

City of Keene
New Hampshire

AD HOC RACIAL JUSTICE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, February 25, 2021

4:00 PM

Remote Meeting via Zoom

Members Present:

Dr. Dottie Morris, Co-Chair
Richard Van Wickler, Co-Chair
Gail Somers (arrived at 4:29 PM)
Aditi Saleh
Councilor Catherine Workman (arrived at 4:29 PM)
Pierre Morton (left at 4:51 PM, returned at 5:05 PM)
Tia Hockett
Eli Rivera (arrived at 4:35 PM)

Staff Present:

Rebecca Landry, IT Director
Shane Maxfield, Police Lieutenant
Steven Russo, Police Chief

Members Not Present:

Co-Chair Van Wickler 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 4:09 PM. Roll call was conducted.

1) Minutes of Last Meeting

Mr. Morton made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of January 28, 2021. Co-Chair Morris seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

2) Review Committee Report Draft In Progress

Co-Chair Van Wickler stated that they will review the draft page by page. Ms. Landry noted that words/items highlighted in yellow indicate portions not yet drafted or questions she had for the committee.

Co-Chair Van Wickler began by listing a few of his responses to and observations of the document, such as the need for page numbers, and the need to list the committee members' names and dates of meetings somewhere in the beginning. He asked for others' feedback.

Co-Chair Morris stated that she will expand upon the things that are highlighted, and asked Ms. Landry about that. Ms. Landry replied that she wrote as much as she had time to, and regarding the highlighted portions, in some cases she will write more, and also, committee members had some content they had prepared. If anyone has drafted anything for the report they can send it to her and she will put it in. Co-Chair Morris replied that she will write something for the first page and send it to her.

Ms. Landry stated that the committee needs to limit the number of meetings they need to complete this, because the City has initiatives to move forward with that are very much in line with this. She continued that the sooner the AHRJCS Committee gets their report to the City Council the better. She welcomes any input people have for the report so they can synchronize it all.

Co-Chair Van Wickler asked for comments on page 2. He continued that he thinks the “Key Observations” section is fantastic, and what jumped off the page at him is “acceptance of these observations as truth is critical.” That is a brilliant sentence. Ms. Landry replied that when she drafted that she was trying to be strong and clear and brief. She hopes that the quote that came from Cornell is appropriate. She is willing to seek out other quotes if the committee wants. Co-Chair Van Wickler and Co-Chair Morris replied that they like the quote.

Co-Chair Van Wickler moved on to page 3. He stated that he particularly liked “Targeting identified behaviors, not people, will help affect positive change.” Ms. Landry replied that that quote came from a member of the public, a teacher in Keene. She continued that she tried to capture input from everyone, when drafting this language. Co-Chair Morris stated that she thinks Ms. Landry captured the key concepts here.

Co-Chair Van Wickler moved on to page 4, acknowledging the yellow highlighted text that Ms. Landry wanted assistance with, regarding the recommendation that the City meet regularly with other government agencies, schools, religious leaders, healthcare providers, and “others.” Ms. Landry replied that that came from Councilor Workman and she is not sure she captured all of the groups Councilor Workman was interested in. She is open to ideas. Co-Chair Van Wickler suggested the Keene Chamber of Commerce be added to that list, and Co-Chair Morris agreed. Mr. Morton added the Cohen Center. Co-Chair Morris asked if “schools” needs to be expanded upon to make it clear that colleges and universities are included. Mr. Morton asked for Franklin Pierce University to be specifically named, as an accountability measure. Co-Chair Morris asked for Keene State College and Antioch University New England to be added by name as well. Ms. Landry added River Valley Community College, too. Mr. Morton added the Keene Family YMCA, and Keene Police Department. He continued that he wants the conversation with Lt. Maxfield. Ms. Landry replied that it ultimately will be up to the Police Chief, regarding who is involved in those conversations. She asked if they want the Cheshire County Sheriff’s Department in there, too. Co-Chair Morris replied yes. Mr. Morton added the Keene Public Library to the list.

Co-Chair Van Wickler noted that the committee needs to name a few good resources after the sentence “There are well established programs and standards that can establish key objectives and a framework for this work.” He asked if anyone had suggestions. Mr. Morton replied restorative justice, which is a practice that supports this work. Discussion ensued and Co-Chair Morris explained more about it, and how it “can be used as a vehicle for dialogue to take place.” Discussion continued and Mr. Morton spoke about the Organization for Chief Diversity Officers or something similar to that as a possibility. Co-Chair Van Wickler asked Mr. Morton to follow up with Ms. Landry about that.

