

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

**HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE**  
**MEETING MINUTES**

**Monday, February 1, 2021**

**5:00 PM**

**Remote Meeting via Zoom**

**Members Present:**

William Hay, Chair  
Dr. Mohammed Saleh, Vice Chair  
Ritu Budakoti  
Jan Manwaring, Councilor  
Sofia Cunha-Vasconcelos  
Marti Fiske  
Dr. Dottie Morris  
Nancy Salwen  
Dr. Shaun Filiault (arrived at 5:29 PM)

**Staff Present:**

Andrew Bohannon, Parks, Recreation, and  
Facilities Director

**Members Not Present:**

**1) Welcome and Call to Order**

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. He called the meeting to order at 5:07 PM.

**2) Approval of January 3, 2021 Meeting Minutes**

Councilor Manwaring made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of January 3, 2021. Dr. Morris seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

**3) Finance Report**

Mr. Bohannon reported that there is a change from previous months – in the very near future this will become a lot different, given all the activity that is going on, which is fantastic.

Ms. Budakoti made a motion to approve the finance report. Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

**4) Keene State College Alumni Outreach**

Dr. Morris stated that she does not have an update; she needs to reach out again. She will check her email again but does not think she has received a response yet. She continued that she knows the committee wanted to do something this month. She asked Mr. Bohannon what she should do if she does get a response back to share with the group, since including too many people in an email thread makes it a public meeting. Mr. Bohannon replied that she can communicate directly with him. He continued that if they have a date set up in time, they can do it, and he will send the information back out to the committee. It could be a “pop-up,” as he has been calling it with other groups.

**5) MLK Breakfast**

Mr. Bohannon stated that they did well with this and had 63 attendees. He continued that it got picked up by various media. If anyone has not seen it, it is on the HRC’s website and he encourages people to watch it. It was a great session by Dr. Waller. There was a lot of great feedback, and a lot of sharing of the video. Chair Hay stated that he received a lot of good feedback about it as well. He continued that he was really impressed by Dr. Waller’s presentation.

**6) Pride Month**

Mr. Bohannon stated that he has been in communication with the Monadnock International Film Festival (MONIFF) people and MONIFF has sent some great information related to what the HRC might be able to do for some type of film festival in collaboration with them. The Executive Director is Dee Fitzgerald and she sent an outline of Pride Week Festival that breaks down the tasks for February, March, April, and May. They talked about providing three films. Ms. Fitzgerald found three films for the HRC to view that she thought would be good at generating audience. Mr. Bohannon listed and described the three movies, Funny Boy, Born to Be, and Deep in Vogue. The total projected cost would be about \$2,100. That includes advertising through the Keene Sentinel, printing, and the film rentals licensing. The price could be reduced depending on the advertising. He continued that he had a conversation with an interested potential sponsor, which could reduce the cost as well. He does not think this is a heavy lift for the committee. They can market it through social media and Keene State College (KSC) channels. The proposed dates are May 6, 7, and 8, with one film a day. Dr. Filiault had ideas about some sort of “dinner and a movie” special, but he himself has not gotten that far yet – he is only at the basics, getting everything in line to do the news release and those sorts of things to make sure they have a successful event. But he wanted to pass that information along. He would be happy to pass information back to the committee and they can go from there.

Mr. Bohannon stated that he thinks they need to make a decision this month, about whether this is the direction they want to go. He could report back at the March meeting, regarding the finances and what sponsorships they have.

Committee members gave feedback and asked questions. One question was whether the viewers would be charged to view the movies. Mr. Bohannon replied no, it would all be free. He continued that he thinks what Dr. Filiault was thinking was that if you sign up for something you might connect it with somebody else, like the dinner aspect of it. But for the HRC, they are looking to make sure the movies are free to the public. Another question was whether there would be panel discussions after the movies. Mr. Bohannon replied that that was part of the discussion for sure and he is not positive about what Dr. Filiault was thinking about this or who would be leading the panel discussion, but there should be an opportunity for questions and answers. It might be something they could record ahead of time and put out there that night. He would encourage Dr. Filiault to follow up on this. Dr. Morris stated that she will give him a name to consider – John Scagliotti, a documentary film-maker from Vermont. She gave more information about him and his work. She continued that Hunter Kirschner would also be interested. Mr. Bohannon replied that that is why they wanted Pride to be in May – so people from the college could participate.

