

City of Keene
New Hampshire

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Monday, April 12, 2021

5:00 PM

Remote Meeting via Zoom

Members Present:

Dr. Mohammed Saleh, Vice Chair
Councilor Jan Manwaring
Dr. Shaun Filiault
Nancy Salwen
Sofia Cunha-Vasconcelos
Dr. Dottie Morris

Staff Present:

Andrew Bohannon, Parks, Recreation, and
Facilities Director

Members Not Present:

Ritu Budakoti
William Hay, Chair
Marti Fiske

Vice Chair Saleh read a prepared statement explaining how the Emergency Order #12, pursuant to Executive Order #2020-04 issued by the Governor of New Hampshire, waives certain provisions of RSA 91-A (which regulates the operation of public body meetings) during the declared COVID-19 State of Emergency.

1) Welcome and Call to Order

Vice Chair Saleh called the meeting to order at 5:05 PM. Roll call was conducted.

Mr. Bohannon stated that agenda items 2) and 3) were addressed at the HRC meeting last month, so they can go right to 4).

2) Approval of March 1, 2021 Minutes

3) Finance Report

4) Pride Month

Dr. Filiault reported that he and Mr. Bohannon were able to get in touch with the Monadnock International Film Festival (MONIFF) this week. He continued that MONIFF selected a film for the HRC to screen during Pride month, related to the current state of transgender rights in the United States. That is a powerful issue to address. He is working on getting a speaker for the discussion following the film, which could potentially be at a local business that has a large open

space for a hybrid in-person/Zoom event. MONIFF will soon give the HRC a preview copy of the film so they can watch it to make sure it is one they want to present, but it has had great critical reception.

Dr. Filiault continued that they also want to hold the event in June instead of May, to have more time to pull everything together. He asked if Mr. Bohannon had anything to add. Mr. Bohannon replied that they need to choose a date. He continued that the idea is to show the film for a couple days and then have the discussion. Dr. Filiault replied that he and Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos had talked some about a date in June.

Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that the first three weekends in June already have community events planned/are occupied. Discussion ensued about when to show the movie. Mr. Bohannon suggested a mid-week showing, so it does not conflict with a weekend event. Dr. Filiault suggested the end of the month, and questioned whether people would watch a movie on a weekday evening. Vice Chair Saleh stated that the days are longest in June or July so that is a good time. Mr. Bohannon suggested that when they get the release and preview the film, they could pick a date from there, based on how long it takes to watch and who Dr. Filiault may have found to be a speaker and how long they think the discussion might be. Dr. Filiault replied that is fine, but they need to pick a date soon so they can publicize the event. Mr. Bohannon replied that he expects they will have the film access in a week or two and they would be able to have everything done before the next meeting. Vice Chair Saleh asked if a quorum needs to be present to finalize the date. Mr. Bohannon replied no, the subcommittee can pick a date and report out.

5) Juneteenth

Councilor Manwaring reported that the subcommittee is looking at three things: food, music, and history. She continued that right now they really need help with the music; they are not having any luck reaching out and finding Black musicians. The ones they have contacted are already booked. The subcommittee is open to ideas and hoping other HRC members have contacts. They are trying to finalize it this month so they can get the publicity out.

Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that as an overall picture, things are starting to come together. They have the outline of the program – two musical performances; with speakers before, during, and after. They need to meet with the City to discuss a few things. They also want to have a voter registration table. They have connected with the group that did a Juneteenth event last year, and they are giving the subcommittee good names for speakers and possibly poets. Work has begun with local restaurants.

Ms. Salwen stated that the subcommittee's next meeting is on Monday. She continued that it is starting to come together, and they are working on a "save the date" announcement to go up on the City calendar to start getting people interested and engaged.

Discussion ensued about the search for musicians. Committee members asked questions about where the subcommittee has looked so far and who they have talked with. Committee members and Mr. Bohannon gave suggestions for who else to consider. Discussion ensued about the possibility of a drum circle.

