

City of Keene
New Hampshire

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE MEETING AGENDA

Monday, April 1, 2024 at 5:00 PM
Room 22 Upstairs, Recreation Center

Members:

Sofia Cunha-Vasconcelos
Dr. Dottie Morris
Dr. Mohammad Saleh
Marti Fiske
Rabbi Daniel Aronson
Councilor Catherine Workman
Gina Burke
Ritu Budakoti
Aja Davis

Staff:

Alyssa Bender, Youth Services Manager

Alternates:

Tedd Benson
Debra Bowie
Jennifer Nascimento
David Morrill

Agenda:

1. Welcome and Call to Order
2. Approval of March 4, 2024 Minutes
3. Finance Report
4. Monadnock Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Coalition Updates
5. Racial Justice Community Safety Report
6. Acceptance of Committee Event Reports
 - a. Black History Month
 - b. Juneteenth
 - c. Keene International Festival
 - d. Indigenous Peoples' Day
 - e. Pride Event
 - f. Martin Luther King Jr. Day
7. New Business
8. Adjourn- Next Meeting May 6, 2024 at 5:00 PM

Tabled: Community Survey

"In our efforts to create a more equal and just society, we move forward with the firm intention to value the voices, opinions, and experiences of all people. We choose to proceed with the awareness and humility that the statements and decisions we make will have a different impact for those with different life experiences. "

1 City of Keene
2 New Hampshire

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5 HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE
6 MEETING MINUTES
7

Monday, March 4, 2024

5:00 PM

Room 22,
Recreation Center

Members Present:

Sofia Cunha-Vasconcelos, Chair
Gina Burke
Tedd Benson, Alternate
Debra Bowie
Rabbi Daniel Aronson (arrived at 5:11 PM)
Ritu Budakoti (arrived at 5:19 PM)

Staff Present:

Alyssa Bender-Jesse, Youth Services Manager

Members Not Present:

Councilor Catherine Workman
Dr. Dottie Morris
Dr. Mohammad Saleh
Marti Fiske
Jennifer Nescimento, Alternate

8
9
10 **1) Welcome and Call to Order**

11
12 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos read the HRC's statement: *"In our efforts to create a more equal and*
13 *just society, we move forward with the firm intention to value the voices, opinions, and*
14 *experiences of all people. We choose to proceed with the awareness and humility that the*
15 *statements and decisions we make will have a different impact for those with different life*
16 *experiences.* " She called the meeting to order at 5:03 PM.

17
18 Roll call was conducted. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that today Mr. Benson will step in for
19 Dr. Morris as a voting member, and new member Debbie Bowie will fill in for Marti Fiske as a
20 voting member.

21
22 **2) Approval of January 8, 2024 Minutes**

23
24 Mr. Benson made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of January 8, 2024. Ms. Burke
25 seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

26
27 **3) Finance Report**

28

29 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos explained the layout of the finance report for the benefit of the new
30 members.

31

32 Ms. Bender stated that at the January meeting, the balance on hand was printed incorrectly. She
33 continued that staff looked into it and updated/corrected it. On the form, she added the correct
34 balance to where the year ended. They also updated the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day section. To
35 answer a question from a previous meeting, yes, the Pride event did use the whole \$500 allotted
36 for the event last year.

37

38 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos explained the HRC's budget for the benefit of the new members. She
39 stated that the HRC annually receives \$2,000 from the City, which is divided equally by the
40 annual events the HRC puts on. It is up to the chair of each event's working group to figure out
41 where to get whatever additional funds (if any) the event needs. Typically, but not always, the
42 HRC does not spend its entire budget and has carry-over funds. The use of excess funds is voted
43 upon by the entire HRC.

44

45 Ms. Bender-Jesse asked if the HRC wants Black History Month to stay on the events list in the
46 finance report, but without the \$500 funding listed, since last year it was a brand new event and
47 not specifically in the HRC's budget. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos agreed. She stated that they
48 should probably figure out how to allocate the budget for next year.

49

50 Discussion ensued about the budget. In response to a question about Black History Month, Chair
51 Cunha-Vasconcelos explained how Dr. Morris organized a rather ad-hoc, impromptu event last
52 year that worked out well, but it was unclear whether the HRC hosting a Black History Month
53 would happen annually. The HRC needs to figure out whether to make it official and how to
54 allocate the budget accordingly.

55

56 As discussion continued about the budget, Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos explained that it has its
57 own budget; the KIF organizers have consistent funding sources

58

59 4) Monadnock Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Coalition (MDEIB) Update

60

61 Rabbi Aronson arrived at 5: 11 PM.

62

63 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos gave background information about the synergy between the HRC's
64 work and the MDEIB's work, and the people who are members of both.