Co-Chair Morris asked if the group feels like adding the Chamber of Commerce covers the business interest enough, or if they need to explicitly say “businesses in Keene.” Discussion ensued and Co-Chair Van Wickler stated that he thinks the Chamber of Commerce covers it. Co-Chair Morris replied that she just wants to make sure they did not miss out on something. Mr. Morton replied that he thinks they missed out on the NAACP and they should be in constant contact with them, and the ACLU, as a matter of practice. Discussion continued about locations of the closest NAACP chapters.

Co-Chair Van Wickler stated that the next sentence is “This will likely require implicit bias training for the people involved and meetings should be facilitated by a professional with racial equity experience and skillset,” and in yellow she asked if that was necessary. Discussion ensued. Co-Chair Morris stated that she loves the idea and there are plenty of people qualified to do that facilitation.

Gail Somers and Councilor Workman arrived at 4:29 PM.

Co-Chair Van Wickler noted that Ms. Landry has “community leaders” highlighted in C. and asked what she is looking for there. Ms. Landry replied that Mr. Morton did a great job helping them understand what is possible with climate surveys. She continued that the recommendation is that “the services of local colleges and universities be engaged to conduct annual racial equity and inclusion climate surveys and that survey results and findings be shared with community leaders for their education and response.” She asked if the words should be “community leaders,” or if it should be changed to the people identified in item B, or “the City,” or the Human Rights Committee, or something else. Discussion ensued and Mr. Morton stated that he thinks it should be shared with the general public, mainly, for transparency, but also the City Council and every entity in item B. Co-Chair Morris agreed that it would be good information for businesses, colleges and universities, and the city in general.

Co-Chair Van Wickler stated that Ms. Landry questioned whether the quote at the bottom of page 4 is a good one to have, and he likes it and would leave it. He asked for others’ thoughts. Ms. Landry explained why she chose the quote. Mr. Morton replied that he thinks it is great.

Co-Chair Morris asked whether the climate survey should be just for colleges and universities, or if it should be city-wide. She continued that a survey would probably be done every two years, instead of every year. Discussion continued about the concept and how to word it. Ms. Somers agreed with Co-Chair Morris that it should go beyond colleges and universities. Mr. Morton asked that the language of C be re-worded, because the idea was to utilize the skillsets of colleges and universities to *create* (not “conduct”) surveys, to be given to the City Council and given to the city. Ms. Landry replied yes, she needs to re-word this, because she was thinking that colleges and universities have great resources to conduct these surveys and that they would be conducting them community-wide. Co-Chair Morris and Councilor Workman agreed that the intent is for the colleges and universities to be conducting the surveys city-wide, not just internally.

Mr. Rivera arrived at 4:36 PM.

Discussion continued about the surveys and the group agreed that the surveys should be given every two years instead of annually, or “biennially.”

Co-Chair Van Wickler asked for feedback on page 5. He stated that “Franklin Pierce College” should be “Franklin Pierce University.” Discussion continued and the group determined that item D is not needed because Franklin Pierce was added in an earlier section already. Co-Chair Van Wickler noted that Ms. Landry had a question at the end of item E, asking if the recommendation was satisfied in item A, and he believes yes, it was. Others agreed.

Moving on to the next item, 2.A., Co-Chair Van Wickler asked how the KPD would educate the public on CALEA accreditation per the recommendation, given how much other work they are doing. He continued that he was a little concerned with the wording of this. Does the KPD really need to do this? Lt. Maxfield replied that currently, the KPD has a CALEA section on its website, which is their method of educating the public on this. Mr. Morton suggested the wording “make accessible” or “make available” to the public instead of “educate the public.” Co-Chair Van Wickler suggested the wording of “Information regarding the Keene Police Department’s CALEA accreditation and what is involved can be found on our website at [link].” Ms. Landry replied that that is already in the next paragraph. Co-Chair Van Wickler replied that he is suggesting it be worded in such a way that there is no expectation from the public that the KPD has to brief them, so that they understand clearly that if they want the information, they can get it from the website. Ms. Landry replied that it can be about continuing to publicize what is required for CALEA accreditation. Others agreed. Lt. Maxfield stated that also, during their on-site reviews by CALEA they have public forums that people can call in to or show up in person, and that is also part of the educational effort. Councilor Workman asked if he knows if the upcoming one is open to the public or just City Council. Lt. Maxfield replied that the forums are open to the public. Ms. Somers asked if they are trying to re-word it to say that the KPD will make this information available to the public, and not necessarily saying how. Others agreed. Ms. Somers replied that they should be clear about that. Co-Chair Van Wickler asked, what does “make an effort to educate the public” mean? Co-Chair Morris replied that “educate” and

