okay. Generally what happens in these types of forums is that people are asked to provide their name and address, and often each person is given a fixed amount of time to speak, such as three minutes, to ensure that everyone is heard without the meeting stretching on for hours. They would have to identify a hard stop, such as one or two hours. She put in some ideas for what the bucket questions or requests might be – for example, for the Social & Community forum, they could ask the public for "ideas for implementing tools to open racial equity discussions that leads to progressive change," and ask them to "identify ways to change programs and practices that perpetuate implicit bias." Those are the types of questions she suggests, to really get some good feedback. She read a few proposed questions to pose to the public in the Education and Schools forum, such as "Give ideas for programs and curriculum to prevent implicit bias and promote a culture of equality," and stated that these questions are all coming from the discussions the committee has had to date in its meetings. She read a few proposed questions for the Policing, Policy, and Law bucket group, and asked for feedback from the group.

Ms. Atkins stated that Ms. Landry did a great job. She continued that she likes all of these. The only one that gives her caution is the word "equality," which they have to be careful about in education. Because what is equal does not necessarily mean "equitable." Ms. Landry suggested

“fairness.” Ms. Atkins stated that if you have the same amount here and the same amount there, people tend to think you will get an equal result and that is not always so. Co-Chair Morris asked if “a culture based in equity” would be better. Ms. Atkins replied that it is not that bullet point she is questioning, but rather the phrasing “equality for all students,” because it is more about equity. They might have to define it better, and it does not need to be the word “equity.” Co-Chair Morris suggested “provide experiences and access to resources, to ensure success of all children” or something like that. She does not know if that captures it either. Ms. Atkins replied that she struggles with this herself. Ms. Landry replied that she can work on that and come up with something, because she understands what Ms. Atkins is saying. Mr. Morton stated that he thinks “ideas that meet the specific needs of the students where they are at” would work.

Mr. Rivera stated that this is an opportunity where they should wait to hear from Mr. Malay because that can turn from ideas to how to support the schools’ mission to provide equity to the students, based on what Mr. Malay tells the group. The committee might turn into having a supportive role instead of just providing the schools with ideas on how to deal with this. Co-Chair Morris asked if he means he would prefer to have Mr. Malay come in before the community forum or thinks it is better to wait until afterwards. Mr. Rivera replied before the forum, so the committee knows where the SAU stands, so when they put this survey out they can know whether they are supporting the work the SAU is already doing, or whether they are recommending that the SAU do XYZ.

Co-Chair Morris suggested they have the Policing forum first so that the committee has enough time to hear from education folks before they have the education public forum. Mr. Rivera replied yes, it would put them in a better position. He continued that it would not make sense to give the school system ideas that maybe they are already doing. Co-Chair Morris replied that that makes sense. She asked if anyone else had further thoughts or ideas. Ms. Landry stated that people can email her their thoughts and ideas if they want.

Co-Chair Morris stated that the plan will be: at the next meeting they can hear from Mr. Malay regarding what is happening, and meanwhile they will be planning the forums to get community input. She continued that it sounds like first forum could be Policing since they got as much as information about that as they need from the Police and other individuals involved in that area and can now hear what the community thinks. The Education forum would be second and the Social & Community forum would be third. She asked if others agree.

Co-Chair Morris asked if they should decide on the dates now. Discussion ensued. Co-Chair Morris proposed October 29 for the forum on Policing. Could they get the word out soon enough so people know it is happening? Ms. Landry stated that that is okay with her. Co-Chair Morris stated that hearing no disagreement, they will schedule it for October 29. She asked if it should be 5:00, 5:30, or 6:00 PM. Discussion ensued. The group decided on 6:00 PM. Ms. Landry asked how long the public forum should be – one hour, two? Ms. Atkins suggested a hard finish in two hours, but if they do not have a lot of participation, they could end it earlier. Co-Chair Morris agreed; it could go either way. They will say two hours is the hard stop.

Mr. Rivera asked if it will be focused on a specific topic, so it does not become a repeat of the initial forum with people giving the same information, and is more focused. Ms. Landry replied that she agrees that that is really important. She continued that it would be wise to start with a statement from the Chairs – along the lines of “Here is what we gathered at the first forum, here is what the committee has been doing for the past few months, and here is the specific information/input we are looking for from you tonight, and here are the other topics we will have forums for on these other dates.” There will still need to be some moderating during the meeting to keep it focused.

