

City of Keene
New Hampshire

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE MEETING AGENDA

Monday, May 1, 2023 at 5:00 PM
Room 22 Upstairs, Recreation Center

Members:

Sofia Cunha-Vasconcelos
Dr. Dottie Morris
Janis Manwaring
Dr. Mohammad Saleh
Marti Fiske
Hunter Kirschner
Rabbi Daniel Aronson
Councilor Catherine Workman
Gina Burke

Staff:

Andy Bohannon, PRF Director
Alyssa Bender, Youth Services Manager

Alternates:

Ritu Budakoti
Tedd Benson
Jennifer Nascimento

Agenda:

1. Welcome and Call to Order
2. Approval of April 3, 2023 Minutes
3. Finance Report
4. Monadnock Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Coalition Updates
5. Todd Horner – Multimodal Transportation
6. Acceptance of Committee Event Reports
 - a. Juneteenth
7. Racial Justice Community Safety Report
8. Community Survey
9. New Business
10. Adjourn – Next Meeting Monday, June 5, 2023 at 5:00 PM

“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, April 3, 2023

5:00 PM

Room 22,
Recreation Center

Members Present:

Sofia Cunha-Vasconcelos, Chair
Hunter Kirschner, Vice Chair
Dr. Dottie Morris (left at 5:50 PM)
Marti Fiske
Rabbi Daniel Aronson
Ritu Budakoti, Alternate

Staff Present:

Alyssa Bender, Youth Services Manager

Members Not Present:

Dr. Mohammed Saleh
Councilor Catherine Workman
Tedd Benson, Alternate
Dr. Shaun Filiault
Heidi Schwieger, Alternate
Jan Manwaring

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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."*

17
18 She called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM. Roll call was conducted.

19
20 **2) Approval of Meeting Minutes – March 6, 2023**

21
22 Ms. Fiske made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of March 6, 2023. Dr. Morris
23 seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

24
25 **3) Finance Report**

26
27 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that Mr. Bohannon updated some expenses. She continued that
28 the Finance Report today is informational and Mr. Bohannon is not present to answer questions.
29 She asked, with that caveat, does anyone have questions? Hearing none, she moved on in the
30 agenda.

31

32 **4) Monadnock Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Coalition (MDEIB)**

33

34 Dr. Morris reported that the Education Subcommittee has been meeting with the Keene High
35 School (KHS) principal, Dr. Gallagher. She continued that those meetings will continue, and the
36 group is thinking about things district-wide, so they are not just focusing on the high school. The
37 MDEIB as a whole continues to meet and to focus on fundraising efforts.

38

39 **5) Todd Horner**

40

41 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos invited Todd Horner to speak.

42

43 Mr. Horner stated that he is here representing the City's Bicycle/Pedestrian Path Advisory
44 Committee (BPPAC). He continued that Mr. Bohannon suggested he come to a HRC meeting so
45 the two groups can "cross pollinate" a bit and share what each group is doing and talk about
46 potential intersections of their respective work. BPPAC members have talked about ways that
47 equity and social justice might intersect with the BPPAC's work. Their focus has primarily been
48 on disability rights, but there are of course others ways that human rights and social justice
49 intersect with transportation, especially active transportation.

50

51 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that this came up as a function of the Downtown Infrastructure
52 project and some efforts to make the City's bike paths more accessible and some considerations
53 specifically around e-bikes. She asked if that is correct. Mr. Horner replied that from an
54 affordability standpoint, bikes and e-bikes are within reach of many more households than a
55 personal auto, which is why Mr. Bohannon brought that up. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if
56 that is coming up, or if this is more of a general conversation. Mr. Horner replied more of a
57 general conversation, although they can talk about downtown specifically if that is where folks
58 want to focus. The City has many construction projects coming up in the next few years, so he
59 was thinking of a more general conversation about what the HRC sees as issues, concerns, or
60 policy concerns that the BPPAC might want to think about related to social justice and equity.
61 He read the Racial Justice and Community Safety (RJCS) Report, flagging areas where he
62 thought there might be overlap. They can also talk about specific locations. The BPPAC wants
63 to know about locations where people are struggling to navigate.

64

65 Discussion ensued. Ms. Fiske spoke about a lack of bicycle storage at various shopping plazas
66 around town, and lack of access for people with disabilities/mobility issues, and the importance
67 of increasing their access to bus routes, including for evening hours, events, and so on and so
68 forth. Mr. Horner replied that the BPPAC has not yet focused on transit as much as they should,

69 but he works for the Southwest Regional Planning Commission (SWRPC), which works with
70 communities in the region on public policy issues, including transit. This next fiscal year they
71 will conduct a feasibility study about what it would be like if there was improved public transit
72 in the area - what sort of organizational structure would be necessary in order to keep that going?
73 HCS (Home Healthcare, Hospice, and Community Services) runs the bus service because no one
74 else stepped up to run it decades ago, but it is not HCS's organizational mission as a healthcare
75 service provider.