65

66 Ms. Burke stated that she is part of the MDEIB's Business Advisory subcommittee, but does not
67 know what has been happening with the larger coalition. She continued that she thinks they just
68 finalized the strategic plan, but is not sure. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that hopefully Dr.
69 Morris or Councilor Workman can confirm that at the next HRC meeting.

70

71 **5) Racial Justice and Community Safety Report Update**

72
73 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos gave background about the work of the Racial Justice and Community
74 Safety (RJCS) Committee, which Dr. Morris was a part of. She stated that the RJCS Committee
75 provided a report to the City, which the then-Mayor asked the HRC to review and give the City
76 recommendations about. After a great deal of review, the HRC provided an Executive Summary
77 of the RJCS Report to the City, with recommendations. The HRC is advisory and has no
78 authority to direct anyone to do anything. The City now has a DEi Committee with
79 representation from each City department, doing good work.

80
81 Ms. Bender stated that the Executive Summary just made it to the DEI Committee. She
82 continued that they are reserving their next meeting for going through the entire report.

83
84 **6) Acceptance of Committee Event Reports**

85
86 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that one of the HRC's primary functions is to create events for
87 the public that are opportunities to dialogue and learn about human rights issues. She continued
88 that the events (on the agenda) are ones that they have identified as ones to plan every year, and
89 each has a working group.

90
91 **a) Black History Month**

92
93 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that she would love a debrief of this event from anyone who
94 attended. Otherwise, they will wait to hear from Dr. Morris. Ms. Bowie spoke positively about
95 the event and what she appreciated about it. She stated that the songwriting workshop with Crys
96 Matthews was helpful and gave ideas on how to have dialogue in a non-confrontational way.
97 The performance was excellent, too. She wishes it had a bigger turnout. Brief discussion
98 ensued.

99
100 **b) Juneteenth**

101
102 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that the next meeting is March 27. She continued that the
103 working group has solidified the program for the main event on Wednesday. She gave
104 information about the satellite events they are planning for that week, and spoke of the synergy
105 happening with other groups from the area, and how well it is all coming together. She stated
106 that they need to do fundraising.

107
108 Ritu Budakoti arrived at 5:19 PM.

109
110 Rabbi Aronson asked who is on the working group and what part of the event the HRC owns.
111 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that the HRC technically owns the Wednesday night concert.
112 She gave more information about the concert. She spoke of the great collaboration with
113 MONIFF, the Keene YMCA, and others, which makes her hesitate to say that anyone "owns"

114 anything. Discussion continued about Juneteenth. Rabbi Aronson spoke about how the Keene
115 SwampBats asked him and other faith leaders to participate in an event they planned for that
116 Wednesday night and how he is communicating with them and encouraging them to do
117 something for Juneteenth.

118

119 Ms. Bowie asked about typical numbers of people attending the event. Chair Cunha-
120 Vasconcelos spoke about how it was probably 60 or 70 last year, total, indoors due to rain. Ms.
121 Bender replied that she thinks the number was higher. Discussion continued. Chair Cunha-
122 Vasconcelos spoke about how the working group has learned, over the years, about getting the
123 word out. They will have promotional banners this year.

124

125 **c) Keene International Festival**

126

127 Ms. Budakoti stated that the planning has kicked back up for the September 28 event, at the Rec
128 Center, from 11 :00 AM to 3:00 PM. She continued that the committee welcomes anyone who
129 wants to get involved in any capacity, such as volunteers for the day of, sponsors, or getting the
130 word out. It is about celebrating the great diversity in the Monadnock region. Discussion
131 ensued. Ms. Budakoti stated that the plan is for the event to be outdoors but will move inside if
132 weather necessitates.

133

134 **d) Indigenous Peoples' Day**

135

136 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that Ms. Fiske is the chair of the Indigenous Peoples' Day
137 working group and is not here today. She continued that it is probably a little early for that
138 working group to be planning, so she assumes there is no update.

139

140 **e) Pride**

141

142 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that the HRC member who chaired the Pride event has left the
143 HRC. She continued that at the last meeting she gave everyone a heads up that she would be
144 asking today for an HRC member to volunteer to chair the Pride event.

145

146 Rabbi Aronson replied that he would be happy to work on it.

147

148 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that since there are new members, she will give everyone
149 another month, to think about whether they have the time/ideas/capacity to chair the Pride event.