Co-Chair Morris stated that they could use a summary using the work that Mr. Morton did of putting everything into categories – that could be the opening statement. “This is the information we have gathered so far, please look over it.” She continued that they could go over some of the bullet points that Mr. Morton created, then use the bullet points that Ms. Landry has in the document to say, “This is why we are here tonight, to specifically identify these things. If you see that we already have something, please hold it or put an asterisk next to it so we don’t go through it again.” Those are not the exact words but it would be in that spirit. Maybe that will help to limit the redundancy, and it would also let people know the committee is listening and taking into account what they already have as being important.

Ms. Landry asked if Mr. Morton could share that original document with her or a summary so she could use that information. Mr. Morton replied yes.

Co-Chair Morris asked if anyone had thoughts about the format. Mr. Morton asked about what Ms. Landry said about speakers being required to giving their address. Ms. Landry replied that typically in a public body meeting, people speaking give their name and address for the minute-taker for the public record. She continued that she can look into whether that is necessary for a public forum. Mr. Morton stated that he does not think that is wise right now, especially around the election. There are safety issues around the election for people of color. This committee’s title is Racial Justice and Community *Safety*. Giving your address (might not be safe). He does not think they should require that; it puts community members in danger in this volatile time. Mr. Rivera replied that he agrees, but they also have to make sure that the people wanting to speak are local. He continued that people worldwide could have access to this online public forum. Someone could post this on Facebook and people from out of state could be talking and sharing stories and then everyone is assuming the incidents are happening locally. That is his concern. Maybe people could just say “I’m a resident of Keene.” Co-Chair Morris replied yes, name and town might be enough. She asked Ms. Landry to check on that. Ms. Landry replied that she will look into it to get a clear, legal answer.

Mr. Morton stated that if the forum is two hours he might have to leave early. He asked if a quorum is necessary in order for this to go forward. Ms. Landry replied that she does not think so, as long as they do not have an agenda and are not making decisions or voting. She will follow up on this question.

Discussion ensued about getting the word out. Co-Chair Morris asked if they will have a flyer or just post this on the website. Ms. Landry replied that she would put it on the website and also create a shareable social media post. Ms. Somers asked for a flyer in PDF format so they can share it. Ms. Landry agreed.

Co-Chair Morris asked if they should plan the second forum or plan it after they see how this one goes, or plan at it at the next full body meeting. Ms. Atkins replied that she suggests they at least pick the date so they can have it on their calendars, even if they do not yet know the details. Co-Chair Morris asked if their next full committee meeting is November 5. She suggested the second forum be on Tuesday, November 17 at 6:00 PM. Hearing no objections, she stated that that will be the date. Discussion ensued about the third date. Co-Chair Morris stated that the third forum will be on Wednesday, December 2, at 6:00 PM. Discussion ensued about what time the committee will meet on November 5. The committee decided on 5:00 PM.

4) Survey Discussion

Mr. Morton stated that they created a charter for a survey, in accordance with the last conversation at the committee meeting. He continued that the charter should be the same as the Mayor's vision for the general committee but the guiding principle is that the survey would reflect the community conversation as identified by the bucket list and comments from the community forums, so they can get a better understanding of the community experiences, ideas, and desires as they move forward. They spoke about creating the survey to get input from people who might not feel comfortable speaking in a public forum. He and Ms. Landry worked on survey goals, which are:

- * To provide a method of collecting data from a meaningful sample size of the community related to racial justice and community safety.
- * To get an understanding of the extent to which members of the committee actually feel safe
- * To build local awareness of implicit bias
- * To uncover opportunities for improvement toward the safety and justice goals
- * To identify key areas of success as well, for possible replication
- * To determine resources needed to impact committee justice and safety

Mr. Morton continued that they hope those will be the goals, along with the charter from the Mayor. He asked if anyone had questions.

Mr. Rivera asked what a "meaningful sample size" is. Ms. Landry replied that usually a sample size is a minimum of five percent, but that is up to the people who put together the survey. She suggests that it should be no less than 100 responses. They are trying to avoid getting responses from a small group of people and making decisions that affect a large group based on that small response.

Mr. Morton stated that the structure of the question categories is pretty much based on the bucket list, with a few other things pulled out that were repeated. If anyone has ideas for categories to add,

they can let them know. What they have so far is: education, schools, hiring practices (not just for the City, but in general), local culture, social justice, [and others].