76
77 Dr. Morris asked if there are plans for a bike share/bike rental service in town. Mr. Horner
78 replied not to his knowledge. He continued that it would be great, but he has not heard anyone
79 talking about this in concrete terms, just conceptual-level conversations. Dr. Morris spoke about
80 the bike-sharing program at KSC and how another program works in Bellows Falls. Discussion
81 continued about the complexities of bike share programs.

82
83 Mr. Aronson stated that his congregation has many people for whom a bike would not be helpful,
84 because they are elderly, have health issues, and so on and so forth. Many cannot or should not
85 drive at night. People are good at giving others rides as needed. He imagines that other faith
86 communities in town have similar populations of people with mobility issues and transportation
87 needs.

88
89 Mr. Horner stated that in the RJCS Report, the first sentence in the introduction recognizes acts
90 of racism from unfair lack of access to resources. There are obviously different forms of
91 "access," but the ability to freely move through a community and travel to opportunities is
92 critical. He continued that the "public safety" category of recommendations mentions limiting
93 interventions from law enforcement unless absolutely necessary, and frequently he hears people
94 talk about increasing pedestrian safety by increasing law enforcement presence on the street, at
95 intersections, setting up speed traps to reduce speeding, and so on and so forth. That is generally
96 not a good long-term solution to pedestrian safety. Design-based solutions are better.

97
98 Discussion continued. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that there are areas of Keene that are not
99 accessible at all by bicycle or anything other than a car. She asked if the BPPAC or SWRPC is
100 looking at that. Mr. Horner replied absolutely, and he habitually takes photos of such locations
101 and instances when he sees them, such as people with mobility aids in the middle of the street as
102 they try to go to essential places. He gave examples, like Rt. 10 heading toward Market Basket
103 and the Market Basket parking lot, and the Hannaford parking lot. Discussion continued about
104 the safety issues for pedestrians and cyclists trying to access the Target plaza from the bike path
105 out back.

106
107 Dr. Morris asked what models there are for Keene to look at, and what the obstacles are for
108 doing certain things. She asked if it is a financial issue. Mr. Horner replied that seizing
109 opportunity when it strikes is one reason why the BPPAC is interested in tying these
110 improvements in with the Downtown Reconstruction Project – a lot of that work has to happen
111 anyway, so it will not incur additional costs to make certain changes. The City could even save

112 money, since a lot of grant funding is tied to multi-modal improvements. The City of Concord,
113 NH went through a similar project several years ago, and a great improvement they made was an
114 improvement to ADA access into most Main St. storefronts. That required a partnership between
115 the municipality and private property owners. He has not inventoried Keene's downtown
116 storefronts to see which are accessible and which are not. Ms. Fiske replied that most have at
117 least one step, and many have several steps. Discussion continued about the challenges of
118 making downtown businesses accessible, and examples of businesses that are accessible.

119
120 Mr. Horner stated that he will bring these issues and this information back to the BPPAC, since
121 this is something they should flag for the City Council as they are talking about this downtown
122 project. He continued that he would be happy to keep in touch with the HRC and come to
123 another meeting sometime. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if the BPPAC holds public hearings
124 about designs. Mr. Horner replied that the BPPAC meetings are open to the public, and usually
125 small, but the BPPAC has been participating in the public hearings the City Council has been
126 holding on the Downtown Infrastructure Project. There are separate committees focused on
127 other construction projects in the City, so there are opportunities for the HRC to weigh in on
128 projects.

129
130 Ms. Budakoti asked Ms. Fiske about the Community Listens project at the Library, and about
131 whether one of those sessions would be something Mr. Horner would be interested in. Ms. Fiske
132 replied that they finished the public sessions, but she would be happy to connect with Mr. Horner
133 about it.

134

135 **6) Acceptance of Committee Event Reports**

136

137 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that the Juneteenth working group has been meeting and their
138 budget is looking to be about \$2,800 at last count, and they start with \$500 from the HRC, so
139 they have started working on identifying community partners to reach out to. She continued that
140 they welcome other HRC members' ideas for who they could talk to, and connections to
141 potential support for the event.

142

143 Ms. Fiske asked what the event will be like. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that it will be 11
144 AM to 2 PM on Saturday, June 17, on Railroad Square, beginning with a welcome and
145 introduction from Kris Roberts. She continued that they envision a musical act for about 45
146 minutes, a speaker for 15 minutes, then more alternating speakers and musical acts. The person
147 who is confirmed so far is Zaron, creator of the Black Cowboys podcast. Multiple Juneteenth
148 events are happening in the city that weekend, and the working group is trying to connect with
149 those other groups so they can present a unified program of events to the entire community and
150 coordinate better than they have in past years. Dr. Morris added that she was supposed to talk
151 with the choir, and she will talk them soon. Ms. Fiske stated that if the working group is looking
152 for sponsors for the entertainers, the Library might be able to help. Discussion continued about
153 the setup of the space at Railroad Square and the logistics of shade, water, the sound system, and
154 so on and so forth.