150

151 **f) Martin Luther King, Jr. Day**

152

153 Rabbi Aronson stated that last month he submitted a report. He continued that many people
154 worked hard on this event. Ms. Fiske took the part at the Library and ran with it, the Community
155 Kitchen ran with their part, Ms. Burke did the press release, and Ms. Bender promoted the event
156 on social media. Bensonwood was an underwriter, which they really appreciate. Rabbi Aronson

157 continued that it was not a collaborative effort (with other community groups), however, in the
158 way that Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos was describing for Juneteenth. He is interested in learning
159 how some of the HRC's other working groups work in tandem with other (community) groups.
160

161 Rabbi Aronson stated that there is the question of what to do with other income that came to the
162 HRC for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, from the Monadnock Interfaith Project, and the \$500 the
163 HRC budgeted for. He asked if they ever received the money from the college that Dr. Morris
164 had talked about. Ms. Bender replied that they have not received anything. Rabbi Aronson
165 stated that the event raised a good amount for Homeboy Industries, but it would be nice if the
166 City sent something from what the HRC has.
167

168 Rabbi Aronson stated that the Community Kitchen sent an invoice. He continued that during
169 planning, the Community Kitchen only asked the HRC to pay for the food, but the itemized
170 invoice is like what one would expect from two fully catered meals, which the Community
171 Kitchen needs for their own taxes, although they do not expect the HRC to pay for more than the
172 cost of the food. Discussion ensued about the event's expenses and money raised.
173

174 Ms. Bender stated that since the HRC did not meet last month, she wants to add now that outside
175 of the money received from the sales of (Father Greg Boyle's) books, there were substantial
176 donations made online, and via check, for Homeboy Industries. She continued that it is amazing
177 how much they have been able to give Homeboy Industries. Rabbi Aronson stated that there is
178 Bensonwood's contribution to Homeboy Industries, too, which is great. He continued that he
179 was very happy with the event, which had great attendance. The only disappointment was the
180 lack of attendance of (public) high school students. The working group would like to work more
181 with the MDEIB, and wanted youth singers, but that would have had to be planned months in
182 advance - those are things to think about for the future.
183

184 Rabbi Aronson stated that the question on the table is whether the HRC should pay the
185 Community Kitchen just for the food, as agreed, or give them more. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos
186 stated that she thinks the HRC does not need to vote on that, because it is the MLK Day working
187 group's budget to make decisions about, unless there is a process she is unaware of.
188

189 Ms. Bender replied that she asked Rabbi Aronson to bring this to the group to have a
190 conversation about it. She continued that the question is whether the HRC wants to use the
191 balance on hand or the money raised. Rabbi Aronson asked if the HRC wants to send more of
192 the remaining money to Homeboy Industries, or give it to the Community Kitchen to cover the
193 cost of the labor for the event. Discussion ensued.
194

195 Ms. Budakoti made a motion for the HRC to send the remaining money to the Community
196 Kitchen. Rabbi Aronson seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.
197

198 Ms. Bender-Jesse stated that they are looking at sending \$1,550. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos
199 replied that sounds good.

200
201 Rabbi Aronson stated that earlier, Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos had asked the HRC for their
202 thoughts on the best method for getting working group chairs to submit their event updates (for
203 the HRC meetings/agendas), and it would be helpful if they could get a reminder about two
204 weeks prior, such as "Please submit reports by [date]." Discussion ensued. Ms. Bender-Jesse
205 stated that she can send the working group chairs a reminder a week in advance. Ms. Budakoti
206 asked if that reminder will come at the same time as the email HRC members reply to to say
207 whether they are coming to the meeting. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that anyone who
208 knows they *cannot* attend a meeting should let Ms. Bender-Jesse know in response to the email;
209 there is no need to send "I'm coming" emails.

210
211 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that for the MLK Day event, today they discussed its finances
212 and briefly touched on the fact that it was a great event, and she wants to say again that it was a
213 wonderful event. She continued that she wants to thank Rabbi Aronson and the working group
214 for the program. Others agreed that it was great. Ms. Bowie stated that it had a great turnout.
215 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos agreed, noting that it was standing room-only in the back. She
216 continued that it was the best turnout she has seen for a Martin Luther King, Jr. Day event.

217
218 7) New Business

219
220 Ms. Budakoti stated that she was told she is now a full member instead of an alternate. She
221 asked if that will be reflected in a future agenda and meeting minutes. Ms. Bender-Jesse replied
222 yes. She continued that if anyone is interested, she has the membership list showing everyone's
223 membership status and when people's terms are expiring.

224
225 Ms. Budakoti introduced a friend who came with her today and is interested in the HRC.

226
227 Rabbi Aronson stated that it is the Cohen Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies's genocide
228 awareness month and there are upcoming events. He continued that there is a film screening of
229 "First They Killed My Father" at the Library at 6:00 PM on March 7. The next day at 12:30 PM
230 in the Mason Library or via Zoom is Cohen Conversation: Reflections on The Killing Fields,
231 with Bodie Barton, a survivor of the Cambodian genocide. There is a photography exhibit at the
232 Library from March 4 through April 9. On April 3 from 3:00 to 4:30 PM, the author of "First
233 They Killed My Father" will be speaking and doing a book signing in the Mountain View Room
234 of the Student Center. The Genocide Awareness lecture is April 3 at 5:30 PM at Keene State
235 College, with more details at the Cohen Center's website.