Ms. Salwen spoke about how there are so many films available for people to watch these days, so having this in conjunction with a powerful speaker makes it a real event and more worthwhile in her mind. She asked what else the HRC has going on that they need to think about allocating money for. What about for Juneteenth or the Keene International Festival (KIF)? The HRC does not have much incoming money at this point. Mr. Bohannon replied that is a good point, and before they decide on allocating money for this they should hear from Councilor Manwaring and Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos about their plans for Juneteenth. The HRC no longer receives funding from St. James thrift shop, because it does not exist anymore.

Dr. Filiault arrived at the meeting.

Mr. Bohannon stated that the HRC gets \$500 every year; he is in the process of the budget right now and can raise that to \$1,000. They can do this in two ways – they could say the HRC will do three major events per year (Martin Luther King, Jr. breakfast, Pride, and Juneteenth) and allocate \$500 per event, which he does not think is a super heavy lift from the City. That would be asking for an additional \$1,000. He could ask. Whether they get that or not, there is still \$4,500 that they have not touched in quite a while. Gaining event sponsors would reduce the costs, and he knows there are people willing to sponsor these types of events. The KIF has its own account.

Mr. Bohannon asked Dr. Filiault for his thoughts on having some type of dialogue before or after the films. Dr. Filiault stated that the goal was to pick a few films that had some success at festivals and also are talked about as being good representation of LGBTQ issues, and then have a speaker, panel, or discussion follow. He has not seen the films on the list they were given. The budget they were given is the outside ballpark, and they were told some films may be available for free or reduced cost, particularly since it will be for a non-profit. COVID-19 will still be an issue in May, so it will be good to have something that can be streamed, such as a movie and a

discussion. A block party would not be realistic for May. Thus, this provides an opportunity to do programming that will have the widest outreach while still maintaining social distancing.

Dr. Morris asked what people think - should they preview the films before saying yes to them, or just trust the process? Chair Hay replied that it would make sense for them to preview the movies – if not all HRC members, then at least a screening committee. Mr. Bohannon stated that he will send the links for each of the three movies and follow up with Ms. Fitzgerald. He continued that she is an international film festival executive director and probably has a really good handle on this. He can reach out to her and see if the films could possibly be streamed.

Ms. Fiske asked if they would just have one discussion, repeated for all three films. She continued that if they are trying to get a separate discussion for each film, previewing them might help the HRC choose the relevant discussion topics and discussion leader. Chair Hay asked if they can have a discussion after each film. Dr. Filiault stated that he definitely thinks they should screen each film before choosing them, to make sure they have a diversity of themes to be able to discuss and a diversity of themes relevant to the community. He continued that he trusts MONIFF and their judgment for films, but this will be a City-sponsored event, so it is worthwhile to make sure the movies are appropriate and at least PG-13 level, since it will be streamed to the entire community. Ms. Salwen agreed that they should preview the movies.

Ms. Salwen asked about the idea of having one of the films be one of John Scagliotti's, and asking him to be the speaker. Dr. Morris replied that his films have been shown a couple of times already. She continued that one of his might be too long to be shown in a film festival, and two others are from the 1980s, but he would be a great person to talk about, because he helped develop younger documentary filmmakers. He has a whole crew of people he has worked with, from all over the world, because people come to his camps.

Ms. Fiske stated that they should consider the length of the films they are choosing, and how long the discussions will be. If the films are long they may lose audience members if they have the discussions after instead of before the films. Mr. Bohannon replied good point. He continued that Deep in Vogue is 62 minutes, Born to Be is an hour and 33 minutes, and Funny Boy is an hour and 49 minutes.

Dr. Morris stated that for the NH Jewish Film Festival, when you register you get an email with a link that is live for 72 hours. You can watch the film anytime during those 72 hours, and then there is a scheduled, hour-long panel you can join. Maybe they could do something like that? Maybe they could have a 24-hour period for people to watch the film and then have a discussion. Mr. Bohannon replied yes, he thinks this was the thought process – 72-hour access to the three movies and panel discussions. Dr. Filiault replied that the intent was to have the opening film with a discussion and then have both on demand for 72 hours.