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7) **Racial Justice and Community Safety Report**

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that she is not sure where the (executive summary of the HRC’s recommendations regarding the RJCS Report) stands, and Dr. Filiault is not here tonight. She continued that she knows some edits were put in. She asked the group to take five minutes to review the document and then share their thoughts.

Dr. Morris stated that she has a correction for something under “4C,” which recommends a “trailing spouse program” – KSC does not have an official trailing spouse program, although she has been trying for years to start one. Thus, they should scratch off “as adopted by Keene State.”

Dr. Morris asked if they can add Franklin Pierce under 4E, as a potential source of internships, even though this is regarding Keene and Franklin Pierce is in a different town. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that she thinks it is fine to add, and asked for others’ thoughts. Ms. Fiske suggested the HRC vote on all of the edits at the end.

Ms. Fiske noted a scrivener’s error at the bottom of the last page – the HRC’s statement (“In our efforts to create a more just society...”) is there, and is probably not meant to be. It is out of context.

Mr. Aronson noted another scrivener’s error in the second paragraph: “Racial Justice and Community Safety Community Safety Committee Report.” He continued that regarding the trailing spouses program, it would help to have a clause that explains what that is, for people unfamiliar with it.

Mr. Aronson continued that the second to last sentence under 4E says “racially diverse student,” and he is not sure what that means. He continued that the full sentence is, “Working without pay would pose economic challenges for many students, especially racially diverse student who are...” Others replied that it should say “students” to be grammatically correct. Mr. Aronson replied that it is more than that; the term “racially diverse students” is not necessarily a helpful category. He continued that the term occurs again under 4I, regarding “serving racially and linguistically diverse people.”

Lengthy discussion ensued about what the term “racially diverse students” means, and what the HRC is trying to say. Mr. Kirschner stated that to him the term “racially diverse” would include white students, and they are not talking about white students. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked what Mr. Aronson thinks makes sense. Mr. Aronson suggested “a racially diverse community.” He continued that what is diverse is the *community* of students. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if “especially from racially diverse communities, who are historically socio-economically disadvantaged” makes sense. Ms. Budakoti stated that to her the text looks fine as it is, the racially diverse student community. She continued that her recommended change is adding the word “community” after “student.” She agreed that the sentence did not make sense to her the

198 first time she read it. Mr. Aronson replied that a student could be racially diverse, but they are
199 talking about a community of people where there are different nationalities, different
200 backgrounds, and different races, and it looks funny to talk about a racially diverse *person*.
201 “Racially and linguistically diverse people” sounds like they are describing individuals, each of
202 whom is racially and linguistically diverse, which is grammatically off. Ms. Fiske replied that
203 the main thing is to get it to be a plural subject.
204

205 Discussion continued on the term. Mr. Aronson stated that terms like “racially and linguistically
206 diverse people” makes it seem like they are avoiding saying words like “people of color,”
207 “people from minority backgrounds,” and so on and so forth. It sounds like an awkward way to
208 try to be politically correct. Mr. Kirschner replied that he thinks they should table this, because it
209 seems like this needs to be a bigger conversation. He continued that “racial diversity” is used a
210 lot in this, and “racially diverse” as a descriptor, and he is also not clear about what was meant
211 by that. He wishes Dr. Morris were still here, because she was on the RJCS Committee and
212 could maybe give some insight. Again, to him, the term “racially diverse” includes white
213 people.
214

215 Ms. Bender stated that the HRC can email Mr. Bohannon thoughts about edits, and this specific
216 line/term can be set aside for a discussion for next time. Ms. Budakoti stated that it would be
217 good for the HRC to define what they mean by “racially diverse,” so when it comes up in the
218 future, they are very clear about who they are talking about.
219

220 Mr. Kirschner made a motion to table this. Ms. Budakoti seconded the motion, which passed by
221 unanimous vote.
222

223 8) Community Survey

224

225 Ms. Bender stated that Mr. Bohannon saw that Lebanon’s community survey was no longer on
226 their website, so he has been reaching out to them and asking why – did they get enough
227 responses? She continued that Lebanon is going through the responses. Mr. Bohannon has a
228 link to the summary, which he will send to the HRC to look at.
229

230 Ms. Bender continued that there will be a Zoom call with the people from Lebanon who ran the
231 survey, Monday, April 10 at 2:00 PM. She continued that HRC members are invited but there
232 cannot be a quorum of HRC members on that Zoom call. They will talk about how the survey
233 went, what worked well and what did not, and so on and so forth. Hopefully at the next HRC
234 meeting they can discuss more of the survey findings.
235