Ms. Somers stated that they had done meaningful grouping from the bucket list, putting topics together. Could they look to do the same here as well? There is some overlap. For example, she assumes “schools” and “education” are not meant to be two separate categories. Mr. Morton replied that he actually did mean for those to be separate categories, because “education” is also about community education. Ms. Somers replied that she thinks they should call it “community education” then, to clarify. She asked if the category of “accountability” is different from the category of “policing.” Mr. Morton replied that the term “accountability” does not just refer to the Police, but others in the community, too, like business accountability, which can include hiring practices. He continued that at the last meeting Ms. Somers shared her story of what happened to her when she went into a business, and there should be some accountability, addressing the situation in a more structured way. Ms. Somers thanked him for the explanation. She continued that she will send information his way if she has any more suggestions.

Mr. Morton stated that the other categories of questions were mental health, public policy, restorative justice, and business practices. He continued that he believes they agreed they will be doing this survey through Survey Monkey. Ms. Landry replied that that works, but they have other ways to do it as well and gave a few examples. She continued that what is nice about Survey Monkey is the analysis after all the surveys submitted.

Mr. Morton stated that in regards to the timeframe for this, the charter of the committee is to produce recommendations for the City Council. He continued that that recommendation could be to create a survey, with the help of one of the local universities, and the survey should be ready and done within X amount of days or months. He does not know what to recommend to the City Council. Should they even make a recommendation about the time period?

He continued that some other things to think about are: once the committee agrees on the scope and framework of the survey, they need to make sure they have all of their ducks in a row when they submit this to the City Council, so that they can approach university leadership about the survey project for students or faculty. And, is this something the City Council would want to pay for, to provide compensation for services, or a stipend, or not?

He continued that Ms. Landry wanted to, and he agrees with her, give some sample questions, so he pulled some sample questions from online sources. When they analyze this it is important to find out where/what position this information is coming from, so they want to ask about people’s gender identity, racial and ethnic identity, and how long people have lived in or around Keene. But there is Keene and greater Keene, so what do they really want?

Co-Chair Morris asked if they think the demographic questions should include age. Mr. Morton replied yes. Co-Chair Morris stated that some things might be happening to younger people rather

than older people, or vice versa, and they could consider that when analyzing the results. Mr. Morton replied that he agrees.

Mr. Morton stated that beyond the demographic questions, a sample question is “People of all cultures and backgrounds are respected and valued here,” agree or disagree. It will be up to the body that is producing this survey to determine whether to use a scale, multiple choice, or something else. These are just samples. Other sample questions are: “I often hear racial, ethnic, and gender-based jokes in passing throughout the day,” and “I have witnessed racial bias or harassment in my neighborhood,” and the answer could be a yes/no or a measurement scale. He continued sharing more sample questions.

Mr. Morton continued that the question here is: how do they move forward? What do they need in order to move forward with the survey? Is it just going to be a recommendation to the City Council that they do a survey? If so, perhaps they should identify certain groups that would be able to produce this survey.

Co-Chair Morris asked for questions, reflections, and thoughts. Ms. Landry thanked Mr. Morton for all the work he has done. She continued that if the committee wants to do a Survey Monkey survey, that is something she can put together. If they want to get the scientific results, that would probably cost \$5,000 to \$10,000. The City has not done that in a while. The last one was a phone survey about a decade ago, by the UNH Survey Center, and it was very powerful to get those results, because you are getting responses from people who are not participating because they chose to go onto the webpage; it is pulling out people who otherwise would not have known, and some of them respond and some of them do not. The question is: if they choose to go forward with the more scientific survey, do they put it forward as a recommendation to the City Council, or does the committee want her to investigate and see if there is a need to do the survey now. Both are options.

Co-Chair Morris stated that it seems as though some of the information on that survey would be useful for the committee to have when making recommendations to the City Council. So would the committee want to do a survey in some form, even if it is not totally scientific, but was maybe somewhere in the middle – not professional and scientific, but not completely amateur – so they could use whatever information they receive to help inform their recommendations? Do they want to go in that direction? If they just make a recommendation to the City Council that a survey be done at some point, her concern is: what will they do with the information they receive? There will no longer be a body like the AHRJCS Committee to use the information. She asked how others feel.

Ms. Somers asked for clarification – are they talking about two different things? Hosting public forums and asking questions, which is sort of like a survey, but also recommending or actually doing a formal survey? Co-Chair Morris replied yes, that is how she sees it, and she sees others nodding yes. Ms. Somers stated that she thinks they should structure the forums in such a way that they get really good insight and then they can determine which areas they need to dig into further with a formal survey. Ms. Landry replied that she likes that idea. Co-Chair Morris and Mr. Morton agreed.