“inform” are two different things, and she thinks they are wanting to use “inform” in this case. Ms. Landry replied that there is a big difference between knowing that the KPD is accredited, and knowing what that means. She continued that she changed the wording to “...and continue to publicize what is required,” but they can continue to tweak that if needed.

Police Chief Steven Russo stated that he appreciates the distinction. He continued that everything has always been on KPD webpages and he admits that it is probably not the best way, because he has spoken with people who did not know that information was on the webpage. There is a huge amount of information about CALEA, the accreditation process, and the KPD’s assessment information and statistics, but he appreciates the distinction because the KPD does not have a good method for going out and educating the public consistently about this. There is a lot of good information on their website but it is a matter of people looking at or finding it. He is not opposed to finding another way to let the public know what is on there, but he is not sure how to go about that.

Ms. Somers stated that she was wondering if it was okay to point the public to the KPD’s website, and it sounds like Chief Russo is saying that is the current place the KPD is using to publicize their information, so that answers her question.

Discussion continued about the length of time that the KPD has had CALEA accreditation. Chief Russo clarified that the KPD was first recognized by CALEA in 2009 and has held accreditation since 2013.

Co-Chair Van Wickler asked about the highlighted part in 2.B. that Ms. Landry wanted assistance with. Ms. Landry stated that what she was trying to get at here is: it is one thing to say “We put a job posting out there and we interview people who apply if they are qualified, however, how can we show that this is a great place to work regardless of your race, gender, etc?” She has heard throughout these meetings that there are people who are uncomfortable applying for jobs because they are concerned there might be a negative experience. Thus, it might take more than just posting job opportunities. Co-Chair Morris replied that that makes sense. It is not just about finding the right place to post an ad, because that is one thing – the other thing is, once people apply and come for an interview, how do we create a welcoming and open environment?

Mr. Morton left at 4:51 PM.

Ms. Somers stated that it might be about where jobs are posted, too, and exploring other places to post jobs. She continued that for example, there is a Black career woman’s network to post jobs to. Ms. Landry replied that she will take that note and incorporate it into the language after this meeting and she might need Ms. Somers’s help getting the language right.

Ms. Landry noted that she captured Mr. Rivera’s words on page 3. Chief Russo stated that in 2013 they tried posting in a publication aimed toward minorities and did not have success, but

they also did not continue it. It is a great idea for them to look at publications and websites they could use that they are not using now. He continued that for 2.B. specifically, where it says "...KPD engage external resources...", he thinks it would be more successful if they look at the entire City's hiring process as well. Ms. Landry replied that she agrees, and they do that later in the document; this section is focused on the KPD because they had the "Police, Policies, and Policing" bucket. Later in the document in a yet-to-be-completed section they will have a recommendation about hiring practices for the City and even beyond, in the community.

Councilor Workman stated that two years ago the KPD's recruitment video was posted on YouTube and it is the first search result on YouTube when you type "Keene Police Department." She continued that she personally does not think it is the greatest depiction of the KPD; it seems very militarized. She does not know what is in the budget for recruitment videos or how that came to be. It would be great to have a replacement video to improve the message. Discussion ensued. Ms. Landry stated that that video purposefully used women and people of color and there is a fine line there, because a lot of careful thought went into making a video that would attract people interested in law enforcement and if they mess with that it might be even harder to get people to apply. The City is already struggling significantly to get qualified applicants. She likes the idea of looking at the video, but they might not want to make a specific recommendation about it. Lt. Maxfield replied yes, a lot of thought went into that video. He continued that if they just showed a bunch of Officers standing around writing in notebooks, they might not attract applicants, so there is some excitement designed into it, a hook to catch people's eye. Councilor Workman asked if the recruitment video has been successful.