236 9) New Business

237

238 Ms. Bender stated that it is the last day to register for Building a Restorative Community. She
239 gave the HRC the flyer.
240

241 Ms. Bender stated that a letter was sent to the Mayor from John Ripley O’Brian, a poet/composer
242 who created and composed an opera based on the life of Jonathan Daniels. She continued that
243 staff has it, if the HRC is interested in reviewing it. Mr. Aronson replied that he is interested.
244 Discussion ensued. Ms. Fiske stated that the opera could be added to the Library’s collection, if
245 Mr. O’Brian is willing to have it placed there, after it has been reviewed. Ms. Bender replied
246 that his contact information is in his letter. She continued that he says he is interested in having
247 it presented by 2025.

248
249 Ms. Budakoti stated that the NH Theater Project came to the high school last month, with 40
250 different stories that were recorded as interviews and enacted on stage. The stories are about
251 immigrants who have come at different times, and what brought them here, what their struggles
252 are, their talents and skills, and so on and so forth. She continued that it was a great program and
253 resonated with her on so many levels. This program needs a wider audience, she realized, after
254 discussing it with her middle school students, who had many questions and expressed doubt that
255 their family members would understand it. She asked if the HRC would co-sponsor this if she
256 were to pursue it. She would begin with a Zoom with the NH Theater Project, which HRC
257 members would be invited to, to see what availability the NH Theater Project has and how much
258 it would cost, given that there are some potential grants and community members who could
259 pitch in.

260
261 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if the HRC is interested. Others replied yes. Chair Cunha-
262 Vasconcelos asked who is interested in joining a Zoom call. Ms. Fiske stated that the Library
263 could be involved with this. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that she would like to be on the
264 call as well. Ms. Budakoti thanked the HRC and stated that she will get the ball rolling.

265
266 **10) Adjournment**

267
268 There being no further business, Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos adjourned the meeting at 6:03 PM.

269
270 Respectfully submitted by,
271 Britta Reida, Minute Taker

272
273 Reviewed and edited by,
274 Andy Bohannon, Parks, Recreation and Facilities Director

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	\$ 2,921.33	\$ 5,651.74	Balance 7/1/24	\$ 2,921.33	\$ 3,985.44
Income			Income			Income		
City of Keene	\$ 1,000.00		City of Keene	\$ -		City of Keene	\$ -	
donations TILL	\$ 775.00							
Donations KIF		\$ 8,012.00	Donations KIF		\$ -	Donations KIF		\$ -
subtotal	\$ 1,775.00	\$ 8,012.00	subtotal	\$ -	\$ -	subtotal	\$ -	\$ -
Total Income	\$ 1,775.00	\$ 8,012.00	Total Income	\$ -	\$ -	Total Income	\$ -	\$ -
Expenses			Expenses			Expenses		
Martin Luther King Day	\$ 45.55		Martin Luther King Day	\$ -		Martin Luther King Day	\$ -	
Black History Month TILL	\$ 1,800.00		Pride Month	\$ -		Pride Month	\$ -	
Juneteenth	\$ -		Juneteenth	\$ -		Juneteenth	\$ -	
International Festival		\$ 6,345.70	International Festival		\$ -	International Festival		\$ -
Indigenous Peoples Day	\$ -		Indigenous Peoples Day	\$ -		Indigenous Peoples Day	\$ -	
Total Expenses	\$ 1,845.55	\$ 6,345.70	Total Expenses	\$ -	\$ -	Total Expenses	\$ -	\$ -
Net 22-23	\$ (70.55)	\$ 1,666.30	Net 23-24	\$ -	\$ -	Net 24-25	\$ -	\$ -
Balance on hand	\$ 2,921.33	\$ 5,651.74	Balance on hand	\$ 2,921.33	\$ 5,651.74	Balance on hand	\$ 2,921.33	\$ 3,985.44

Juneteenth Subcommittee Report
4/14/2023

Event will be held 11 AM to 2 PM on Saturday June 17th in Railroad Square

- 3 musical acts,
 - 1 of 3 currently confirmed
- two speakers,
 - both confirmed
- MC
 - Not confirmed
- opening statement.
 - confirmed

Meetings

- Schedule has had to change to meet participants scheduling needs, feel free to inquire with subcommittee chair
- Frequency will increase as date approaches

Budget

- Current concrete funds are \$500
- Overall budget \$2800
 - \$750 – sound system
 - \$2050- stipends for musicians and presenters
 - Sponsorship being sought.

Marketing

- Coordinating with other entities to market full weekend of local events.
 - Meeting to organize this being scheduled
- Roll out slated for May 1