Co-Chair Morris asked if they want to table the decision since the next meeting, or make a motion, or keep talking.

Ms. Atkins made a motion to move forward on a non-scientific survey to help guide the committee's recommendations to the City Council. Mr. Morton seconded the motion.

Mr. Morton stated that he does agree that they should have an informal survey based on the feedback they receive from the forums, but they may run out of time. The last forum is December 2. If they wait until the forums are done before commissioning a survey, the college students will be gone. Co-Chair Morris replied that most things are done remotely anyway, so it is okay. Mr. Morton stated that they still might not have time then, with Christmas approaching, and then they would need time to send the survey out, and wait for replies, and ask the City Council to send the data to the Human Rights Committee for them to work with, and so on and so forth. There is not enough time.

Co-Chair Morris stated that she does not think the survey Ms. Atkins referenced in her motion was as formal as what Mr. Morton is talking about. She continued that it could be something that they create through Survey Monkey. Ms. Atkins replied yes, that is the take she got from the conversation that was happening and that is why she phrased her motion as she did. She continued that her only concern is that they will continue to reach the same people, because of the way they are doing this – the same people who are willing to click on a survey, the same people who are willing to come to a forum. She is torn. She likes the idea of a more scientific survey but they definitely need to make sure the information that would come from that survey could be turned into action and that the City Council would be willing to take action on it.

Ms. Landry stated that there is nothing wrong with the committee's report to the City Council saying "This is the information we received from people who had ideas and experiences they wanted to share," from the forums and the informal survey, and that may be a subsection of the population, but their recommendations could also say that a broader perspective could be beneficial and it would come from a formal survey.

Co-Chair Morris stated that she is thinking about how the Governor's Council worked – how do they meet people where they are? For example, ask a Rabbi if they can have a listening session, or go to Franklin Pierce and ask how to talk with the faculty, staff, and students. That does take more work, but is a way to avoid what Ms. Atkins is saying. They could (virtually) meet people where they are at, doing outreach to certain organizations and groups in town to make sure they are getting a full picture. That discussion might be for another day but it is an idea.

Co-Chair Morris asked if people have more to say or are ready to vote on the motion, which is: "to move forward on a non-scientific survey to help guide the committee's recommendations to the City Council." Ms. Somers asked if they should add to the end of that something like "guide the City Council on a further survey that is needed." Those may not be the words, but, guide them in what way? Ms. Atkins replied the survey is to help the AHRJCS Committee guide its recommendations

to the City Council. Co-Chair Morris asked if Ms. Atkins feels a need to amend the motion. Ms. Atkins replied no, she thinks it is inclusive.

Co-Chair Morris called for a vote. The motion passed by unanimous vote. Co-Chair Morris stated that the committee will help Mr. Morton come up with the questions and then they will figure out, at the next meeting, how to go about getting it completed and who will do what to get the word out to have a broad range of people complete the survey.

Ms. Landry stated that going back to a previous topic, they talked about forum for Police, Policies and Laws, and she wants to let the committee know that the Governor's Commission on Law Enforcement Accountability, Community, and Transparency produced a number of reports. She will share a link to the final report. It includes a lot of the things the committee has been talking about, and they are coming down as recommendations or requirements from the State to the local police departments. Some of the things the committee might recommend to the City Council might already be accommodated by the State's recommendations and requirements. The website link is: www.governor.nh.gov/accountability . The LEACT recommendations are there on that website, too.

Co-Chair Morris asked if anyone had anything else to say before adjourning.

Mr. Morton stated that this is the Racial Justice and Community *Safety* Committee. He continued that he does not know if this is within their purview, but he wants the committee to be cognizant of safety issues surrounding the election, for people who look like him. They are just a recommending body and cannot actually protect people at the polls, but he just wants that on the record. Ms. Landry asked if Lt. Maxfield has any information to share. She continued that there is a lot of information coming to municipalities across the state from the Secretary of State. Every election they look at things like this. She thinks there will be Police presence at the polls. Lt. Maxfield replied yes, that is correct. He continued that if anyone at the polls has a concern they should go right up to the Police Officer who is at the polls. Co-Chair Morris stated that the first community forum will be right before the election, so they might hear some of those concerns expressed then, so the committee needs to be ready to hear those.

There being no further business, Co-Chair Morris adjourned the meeting at 6:52 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

Edits submitted by,
Rebecca Landry, IT Director/ACM