Co-Chair Morris suggested having a recommendation to review the video and to invest in creating a more appealing one. She continued that she wants to respect the work that has been done but there has to be some assessment to see if the video has been effective or not. Chief Russo replied that the KPD is always open to suggestions, and that video is just one small part of a larger effort. They are advertising everywhere, promoting everywhere; finding applicants is a nationwide crisis. They want to sell the community, too, to get people to consider working in law enforcement to move to the Monadnock region. He has been having conversations with people about how to change the narrative and make it more attractive to applicants and get people from this new generation to be part of the change they are asking for. Instead of just complaining, it would be great if people could help with the transition they are asking for.

Co-Chair Morris stated that that just reinforces her resolve about the video. Yes, it is one part of the biggest picture, but if they are trying to reach young people, that is a conversation about how to use social media to promote there is possibility to create change from within. If the recruitment video, which she has not seen herself, is giving this militarized picture, it might not be that appealing to young people. They could consider working with the Chamber of Commerce – a lot of places are having a hard time recruiting job applicants and a lot of businesses are saying it is hard to recruit people of color to the area. The Chamber has projects to try and attract people; it would be a good working relationship to promote the region. Ms.

Landry replied that she captured what Co-Chair Morris said and this is also where Mr. Rivera's comments come in, too.

Co-Chair Van Wickler asked if Mr. Rivera has anything else for page 5. Mr. Rivera stated that in item C in the section about the KPD, there was a question about "perception" versus "education." He recommends it say "improving public education of KPD practices" instead of public "perception," because perceptions could be due to lack of education or wrong assumptions. Ms. Landry asked if he thinks "education," "understanding," or "knowledge" is better wording than "perception." Mr. Rivera replied yes.

Co-Chair Van Wickler asked about the next highlight in E, the recommendation that the KPD "continue to engage" the services of Veteran and First Responder Healthcare organization. Ms. Landry stated that she was not sure whether the KPD already does that, and thus, whether it should say "continue to engage" or "to engage." Lt. Maxfield replied that he does not have an answer for that. Chief Russo stated that the KPD does not have any real connection with that organization but they have a peer-to-peer program. He continued that he might have missed a conversation but does not know where this recommendation to engage with that organization came from, although he thinks everything written in E is correct. They collaborate with other, more local organizations. Co-Chair Van Wickler asked if Chief Russo had other wording to suggest. Chief Russo replied that he likes what is written here. It is an ongoing process that the KPD is trying to figure out and he has looked into a number of things. The gist of what E says is great, but he does not know if it is good to name one specific organization like that. Co-Chair Van Wickler asked if he is okay with the wording of "continue to engage." Chief Russo replied yes. Ms. Landry stated that it could say "...continue to engage the services of Veteran and First Responder Healthcare or other similar organizations," so it is open. She continued that the reason they named this organization is because they had a guest speaker from there.

Mr. Morton returned to the meeting at 5:05 PM.

Co-Chair Van Wickler asked Ms. Landry about the highlighted note in item F. Ms. Landry stated that Councilor Workman had had some specific recommendations about a pen-pal program and she wanted to give her the opportunity to give wording for this. Councilor Workman stated that she intended that to be in the Education section, not the Police section. The idea was to have a program for school-age children to have pen-pals in other countries. Chief Russo replied that he had no problems having that in the Police section; the KPD does similar things already and he did not think this was in the wrong section, but the recommendations are up to the committee. The KPD would be more than happy to be involved with programs with children. Ms. Landry suggested they keep the pen-pal idea in both sections. Ms. Somers stated that when she was growing up in Jamaica she had a pen-pal for years and it was great. Chief Russo stated that something like this could go through the KPD's School Resource Officer (SRO) program and maybe the College Liaison program, too.

Co-Chair Van Wickler moved on to page 7 on Education. He noted that Ms. Landry was looking for more content under item E. Ms. Landry stated that it says “It is recommended that schools thoroughly review special education, food security, and other student and family assistance programs to determine where racial bias exists and make efforts to correct it” and it might be enough as worded, or if anyone wants to add anything, they can. Co-Chair Van Wickler and Co-Chair Morris spoke in favor of leaving it as is.