236
237 Ms. Bowie stated that she will send a link to the Cohen Center's website to Ms. Bender-Jesse,
238 who can send it out to the HRC members. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos reminded the HRC to not
239 click "reply all" to avoid inadvertently creating a quorum. She thanked Rabbi Aronson for the
240 information.

241

242 Ms. Bender-Jesse stated that many people were very moved by having Father Greg Boyle here
243 for MLK Day, to the point where someone else is trying to get him to come back to Keene to
244 continue the conversation. She continued that recently, Omar Ndizeye came to Keene, through
245 the Cohen Center, for a fantastic event that included restorative circles and a panel. As a result
246 of those two events coming together and bringing that restorative conversation to the area, she
247 and people from several area organizations have come together to discuss bringing something
248 like that to Keene again. They understand how much work Father Boyle has done and they want
249 to continue that conversation and see how the community can keep working together in that
250 restorative light. It is something for the HRC to be aware of, if they are interested in helping
251 make a continuation out of the amazing event.

252
253 Ms. Bowie stated that to add to that, she is a chair on KSC's Truth, Reconciliation, and Equity
254 Collaborative. She continued that she has also been attending the United Church of Christ
255 (UCC), which is working on a Compassionate Community program. She is seeing all of these
256 different groups (doing similar work) and she is telling everyone that they have to find a way to
257 come together, because they could then accomplish so much more. Gail Somers is working on a
258 multicultural center, too. How can they all work together? Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied
259 that that is a great question for everyone to mull over, and maybe they will have suggestions for
260 next time.

261

262 **8) Adjourn - Next Meeting April 1, 2024 at 5:00 PM**

263

264 There being no further business, Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos adjourned the meeting at 5:56 PM.

265

266 Respectfully submitted by,
267 Britta Reida, Minute Taker

268

269 Reviewed and edited by,
270 Alyssa Bender-Jesse, Youth Services Manager

7/1/22- 6/30/23	HRC	KIF	7/1/23- 6/30/24	HRC	KIF	7/1/24- 6/30/25	HRC	KIF
Balance 7/1/22	\$ 2,991.88	\$ 3,985.44	Balance 7/1/23	\$ 2,692.50	\$ 5,951.74	Balance 7/1/24	\$ 4,942.50	\$ 3,985.44
4,091.88								
Income			Income			Income		
City of Keene	\$ 1,000.00		City of Keene	\$ 2,000.00		City of Keene	\$ -	
donations TILL	\$ 1,800.00		Donation MLK	\$ 750.00				
donations Juneteenth	\$ 3,150.00		MLK Book Funds	632.65				
Donations KIF		\$ 8,312.00	Donations KIF		\$ 4,300.00	Donations KIF		\$ -
subtotal	\$ 5,950.00	\$ 8,312.00	subtotal	\$ 3,382.65	\$ 4,300.00	subtotal	\$ -	\$ -
Total Income	\$ 5,950.00	\$ 8,312.00	Total Income	\$ 3,382.65	\$ 4,300.00	Total Income	\$ -	\$ -
Expenses			Expenses			Expenses		
Martin Luther King Day	\$ 45.55		Martin Luther King Day	\$ 331.90		Martin Luther King Day	\$ -	
500.00			500.00	\$ 1,550.75		500.00		
Black History Month TILL	\$ 1,800.00		Black History Month	\$ -		Black History Month	\$ -	
Juneteenth	\$ 3,098.58		Juneteenth	\$ -		Juneteenth	\$ -	
500.00			500.00			500.00		
International Festival		\$ 6,345.70	International Festival		\$ 6,339.06	International Festival		\$ 1,280.48
Indicigenous Peoples Day	\$ -		Indigenous Peoples Day	\$ -		Indigenous Peoples Day	\$ -	
500.00			500.00			500.00		
			Pride Event - Story Clear Filrr	\$ 500.00		Pride Event		
			500.00			500.00		
Total Expenses	\$ 4,944.13	\$ 6,345.70	Total Expenses	\$ 2,382.65	\$ 6,339.06	Total Expenses	\$ -	\$ 1,280.48
Net 22-23	\$ 1,005.87	\$ 1,966.30	Net 23-24	\$ 1,000.00	\$ {2,039.06}	Net 24-25	\$ -	\$ (1,280.48)
Balance on hand	\$ 3,997.75	\$ 5,951.74	Balance on hand* ,...	\$ 3,692.50	\$ 3,912.68	Balance on hand	\$ 4942.50	\$ 2,704.96
Correct Balance	2692.5							