Discussion ensued about finances and the HRC's budget. Councilor Manwaring spoke about the subcommittee's belief that it is important to pay performers. Mr. Bohannon encouraged the subcommittee to pursue sponsorships.

6) Library ALA Grant

Mr. Bohannon stated that Marti Fiske was not able to attend the meeting tonight, but in the agenda packet he included flyers for the Community Conversations from the Libraries Transforming Communities grant, which is the ALA grant the Keene Public Library received. He continued that it has upcoming dates for different discussions (on race and social justice). The first one was very well attended with 123 participants. He listed the upcoming dates and topics/books. Dr. Morris stated that *The Fire Next Time*, by James Baldwin, is very good.

Mr. Bohannon stated that it is their job, as the Human Rights Committee, to help promote these events, and he encouraged the committee to please spread the word and share the events on social media. He continued that along with the Community Conversations information, Ms. Fiske is sending out information on eight different books on anti-racism that the KPL has acquired, to increase people's access to anti-racist resources, which was part of the Ad Hoc Racial Justice and Community Safety Committee (AHRJCS)'s report and recommendations. At one of the AHRJCS meetings, someone pledged \$500 to purchase more books on the subject matter for the community and the KPL has done that. Mr. Bohannon encouraged the HRC members to check out those books and let people know that the KPL is a great resource for exploring this topic.

Vice Chair Saleh asked if the events are remote or in-person. Mr. Bohannon replied that they are all remote. Vice Chair Saleh asked if these KPL events are posted on the bulletin boards in the City Hall lobby, because a lot of people go there. Mr. Bohannon replied that if they are not already posted there, they will be.

7) New, Other Business

Councilor Manwaring stated that she has been doing a lot of reading in preparation for Juneteenth and would really like to see the HRC do something for Indigenous People's Day, which was formerly Columbus Day. She continued that it is in October, and they do not need to do anything about it today, but she pictures something similar to what they did for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. She would like the HRC to think about this. Indigenous people were treated so horribly and it is important to do something.

Dr. Morris reported that tomorrow night, as part of the Remembering to Heal series, there will be a speaker who is an Indigenous woman, speaking on the topic of trauma and the idea that memory can help repair trauma to some degree. She continued that it is hard to fully explain but relates to the concept of validation. Remembering trauma experienced by Indigenous people or people of color, and validating it instead of denying that it happened, helps with the healing. It is tomorrow night at 7:00 PM and free and you can register at her website or the Cohen Center's website.

Ms. Salwen stated that a book by Louise Erdrich she just finished reading talked about the Trump Administration's threat to the Wampanoag tribe. She continued that is current, and the Wampanoag people are local, and she does not know much about it but if the HRC is going to do something for Indigenous People's Day this is something they could learn about. Dr. Morris replied that they could talk with people at the NH Intertribal Native American Council, such as Denise and Paul Pouliot. She briefly spoke more about their work.

Vice Chair Saleh asked if Mr. Bohannon could add Indigenous People's Day to next month's agenda. Mr. Bohannon replied yes, that is a great idea. He continued that they could do something similar to what they did for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.

Vice Chair Saleh asked if there is any other new business. Mr. Bohannon stated that the AHRJCS Committee, which Dr. Morris was a part of, has submitted their 11-page report and it is on the City's website on the AHRJCS Committee page under the "Boards and Commissions" tab. He continued that he has asked them to also link it on the HRC's webpage. Actions are already being taken as a result of this subcommittee so he thanks Dr. Morris and everyone on that committee for their amazing work. Dr. Morris replied that it was an amazing group of people and she cannot say enough about (the committee's staff liaison) Rebecca Landry.

Vice Chair Saleh asked Mr. Bohannon to email the link to the report to the committee. Mr. Bohannon replied that he will, and he will also add it to the May agenda. He continued that eventually, many of the AHRJCS Committee's action items will come to the HRC's plate.

8) Adjourn – Next Meeting Monday, May 3, 2021 at 5:00 PM

There being no further business, Vice Chair Saleh adjourned the meeting at 5:52 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

Edits submitted by,
Andy Bohannon, PRF Director