Ms. Landry asked how everyone felt about the opening paragraph in the Education section. She continued that they do not have any authority to tell the schools what they should or should not do. She tried to make it clear that the committee is making recommendations based on the information they received from the committee and public. Co-Chair Van Wickler replied that he thinks it is well-written and clear. Others agreed.

Hearing no further comment on page 7, Co-Chair Van Wickler moved on to page 8. He asked for thoughts on the highlighted text regarding the recommendation to promote diversity amongst faculty and the note that faculty diversity is stagnant nationwide. Ms. Landry stated that she found that just like recruiting is difficult for law enforcement across the board, the data is very clear that faculty diversity is stagnant, particularly for elementary school. Racial diversity is growing amongst the student population but not faculty. Do they want to address that here? It is just an observation. Co-Chair Van Wickler replied that they could just say exactly that: “Faculty diversity is stagnant nationwide. Keene is not alone.” Mr. Morton stated that he thinks the recommendation should read something to the effect of “It is recommended that Keene schools not only ensure equity in the education system by promoting diversity amongst faculty, and through concerted outreach to organizations and institutions where diversity can be found.” If you do not go where the diversity is, you can promote it all you want, but you will not get it. Co-Chair Morris stated that a critical piece is determining how to work with the current group of predominantly-white teachers, who are teaching an increasingly diverse student body, in addition to trying to increase faculty diversity, to have more culturally-responsive pedagogy. That would apply to all teachers. It would not let them off the hook, per se, to say they cannot find enough teachers of color, but they are still responsible for making sure they have culturally-responsive pedagogy. Mr. Rivera replied that that sentence would apply to every section of this paper. It is not just the Keene school system, it is also City government and County government and private businesses, all dealing with the same thing.

Ms. Landry replied yes, she agrees, and they will get to that in other sections. In other sections they were talking about how to post job positions, and one of the resources she hopes to expand upon is that they have a lot more posting resources now than they did 5 or 10 years ago. They are very social-media driven. Yes, this can be captured in multiple places in the document. She will use Co-Chair Morris’s term “culturally-responsive pedagogy” in here, too.

Ms. Landry asked what people think about how she worded H. Co-Chair Van Wickler replied that he thinks it is good the way it is.

Co-Chair Van Wickler moved on to item 4, Government Leadership. Ms. Landry asked if that section should come before the Education section. The first audience for this document is the City Council. She asked if Councilor Workman thinks this is ordered correctly. Councilor Workman replied that she thinks the Government Leadership section should be the very first section, followed by Community Input and the others in the order that they are. Mr. Rivera stated that he, too, thinks Government Leadership should be first.

Co-Chair Van Wickler asked about page 9, which has lots of highlighting. Ms. Landry stated that someone had said, “A strategic approach to moving Keene toward racial justice and inclusivity will require consistent effort, analysis, and adjustment, including a six-month and twelve-month follow-up on the recommendations in this report.” She asked if the group wants to say six- and twelve-month, or just twelve months, or just six months. Discussion ensued. Due to the differences in committee members’ opinions on this, Ms. Landry suggested just saying “Including regular follow-up.”

Ms. Somers stated that as they keep referring to things that need follow-up or measuring over some timeline, she needs some clarity. She continued that they talked about having some sort of permanent body tasked with this work, but at the same time a lot of the follow-up is referencing the City. Are they still going to recommend that some semblance of this resides in a permanent organization, such as the Human Rights Committee? Is the City Council the right body to be named as the one to follow up on these items? Ms. Landry replied that paragraph C under “Government Leadership” is where she was trying to address that – “It is recommended that the City continue its commitment and efforts toward racial justice and community safety whether via an existing committee such as the Human Rights Committee, a new equity and inclusion task force, or a joint effort of multiple community organizations and agencies.” Ms. Somers asked, if this recommendation were fulfilled, would that be the body that would do follow-up on the annual surveying and so on and so forth? Ms. Landry replied yes, she thinks so, but the City Council has the liberty to create a new committee if they want to or change the charge of an existing committee. She hopes they would divvy up the recommendations in this report or create a new committee to do that. That can be part of the committee report’s introduction and also part of the message they have with the Mayor. They can invite him to their last meeting. Ms. Somers replied that she highly recommends that be part of the report’s introduction.