Dr. Filiault stated that it would be great to get films that bring intersectionality, and Deep in Vogue involves Black and Latinx culture. If they are really deliberate with these movies they can hit a wide array of human rights themes.

Chair Hay asked if the 72-hour period would be May 6-8 or have one each night. Dr. Filiault replied that they would work their way through that. Dr. Saleh stated that he hopes it is 72 hours for each movie, because it is difficult for busy people to have three movie nights in a row. It would be interesting to have a panel discussion on all three movies.

Dr. Filiault made a motion for the Human Rights Committee to authorize Mr. Bohannon to do all things necessary to obtain access for these films and begin the development for the Keene Pride event, and to authorize up to a \$1,000 budget for the event with the intent that as much money as possible will come from outside sponsors or other organizations; and for the films to be shown at the festival to be selected by a committee comprised of members from the Human Rights Committee. Dr. Morris seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

## 7) Juneteenth

Councilor Manwaring stated that she and Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos met. She continued that as she stated in last month's minutes, the plan is food, music, and history. They thought of opening the event with a reading of the announcement that the slaves are freed, from the Governor of Texas, and the Square would have other historical figures throughout the day. They want to work with restaurants about food, and for music, they need the HRC's help. It would be nice to have different kinds of music. The event does need money, which Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos will talk about.

Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that she is still working up a budget. She thinks it will be about \$2,000. They have not yet examined sponsorships. They will pay musical acts a fee, and there will be some marketing costs to publicize the event. Given the nature of the event and the community we are in, there is a good chance they will get sponsorships.

Councilor Manwaring stated that they are also thinking about promoting diversity. She continued that they have representatives here from the Keene India Association and they hope, for example, that Gail Somers will join the event, too. That is another part they are working on.

Ms. Salwen stated that she would be interested in helping brainstorm about music or meet with the subcommittee once or twice. Chair Hay suggested they touch base with the Jamaican restaurant, which has Jamaican musicians.

In response to a question about how COVID-19 might affect the event, Councilor Manwaring stated that she thinks it is an outside activity, and the date is a Saturday this year, and hopefully it will not rain. She is in contact with Gail Zachariah and will see what her ideas are, too. It would be great if the event could be live, not just virtual.

In response to questions about the event's location, Councilor Manwaring stated that they want both Central Square and Railroad Square. She asked if Mr. Bohannon reserved both of those spaces. Mr. Bohannon replied yes.

Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that it would not be that difficult to make the event virtual, if needed. It could be on Facebook Live and include musical acts if there were not too many of them. It would not be the same as a live event, of course, but they could have the same components. Perhaps they could get the cooperation of local restaurants to do their menu for the day and people could order takeout.

Ms. Fiske asked what the \$2,000 budget is expected to cover. Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that she was thinking of about five musical acts at about \$300 apiece and approximately \$500 for marketing and printing. Ms. Fiske replied that it sounds like they would have to seek sponsors to pay the historical performers, unless someone local donates it. Discussion continued about the importance of paying musical acts and historical performers.

Councilor Manwaring stated that she was also thinking of somehow involving the Keene Farmer's Market, since it will be a Saturday and they will be there. She continued that it may get into Gilbo Ave. a little bit. There are a couple other people joining the planning. In order to pull this off they do need a group. Chair Hay stated that he would be glad to portray Frederick Douglas.

Mr. Bohannon stated that the Keene Young Professionals (KYP) is planning an international food festival in late May or early June, the week before June 19. He thinks that is June 12, which will also be Art Walk. They will be doing some events. This will be a back to back thing. He would caution against having five acts, because that is a lot of logistics. Having worked with Ms. Budakoti on the KIF, he recommends they start small and grow. Five acts would make it a five- or six-hour event, and they might not want it to be that long. He recommends they not go beyond a three-hour event.

Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that she was picturing 30-minute sets. Mr. Bohannon replied that there would need to be time to break down and set up as well, which would take at least 20 minutes per act.

Councilor Manwaring stated that the KYP told her they would give two weeks between events and would not go back to back. Why did they change that? Mr. Bohannon replied that he thinks the KYP is trying to think like the HRC is – if they can host an outdoor event in June. He has a meeting coming up with them and will review all of that information with them. Councilor Manwaring stated that it would be great if there could be two weeks between the events.

Ms. Budakoti stated that there is another festival that will be happening around the same timeframe, planned by the Historical Society. She continued that she will check about that and report back to the committee. If Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos and Councilor Manwaring are looking

for any performances from the Keene India Association she would be happy to coordinate that. Ms. Fiske stated that that festival Ms. Budakoti mentioned is scheduled for August.

Chair Hay stated that they should have a lot of this answered by the next meeting, because time will sneak up on them. Discussion continued. In response to the suggestion that they consider combining events with the KYP, Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos spoke about the importance of keeping Juneteenth as its own event. Chair Hay agreed that it should be distinct.

Mr. Bohannon stated that they have two very active subcommittees. He continued that he will continue to work with Dr. Filiault on the Pride event. Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos and Councilor Manwaring have reached out to him about this event and he is happy to give them whatever guidance they need. Both subcommittees can come back to the HRC Committee in March, which will be a heavy agenda and mainly focused on those two events.

### **8) New or Other Business**

Chair Hay asked if anyone has new or other business. Mr. Bohannon stated that one of the positives about having Ms. Fiske on this committee is the many events the Library does. He continued that Ms. Zachariah told him about how the Library will be leading facilitated conversations about diversity and race in our community, and people will be trained in this through the Library. She asked if the HRC Committee wanted to be involved with this and he said yes on the committee's behalf. The Library Trustees are excited about this, too.

Ms. Fiske stated that Ms. Zachariah is creating a committee to work on these events; it is part of an American Library Association (ALA) grant. She continued that the focus will be on race relations. Ms. Zachariah may reach out to HRC members about joining that committee to help organize the whole process. The idea is to have several small-group conversations, probably on Zoom, and the grant requires it be completed by July 31. They could potentially tie something into the Juneteenth event, if Councilor Manwaring and Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos wanted to talk with Ms. Zachariah about that. Mr. Bohannon stated that he will add this to the HRC's March agenda.

Chair Hay noted that today is the first day of Black History Month, and it is a short month. Dr. Morris stated that she could be here all night talking about why February was chosen for Black History Month. It was requested by Carter Woodson. There is a specific and strategic reason for that. Mr. Bohannon asked if she could briefly explain more. Dr. Morris replied that February is the birth month of Abraham Lincoln and W.E.B. DuBois, and that is why Carter Woodson chose it. Chair Hay stated that the other 11 months should be steeped in Black History also, because there is a lot to learn.

Councilor Manwaring stated that the Ad Hoc Racial Justice and Community Safety (AHRJCS) Committee is bringing their report to the City Council shortly, and the HRC has been mentioned as possibly being involved in the report and/or the continuation of the work. There are questions

of whether the AHRJCS Committee will continue or be folded into the HRC. She continued that Mr. Bohannon will be hearing about it if he has not already. Mr. Bohannon replied yes, he is aware, and the HRC's agenda may expand. The HRC is gaining traction. This committee is really being pushed forward as a resource, as an opportunity and a venue for people to share. Oftentimes people say "I don't know who to go through," and he says, "Try the HRC. At least have a dialogue here, as a start." They are making progress. If they can pull off Pride month, and Juneteenth, and the conversations with students, and the ALA grant, that is progress. They need to just keep taking steps forward, because that is what it takes. Chair Hay agreed. He stated that he is surprised by how many people do not even know the HRC exists. Mr. Bohannon stated that there are communities reaching out to him to learn what the HRC is doing and why and how. It is good to be a model, but they have to be a model of success.

Mr. Bohannon asked what Zoom format the committee prefers for their meetings. Brief discussion ensued. Committee members replied that they are fine with today's format.

**9) Adjourn – Next Meeting Monday, March 1, 2021, at 5:00 PM**

There being no further business, Chair Hay adjourned the meeting at 6:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

Edits respectfully submitted by,  
Andy Bohannon, Staff