Co-Chair Morris stated that someone will need to take these recommendations and come up with a plan. She continued that the plan would include a timeline and information about who is responsible for what and how to carry it through, accountability, and so on and so forth. She agrees that that has to be in the report somehow. It is important for someone to take responsibility – if not, it just becomes another document.

Mr. Rivera asked if this recommendation goes hand in hand with 1.E., the recommendation that the City partner with other public bodies “to join or convene a group of community stakeholders that serves the purpose of providing a public means for anonymous reporting of racial injustice that also includes regular review, reporting, and recommendations.” Others agreed. Ms. Landry

stated that she thinks 1.E is an item the group removed from the report, before Mr. Rivera arrived at the meeting, because it was covered elsewhere.

Ms. Landry stated that in the draft she included a recommendation about the City evaluating the state of affordable housing, which is something the committee brought up briefly in a meeting but had not expanded on. She is not sure to what extent they should include it in this report. Discussion ensued. Ms. Somers stated that maybe they could say “There are other significant issues, but due to the limited that we worked together, here are the other topics that will need to be addressed by this body that is being established.” Affordable housing is an example of such a topic. Mr. Rivera asked if the Mayor is on the Governor’s task force on housing, because he has an interest in this as well. Councilor Workman replied yes, and City Council is addressing it in a few different aspects and it is very important to the current City Council and the Mayor. Discussion continued and Ms. Landry thanked Ms. Somers for her thoughts and suggested wording, which she will work into the conclusion somehow.

Regarding section F, the recommendation that the City promote festivals that celebrate racial diversity, Ms. Landry asked if anyone had specifics to list. Ideas committee members gave were Juneteenth, Cinco de Mayo, Holi, and Pride. Ms. Landry stated that she saw a great idea – there is a community that asks people of color to do the social media recording and photography at these events, and found a very different perspective, which was very educating. She continued that she will not put that in the report but wanted to mention it.

Ms. Landry stated that now they get to the end of the draft with the section she has not written yet. She continued one section is Business-Employers, and that would address what the Police Chief was saying about some things that would apply to other employers, like ways to promote equity, and reviewing hiring practices and policies, and mission statements.

Co-Chair Morris and Co-Chair Van Wickler thanked Ms. Landry for all the work she has done.

Chief Russo thanked Ms. Landry and the committee for the work and time they have put into this, and stated that he thinks they have created a great document. He continued that he recommends that if possible, they give this to one committee instead of multiple committees. If they split these (recommendations) out amongst multiple committees, it would get confusing for everyone and would create a lot of havoc. He recommends they give it to the Human Rights Committee or one of the City’s standing committees. Regarding holding accountability, he hopes the group recognizes that their recommendations are just recommendations for every organization outside. The only one listed so far is the KPD. He would ask them to consider, since they are looking at bringing the net very large, as they should, is to change the second category of recommendations from “Police Department” to [something else] because there are other organizations that have jurisdiction within the City of Keene, including the Sheriff’s Department and NH State Police, and realizing again that the recommendations are just recommendations. They will not get any argument from the KPD and the KPD is going to work with the City Council on the recommendations; that is a given. But it would show that they are

trying to expand this to the community, just as they are with the other categories of Education and Public Input & Community Education.

Mr. Morton stated that he thinks “Police Department” should be changed to “First Responders.” He continued that he thinks all of these recommendations talk to all of our first responders and safety. Ms. Landry stated that it will require a little rewording in the paragraphs, too, which is fine. She continued that CALEA is something that only law enforcement agencies can do. Chief Russo replied that CALEA has accreditation processes for Communications Offices specific to dispatch centers, and a slew of other things, like Corrections. The hospital and KSC are accredited, although through something different than CALEA. Ms. Landry replied that she hears what he is saying and is going to take a stab at this, maybe with the category being called “Emergency Responders.” Chief Russo stated that he does not want to push CALEA on anyone else, because it is a long, difficult, expensive process. He continued that there could be a subparagraph linking CALEA with the KPD specifically. Discussion continued about how to rename the category, and the group agreed with Councilor Workman’s suggestion of “Public Safety.” Ms. Landry stated that she will make an effort to, when possible, throw a wider net in the language in those paragraphs.

Ms. Landry stated that she was not sure if Ms. Somers and Mr. Morton wanted to be quoted in the last paragraph, and if so, how they want to be referenced. Ms. Somers replied that she is fine with that, as “Gail Somers, a Keene resident.” Mr. Morton stated that he is fine with being quoted, too, as “Pierre Morton, proud member of the Keene community.” Councilor Workman stated that both of their quotes are powerful and phenomenal. Co-Chair Morris agreed.

Ms. Landry thanked the group for all of their feedback, and stated that she thinks she has what she needs and can finalize the language for the last couple of sections and make the changes everyone recommended. She continued that they did not touch on one thing that Mr. Rivera had asked, which is whether the committee would address the very uncomfortable topic of racial hoaxes when with encounters with Black, Indigenous, and people of color the Police are easily manipulated to be viewed as racist and using excessive use of force. She asked if Mr. Rivera wanted to say anything. Mr. Rivera stated that when people try to do the right thing, there are folks who try to take advantage of that and manipulate an incident on social media to make incidents appear to be racist and anti-police and law enforcement officers have to defend themselves or try to get ahead of it but sometimes the damage has already been made. How do they address that? It is a very uncomfortable conversation but it is also reality. He is not sure if the committee wants to go there or not. Co-Chair Morris stated that her concern, given some of her most recent experiences, is saying something like that can appear very defensive and will be interpreted that way, and she thinks it can distract from the rest of the report. Co-Chair Van Wickler stated that he thanks Mr. Rivera for his thoughts, but agrees with Co-Chair Morris that they do not want to distract from what the report is trying to do.

3) Additional Recommendations – Chair Van Wickler

Co-Chair Van Wickler spoke about his letter, which reads as follows:

“9 February 2021

Keene Racial Justice and Public Safety Committee

Re: Proposal for discussion

In consideration of recommendations to the Mayor and Keene City Council for our final report I am requesting discussion and consideration of the following;

*1. For the city of Keene to **implement a one hour block of instruction** as part of their orientation that is mandatory for all city employees on the topic of “racial and cultural sensitivity training and familiarization”.*

*2. Develop a section of the **city website dedicated to the familiarization of racial justice issues** that the public can access and interact with.*

*All of the following ideas are **proposals** to stimulate discussion. My pitch is this:*

The name of this section of the website is

“ Keene REACT ~ Racial Equity Acknowledgement & Courtesy Training”

Different buttons feature information on NH Native American History, Black History, Indian, Latino and Asian history. Include statistics on percentages of the population for each both Nationally and locally and percentage of business owners for each in NH and in our community.

Another tab is a recommended book to read list, and which ones are available in our local library.

*A tab that features a “question and discussion” forum on **racial justice and public safety issues**.*

*A tab that features the loving (and challenging) life of **bi racial families utilizing real life scenarios from our community**.*

*A tab that features **“TED talk” and other videos** on racial justice that enhance our knowledge of cultural differences and understanding of one another. During one of our meetings someone brought up the “You Tube” videos of “Discussions with a Black Man” and other videos defining “white privilege” as an example.*

These videos can help us understand terms such as “code switching”, which too few white people understand or even know about. Two great videos on code switching are by

Chandra Arthur ~ The cost of code switching

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bo3hRq2RnNI>

And

Katelynn Duggin ~ To code switch or not code switch

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sncGGjaYJ5I>

These are two of many examples that will enhance learning and understanding for our community and hopefully lead toward greater acceptance of one another.

Knowledge is power. The more we know, the better it gets.

So as we wrap up our recommendations to the Mayor and city council, I believe that this is a worthwhile recommendation to first discuss this among ourselves and then perhaps pass along in our final recommendation if the committee feels it worthy.

I am eager to hear and process your thoughts on this proposal.

In the spirit of peace, Rick”

4) Next Meeting – Agenda Items and Schedule

Discussion ensued about when to meet again, for the final meeting, and for how long. Co-Chair Van Wickler stated that the meeting likely will not be as long as this one – it will just be for any last urgent comments about the report, and then a roll call vote to send it to the City Council. He continued that he agrees with Ms. Landry that they should invite the Mayor to the final meeting, to get his input. The group chose 6:00 PM on March 18. Ms. Landry stated that they need to finish before the 7:00 PM City Council meeting. The group agreed that it is reasonable to expect they could finish in 45 minutes.

Co-Chair Van Wickler thanked everyone for their hard work. There being no further business, he adjourned the meeting at 5:55 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker