

City of Keene
New Hampshire

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE MEETING AGENDA

Monday, June 6, 2022 at 5:00 PM
Room 22 Upstairs, Recreation Center

- This meeting will be conducted in person and by using the online meeting platform, Zoom. The public may view the meeting online at www.zoom.com and click on “Join A Meeting” enter Meeting ID 867 3299 3658
- To listen to the meeting, please dial (646) 876-9923 and when prompted enter Meeting ID 867 3299 3658
- If you encounter issues accessing this meeting, please call (603) 757-1835 during the meeting

Members:

Sofia Cunha-Vasconcelos
Dr. Dottie Morris
Janis Manwaring
Dr. Mohammed Saleh
Dr. Shaun Filiault
Marti Fiske
Hunter Kirschner
Rabbi Daniel Aronson
Councilor Catherine Workman

Staff:

Andy Bohannon, PRF Director

Alternates:

Ritu Budakoti
Heidi Schwieger

Agenda:

1. Welcome and Call to Order
2. Approval of May Meeting(s) Minutes
 - a. May 2, 2022
 - b. May 9, 2022
 - c. May 23, 2022
3. Finance Report
4. Human Rights Committee Purpose
 - a. Review of City Ordinance
 - b. Statement of Inclusion
5. Monadnock Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Coalition Updates
6. Acceptance of Committee Event Reports
7. Community Outreach
8. Racial Justice and Community Safety Report
9. New Business
10. Adjourn - Next Meeting Monday, July 11, 2022 at 5:00 PM

1 City of Keene
2 New Hampshire

3
4
5 HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE
6 MEETING MINUTES
7

Monday, May 2, 2022

5:00 PM

Room 22,
Recreation Center

Members Present:

Sofia Cunha-Vasconcelos, Chair
Dr. Shaun Filiault, Vice Chair (from 5:15 PM,
to 5:52 PM, via Zoom)
Jan Manwaring
Dr. Dottie Morris (arrived at 5:05 PM)
Dr. Mohammed Saleh (arrived at 5:08 PM)
Hunter Kirschner
Councilor Catherine Workman (arrived at 5:15
PM, via Zoom)
Rabbi Daniel Aronson (arrived at 5:04 PM)
Ritu Budakoti, Alternate
Heidi Schwieger, Alternate

Staff Present:

Andy Bohannon, Parks, Recreation & Facilities
Director

Members Not Present:

Marti Fiske

8
9
10 1) Welcome and Call to Order
11

12 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos called the meeting to order at 5:02 PM. Roll call was conducted.
13 Members from Keene Pride introduced themselves, as did a person from the Keene Sentinel.
14 Ms. Manwaring asked if anyone was present via Zoom. Mr. Bohannon replied not yet, other
15 than the Minute-taker.
16

17 2) Approval of April 4, 2022 Meeting Minutes
18

19 Ms. Schwieger made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of April 4, 2022. Ms. Budakoti
20 seconded the motion.
21

22 Daniel Aronson arrived at 5:04 PM and introduced himself. Dr. Dottie Morris arrived at 5:05
23 PM and introduced herself.
24

25 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos called for a vote on the motion, which passed with a vote of 6-1. Ms.
26 Manwaring stated that she abstains. Mr. Bohannon asked why. Ms. Manwaring replied that she
27 thought they were going to talk about the minutes first. Mr. Bohannon replied that she cannot
28 abstain. Ms. Manwaring replied that she then votes against the minutes.

29

30 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that she understands that Keene Pride had concerns about what
31 was said [at the April meeting].

32

33 Adam Toepfer, Keene Pride President, stated that he and others from Keene Pride wanted to
34 present a report, and go over some misrepresentations. He distributed copies to HRC members
35 and asked Susan MacNeil to speak.

36

37 Susan MacNeil, Board member of Keene Pride, 95 Rockingham St., Bellows Falls, VT, stated
38 that Keene Pride was happy that this was taken up at the April meeting of the HRC, but when
39 they saw the minutes, they thought perhaps some assumptions became fact and were dismayed.

40

41 Dr. Mohammed Saleh arrived at 5:08 PM and introduced himself.

42

43 Ms. MacNeil continued that Keene Pride came up with a statement that addresses some of the
44 issues. It is too long to read into the record in its entirety, but she will share some highlights.
45 She read:

46

47 *“Keene Pride, a NH non-profit organization, would like to go on record to address the*
48 *misinformation regarding our organization recorded in the Keene HRC’s meeting minutes of*
49 *April 4, 2022. Keene Pride expresses profound gratitude to the City of Keene Planning,*
50 *Licenses, and Development Committee for their unanimous recommendation of our downtown*
51 *Keene license to hold a block party on Sunday, September 18, 2022. Keene Pride was thrilled to*
52 *receive the unanimous support from the City Council to approve the block party application and*
53 *event, which is free and open to the public. Keene Pride’s vision for the block party was never*
54 *alcohol-oriented. We have not applied, nor do we intend to apply, for a liquor license for the*
55 *block party or any of the public events that will occur between September 11 and September 18.”*

56

57 Ms. MacNeil continued that item #4 addresses an issue that was in the meeting minutes about
58 why September. It is essentially to have as many people as possible, and to help local businesses
59 kick off a robust 4th quarter. Pride events held throughout the country bring in a huge amount of
60 revenue to the organizations and businesses in the area. There was an assumption that somehow
61 Keene Pride does not have an understanding or awareness of the cultural and historical issues
62 surrounding the Pride movement, the Stonewall uprising. They certainly do. The Board has a
63 depth of information, which is spelled out in the document. The idea of October was brought up,
64 as a month for the gay community to recognize Pride, and October 10 is National Coming Out
65 Day. If the HRC wants to do anything, they applaud that. There was an impression that
66 somehow Keene Pride was not in touch with local businesses or other local organizations, but in
67 fact, they are. They have put a lot in place already. They are in touch with the Rotary Club

68 about banners for downtown and have the support of the Chamber, faith communities, non-profit
69 organizations, and local businesses. Their intention has always been to keep the focus local and
70 regional. They have already received some financial commitments from a couple businesses in
71 the city, including C&S, Brown Computer Solutions, and Fenton Family Dealership. They are
72 applying for grants to national organizations as well as the NH Charitable Fund. They have
73 confirmed that John Scagliotti, VT filmmaker of Before Stonewall and After Stonewall, is on
74 board and supportive of being involved. They are also on Senator Jeanne Shaheen's calendar for
75 an appearance at the block party on September 19 and her liaison for civil and gay rights is
76 pleased that this is happening. They have local musical performers booked for three hours at
77 Railroad Square. Keene Pride has reached out to the LGBTQ club at Keene High School, and
78 they will be involved. There will be many family events for folks who attend the block party.
79 They booked the Colonial Theatre's showroom on five different nights. They have an exciting
80 event already with the MDEIB and are in touch with all those folks. Keene Pride will focus on
81 educating the public, which will include a broad array of speakers and programming. They are
82 working with the local historical societies, too. They plan to offer year-round programming and
83 community building for the local queer community.

84
85 Ms. MacNeil continued that Keene Pride was a little offended when they read the meeting
86 minutes, because [what was said in the minutes] was never their intention, and they wanted to set
87 the record straight, because they are so excited and thrilled by the cooperation of the City.

88
89 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if the HRC wants to vote to accept the meeting minutes with the
90 addendum of the document from Keene Pride. She asked if they can do that. Mr. Bohannon
91 replied yes. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked for a motion.

92
93 Ms. Manwaring made a motion to accept the April 4, 2022 meeting minutes with the addendum
94 of the document from Keene Pride. Dr. Morris seconded the motion, which passed by
95 unanimous vote.

96
97 HRC members thanked Keene Pride for coming. Mr. Bohannon thanked the Keene Pride
98 members for coming to speak to the HRC and making the clarifications and bringing this
99 document forward so the HRC has time to review it and continue the dialogue with Keene Pride.
100 Ms. MacNeil replied that Keene Pride would love to work with the HRC.

101
102 Councilor Catherine Workman arrived at 5:15 PM.

103
104 **3) Finance Report**

105
106 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that the Finance Report is the same as last month. She
107 continued that she thinks that going forward, the HRC's finances will need to be discussed in
108 some depth, due to the number of events. Unfortunately for the chairs of working groups for
109 events, they will need to start making budgeting part of the process in a more formal way. She
110 asked if anyone had questions. Hearing none, she moved on in the agenda.

111
112
113
114
115
116
117
118
119
120
121
122
123
124
125
126
127
128
129
130
131
132
133
134
135
136
137
138
139
140
141
142
143
144
145
146
147
148
149
150
151
152
153

4) Racial Justice and Community Safety Report

A) Approval of April 12, 2022 Meeting minutes

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that the HRC met on April 12 for two hours and made a significant amount of progress regarding the Racial Justice and Community Safety (RJCS) Report. She continued that the meeting minutes are in the agenda packet.

Ms. Manwaring made a motion to accept the meeting minutes from April 12, 2022. Mr. Kirschner seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that the next meeting regarding the RJCS Report is May 9, from 6:30 to 8:30. She appreciates the HRC members putting the time into this.

5) Committee Programs for 2022

A) MLK Day – January 17

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that they do not immediately need to start thinking about next year, but they should keep this on the radar.

Ms. Manwaring stated that she wants it on the record, as a reminder to the HRC, that they consider asking the Historical Society and Jenna Carroll to present her research on Black people in the area. She continued that about 14 people are working on that. It is too soon to consider this for Juneteenth, but by January, Ms. Carroll could have some excellent information.

B) Holi Festival – Not taking place 2022

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that Holi Festival is not taking place this year.

C) Pride Month – October

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked Dr. Filiault or Mr. Kirschner to speak. Mr. Kirschner stated that he is not sure that he has anything to say at the moment, given what Keene Pride just shared with the HRC. He continued that he and Dr. Filiault need some time to discuss where they are at.

D) Juneteenth – June 19

Ms. Manwaring stated that things are coming along well. She continued that the event will be Saturday, June 18, since June 19 is Father’s Day. They are working on the programming. The flyer is wonderful. Mr. Bohannon replied that he will make sure he sends it out to everyone, if he has not already done so. Ms. Manwaring stated that she and Ms. Schwieger are working on two tables, and the Library will have a table. One table will be on voting.

154 Ms. Schwieger stated that the Jonathan Daniels Center (JDC) will have its own presence at the
155 event, but part of what they want to take on is enlisting the support of the NH League of Women
156 Voters, to do something around voting rights. They also want to create a community
157 engagement opportunity, a reflection with prompts to invite responses, which people can share
158 publicly or take away with them, about their own activism and engagement. They are meeting
159 after tonight's HRC meeting to talk more about it. The JDC will collaborate with the HRC on
160 this.

161
162 Ms. Manwaring stated that she was looking up voter suppression and how people are kept from
163 voting, and on the ACLU website, three states were mentioned repeatedly, including New
164 Hampshire. Education is needed, about how voter suppression happens.

165
166 Ms. Budakoti stated that the HRC previously talked about collaborating with other organizations
167 doing similar things [for Juneteenth]. She asked what happened with that. Mr. Bohannon
168 replied that the conversation was had, and attempt was made to have one event this year, and for
169 certain reasons the HRC decided not to do that and to have their own event. He continued that it
170 would be challenging to get people to attend and help with a Juneteenth event if it was the same
171 day as Father's Day. Also, the HRC wanted the event be downtown, and to have different
172 messaging [from the YMCA's focus on health], because the HRC already did that with the MLK
173 Day event. Those are reasons why the HRC wanted to do its own Juneteenth event this year, but
174 they would be open to considering collaboration next year.

175
176 **E) Keene International Festival – September 24**

177
178 Ms. Budakoti stated that they have gained some momentum in the planning for this, and Mr.
179 Bohannon is on the planning committee. She continued that she does not know how they are
180 doing financially, but they are working on getting sponsors and putting things together, like the
181 arts and crafts from places around the world. In addition, they are working closely with the
182 Colonial to bring a multigenerational act, which will be a key highlight. Other performers from
183 the local community will come in and rock the event. The planning has good momentum but
184 they are still seeking volunteers, planning group members, and donors. Donations would be very
185 helpful, because it all goes back into the community, and this is a wonderful event that brings the
186 community together.

187
188 **F) Indigenous People Day – October 10**

189
190 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that Ms. Fiske is [leading this working group] but she is not
191 present, so she will table this until next month.

192
193 **6) New, Other Business**

194
195 James Rinker of 34 Cottage St., Digital Community Engagement Journalist from the Keene
196 Sentinel, stated that he has been in this role since January, and a big part of the role is engaging

197 with the community, especially parts of the community that are under-served by reporting and
198 the work of the Sentinel. He is here on behalf of the Sentinel and interested in an open
199 discussion with the HRC on how to best connect with people who are under-served by the
200 community and give a baseline of what the Sentinel is interested in doing and what they have
201 already started. He sees that the HRC is quite events-based and puts forth initiatives.
202 [Regarding] a way to get the news out about the committee meetings, he saw in the meeting
203 minutes that someone described the HRC as “a well-kept secret.” He wants to increase the
204 region’s awareness of this work. He partners with the non-profit Trusting News, which partners
205 with newsrooms around the nation. They are auditing the Sentinel’s opinions content to make it
206 more accessible to those who have little to no media literacy and understanding of what goes into
207 a newspaper, and making the Sentinel’s reporting practices clearer. Recently the Sentinel was
208 recognized for their “Better Judgement” series, a revision of how they report on crime in the
209 Monadnock region, in part to reduce the stigma around people who commit crimes. The Sentinel
210 also hired him, in a dedicated role with community engagement and outreach, to put into action
211 new ways to make an impact. He grew up in this region and has seen the impact local journalism
212 can have. He is part of the audience engagement committee, part of which is doing outreach,
213 similar to what the HRC does, identifying opportunities for the Sentinel to appear in the public
214 eye and connect with readers and do additional outreach with the community. He is here to open
215 the discussion and hear from the HRC about what he/the Sentinel can do, to open those doors.

216
217 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos thanked Mr. Rinker for this opportunity. She continued that the HRC
218 probably needs to mull a bit about what the best way would be for them to engage with him.
219 That will be the HRC’s homework assignment for this month. Dr. Morris suggested that the
220 HRC Chair write a column. Mr. Rinker replied that he can give the HRC contact information for
221 [the person in charge of the] opinions content, because he does not handle that. He is not on the
222 editorial staff. He could be the HRC’s liaison with the Sentinel for after they do their homework
223 with mulling and planning and discussing what the HRC is interested in. Mr. Bohannon replied
224 that there is definitely opportunity here, but they need time to process this. He continued that the
225 HRC’s next agenda could include this conversation and Mr. Rinker is welcome at that meeting.

226
227 Ms. Budakoti stated that press releases right before [HRC] events would be very helpful. Mr.
228 Rinker replied that one of his goals is to make the work being done in the community more well
229 known. The Sentinel is currently redesigning their website, to be more accessible, more
230 applicable, and more easily navigated, and hopefully it will include a new community events
231 calendar. He saw this HRC meeting on the Sentinel’s calendar. A second goal of the audience
232 engagement team that he is part of is attending events. They will do outreach for the Keene
233 International Festival as well as various events in the region. Letting people know in advance
234 that the Sentinel will be at these events means people will be aware that they can talk to Sentinel
235 staff. The third goal is the creation of something he brought up, like transparency work – “coffee
236 with a reporter” is in the works, and creating ways for people to connect with people who are
237 generating the news, to ask open, honest questions. The Sentinel is still working on clarifying
238 where people can send things, because there are several avenues that go to several people for
239 different things. They are working on streamlining where people can send news versus letters

240 versus events. He is happy to do his homework and get a list of those for next month's HRC
241 meeting.

242
243 Dr. Saleh stated that he may have missed it, but was a link to the spreadsheet that captures all the
244 HRC recommendations shared with the committee? Mr. Bohannon replied that he thought he
245 shared it at the last meeting, but can share it again. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that he
246 shared the blank version, but not the output from the April 12 meeting. Mr. Bohannon replied
247 that he has not sent that out yet. Discussion ensued. Mr. Bohannon stated that he will send what
248 he has, and the HRC can refine it.

249
250 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that she is looking to change the structure of the HRC meetings,
251 and perhaps change the focus of the HRC. She continued that they spend a lot of time going
252 through updates on events, which is not necessarily the best use of their time. She would like the
253 chairs of the working groups to submit written updates to be included in the [agenda packet]. If
254 a working group needs input from the HRC about something, they can ask for time on the
255 agenda; otherwise, it will be up to the HRC members to read the notes. If HRC members have
256 questions about the events or working groups, they can ask during "new business."

257
258 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos continued that a few items that did not make it onto today's agenda
259 will be on the agenda going forward. One is liaising with the Monadnock Diversity, Equity,
260 Inclusion, and Belonging Coalition (MDEIB). Monthly, Dr. Morris and Councilor Workman
261 will give the HRC insight into what is happening with the MDEIB and hopefully share with the
262 MDEIB about the HRC, too.

263
264 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos continued that the HRC had started a conversation about finding more
265 concrete ways to impact the lives of Keene citizens, and that is her hope for the HRC's direction.
266 The events are important and part of their charter, but they can do more, in terms of being a point
267 of access for the community. They can examine the ways people interact with the City and how
268 to make that more inclusive. As the HRC has discussed before, it is not just about race and
269 LGBT issues, but also mental health and how people with mental health concerns are able to
270 interact with the City and be heard, housing, access issues in the general, and the broader
271 interpretation of "human rights." She asked for feedback. She is open to thoughts on what this
272 can look like.

273
274 Dr. Saleh stated that he agrees with looking at the broader interpretation of "human rights." He
275 wonders how they would go about that. Is there any other entity in the City government that is
276 tracking the needs and concerns of citizens, or should the HRC ask other organizations in the city
277 what they see as the issues and needs? Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that she does not think
278 the City is tracking this, and that is where the HRC can help. If the HRC is not equipped to do
279 the work themselves, which is an unanswered question, they can figure out how to create a
280 structure to collect and consider that information. Identifying the community agencies and
281 organizations connected with populations who struggle to access community services and vitality
282 would be a good place to start. Discussion continued about the organizations.

283
284
285
286
287
288
289
290
291
292
293
294
295
296
297
298
299
300
301
302
303
304
305
306
307
308
309
310
311
312
313
314
315
316
317
318
319
320
321
322
323
324

Mr. Kirschner stated that he is thinking about [Christina “Teeny” Wold’s] communication to the HRC [about mental health], and about creating avenues for folks to propose areas of concern/issues for the HRC to attend to. He is thinking about multiple modalities, going right to the people, in addition to the agencies that serve them.

Mr. Aronson stated that this dovetails with a discussion from the April 12 meeting about something like an ombudsperson that could be a central address for addressing concerns. He wonders if they could also use the Sentinel to get the word out that if people have concerns they would like the City to be addressing, in the realm of human rights, that this would be an appropriate place to bring them. They would have to be vetted and he does not know what the protocol is for that. That invitation would need to be crafted in a way that is appropriate for the HRC. Dr. Morris replied yes, it would be important to map out the process and determine who would be accountable. Dr. Saleh replied that the HRC probably does not have the bandwidth to address all the issues themselves, but could gather data and identify the collective needs of the community and try to come up with a plan.

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that one hour a month is not enough. She continued that she does not know what the correct frequency and length of meetings are, or if they could do work on an ad hoc basis, which sounds like a lot of meetings. One hour a month is not enough, however, for what could be a massive endeavor. She would like to leave everyone with this germ of an idea today. HRC members already have a homework assignment to think about the Sentinel and how to use that opportunity. Another homework assignment is to think about what the HRC’s work should be, and what the structure should look like, which is a massive question. She wishes they could bounce ideas off each other, but unfortunately, they cannot, due to the rules of not creating a quorum outside of meetings. This will take a lot of discussion and brainstorming. She asked if next month’s meeting should be longer, or if they should set up a separate meeting to discuss this, or if it is premature. Others replied that they can talk about it at the HRC’s June meeting, since they already have a separate meeting in a week to discuss the RJCS Report. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos agreed and suggested the June meeting be two hours.

Ms. Budakoti stated that going forward, they should think about what the HRC’s role is in the City, what their strengths are, and what areas they can work within. She continued that if they just ask the community, “What are your concerns?”, there could be hundreds, but they are not all ones the HRC can help with. It would help if the HRC could lay out certain areas they can help with, and be very specific with people about what the HRC can and cannot do, and what resources they do and do not have. She asks the HRC members to do this internal reflection, so they have clarity on this before asking the community what their concerns are. The response from the community might help the HRC determine what to focus on and how much time to spend – for example, if many people speak of concerns of a particular topic, the HRC knows to focus there to help the community and how to allocate their time and resources.

325 Discussion ensued about the logistics of a two-hour meeting next month. Mr. Bohannon stated
326 that they can find a way, if that is what they want. He continued that knowing the history of this
327 committee, meetings typically are less frequent in the summer, with August being a month off.
328 The HRC can meet in August if they want, but he would have another staff member fill in for
329 him that month. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that they can discuss schedule changes in
330 general – maybe the first Monday of the month does not end up being the best meeting time.
331

332 Dr. Saleh asked, for clarification, if the plan is to meet for two hours in June, and that the main
333 discussion will be on exploring the broader scope of the committee, but they are not agreeing –
334 or not *yet* agreeing – to have every meeting be two hours long. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos
335 replied that is correct. She continued that however, the looming “threat” is that moving forward,
336 the HRC will need to devote more than one hour per month to its work. Dr. Saleh replied that he
337 personally would rather have the monthly meetings run longer, instead of adding another day to
338 the calendar. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that they will need to figure it all out. Mr.
339 Bohannon stated that some City committees do not specify an ending time for each meeting, but
340 rather, meet for as long as each agenda takes; there are different ways to do it. Discussion
341 continued.
342

343 Dr. Morris stated that someone asked what the HRC’s purpose as a group is. Are they an
344 advisory group? They need to clarify that in their own heads. Ms. Manwaring replied that when
345 this group was formed, there was discussion about whether it would be a “committee” or a
346 “commission,” the latter of which has statutory rules. Mr. Bohannon replied that it stays as a
347 committee. Discussion continued about the difference. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if the
348 HRC could get a quick explanation of “commission” vs. “committee,” via email. Mr. Bohannon
349 replied that the City’s only commission is the Conservation Commission, which has statutory
350 responsibilities, along with the Planning Board and [Zoning Board of Adjustment]. All the other
351 City bodies are committees. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that the other side of being a
352 committee and not having the statutory requirements they must follow is that there are powers
353 they are not authorized to use, which they need to be conscious of as they have this conversation.
354 Mr. Bohannon replied yes, ultimately, the City Council has the authority.
355

356 Dr. Saleh stated that he would like clarification on what happens to recommendations that
357 committees make. He continued that for example, the HRC created a draft statement to be read
358 aloud [before City committee meetings], and the Mayor did not like it so it was put aside. They
359 do not want to go through significant effort only to be pushed aside. Is there any established
360 protocol for that? What happens next? Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that that was one of
361 the items to put back on the agenda – reconsidering the language of the draft statement, and
362 having a dialogue with the Mayor about how they can address his concerns. Ms. Manwaring
363 replied that at the time, the Mayor said he did not feel he could ask the chairs of every public
364 body to read a statement at the beginning of each meeting, and it was more about that than the
365 specific language in the statement. Discussion continued. Dr. Saleh asked what the established
366 process is for the HRC’s recommendations. For example, do they have to go to the Mayor first?
367 Ms. Manwaring replied that they could write a request to the City Council, and the City Council

368 would assign the HRC's request to a City Council committee, and the HRC would go to that
369 committee meeting and talk about it. That committee would make a recommendation to the City
370 Council, and the City Council would vote on it. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that this
371 conversation will be on next month's agenda.

372

373 Dr. Morris stated that the City Attorney would have answers to many of the HRC's questions.
374 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that they should consider asking the City Attorney to attend
375 the June meeting. She continued that maybe an email from him would be enough. Mr.
376 Bohannon replied that he will try email. He continued that the City has a new Assistant City
377 Attorney, also; maybe she could help with this.

378

379 **7) Adjourn – Next Meeting Monday, June 6, 2022 at 5:00 PM**

380

381 There being no further business, Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos adjourned the meeting at 6:05 PM.

382

383 Respectfully submitted by,
384 Britta Reida, Minute Taker

385

386 Reviewed and edited by,
387 Andy Bohannon, PRF Director

1 City of Keene
2 New Hampshire

3
4
5 HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE
6 MEETING MINUTES
7

Monday, May 9, 2022

5:00 PM

Room 22,
Recreation Center

Members Present:

Sofia Cunha-Vasconcelos, Chair
Dr. Shaun Filiault, Vice Chair
Councilor Catherine Workman
Marti Fiske
Dr. Dottie Morris
Hunter Kirschner (arrived at 7:00 PM)
Rabbi Daniel Aronson
Heidi Schwieger, Alternate

Staff Present:

Andy Bohannon, Parks, Recreation & Facilities
Director

Members Not Present:

Jan Manwaring
Dr. Mohammed Saleh
Ritu Budakoti, Alternate

8
9
10 1) Racial Justice and Community Safety Committee Report
11

12 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos called the meeting to order at 6:38 PM. She stated that at the previous
13 meeting about the RJCS Report, the HRC left off at recommendation 4.B.
14

15 *4.B. It is recommended that the City and Keene employers regularly conduct diversity, equity*
16 *and inclusion training for employees that fosters an open and welcoming workplace culture*
17 *for all people.*
18

19 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that the conversation was around making a list of free trainings
20 and working with the City's HR Department. She thinks that Mr. Bohannon took an action.
21 This one is covered for now. Her intention is for the group to go through all of the items and
22 then circle back around and then do the next level of development and status check and
23 discussion.
24

25 An HRC member asked if the terms “racial justice” and “DEI” (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion)
26 are used interchangeably. Discussion ensued about how DEI is a broader umbrella term that
27 encompasses and assists with racial justice issues.

28

29 ***4.C. It is recommended that the City and Keene employers review employee recruitment,***
30 ***retention, pay and promotion policies to achieve improved diversity and equity amongst***
31 ***applicants and throughout organizational personnel at all levels.***

32

33 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that she thinks this can go along with the inclusion training, as
34 something the HRC discusses with the HR Department. Mr. Bohannon stated that he reached
35 out to HR this week. He continued that the provider of the City’s EAP (Employee Assistance
36 Program) used to provide three on-site trainings per year, and he will keep pursuing that avenue.
37 The trainings covered these sort of things. He thinks the City changed EAP providers since then,
38 which was about 2010, and he is waiting for confirmation. HRC members noted that 4.C. is
39 talking about an audit of policies, more than employee training.

40

41 Mr. Bohannon stated that he spoke with Rebecca Landry (IT Director/Assistant City Manager)
42 today. There is the Monadnock Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Coalition (MDEIB),
43 and also, the Chamber of Commerce has formed a group focused on DEI, and they have done
44 quite a bit of work. He and Ms. Landry were saying, “Okay, the meeting of the minds is going to
45 happen, so that three groups are not going down the same parallel path.” Those three groups are
46 the City (HRC), the YMCA (MDEIB), and the Chamber. Discussion ensued about working
47 together, working “smarter, not harder,” and efficiency.

48

49 Dr. Filiault stated that this might be an area to reach out to the City Attorney about, because
50 when you are talking about recruitment, pay, retention, and promotion, with regards to diversity
51 and equity, you begin to quickly run up against federal law. Trying to increase diversity and
52 equity in hiring [needs to follow] federal law. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that that is an
53 important caveat, but they can still do a lot within the boundaries of federal law. Dr. Filiault
54 replied yes, once they clearly understand what the boundaries are, which the HR Department and
55 the City Attorney can advise on. Discussion ensued. Dr. Morris spoke about how recruitment
56 efforts can include better/more strategic advertising, to maximize the pools of candidates. Mr.
57 Bohannon stated that he will bring this issue forward at his upcoming meeting with the City
58 Manager and City Attorney.

59

60 Ms. Fiske noted that 4.C. references the City “and Keene employers,” so she wonders if the
61 Chamber’s DEI group and the MDEIB are focusing on those Keene employers, and the HRC can
62 only focus on the City. Others agreed. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that they would have
63 to verify this, and to her it is part of the conversation – how do they divvy this up, and share the
64 responsibility in reporting? Discussion ensued. Dr. Morris spoke of Keene State College
65 (KSC)’s experiences hiring people who come with a “trailing spouse” who also needs a job, and
66 KSC’s desire to create a network within a 35-40 mile radius where people could live in Keene or
67 near it and their spouse could find a job. If HR people could come together to create that

68 network, within federal guidelines, it would help. Employers recruiting candidates could then
69 have a list of places where candidates' spouses could apply for jobs.

70
71 Mr. Aronson stated that the wording of 4.C. asks for a review of policies; it is not yet about
72 proposing solutions. It is about identifying strengths and weaknesses. The question is, what are
73 they focusing on? And if the HRC is focusing on just the City, the question is what that review
74 would look like and who would do it. An outside auditor? Ms. Fiske stated that she is a City
75 employee who recently tried hard to hire for an upper level position, and the hard part was
76 recruitment. She thinks the City's pay and promotion policies are solid. All (departments) deal
77 with retention issues. But recruitment is hard. She did not know where to advertise. She tried,
78 for example, the Black caucus of the American Library Association and did not get any potential
79 applicants from that advertisement and it doubled her budget. Something like what Dr. Morris is
80 suggesting would be more valuable, in her opinion. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that she
81 wonders if other cities have good models of success for recruitment. Dr. Morris replied that the
82 Town of Brattleboro put something in place about two years ago, and did some really intentional
83 things to broaden their applicant pool, and now have a Puerto Rican HR Director, an African
84 American female Police Chief, and another person of color (in another job), all from continuing
85 to broaden the pool. They could talk with the HR Director about how they have done this.
86 Councilor Workman noted that the new Town Manager in Brattleboro is also a person of color.
87 Discussion continued.

88
89 An HRC member stated that she is unclear whether it is the HRC's job to help identify ways to
90 do this review. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that is a good question, whether it is the
91 HRC's job to call for the need, and allow the HR Department to do its own audit or determine
92 what that looks like, and the HRC could serve as a resource and, for example, suggest that the
93 Keene HR Department talk with the Brattleboro HR folks. Councilor Workman replied or
94 asking the members of the Chamber of Commerce to start there, so each of the Keene members
95 take a pledge to do their own internal audit, or something like that, and review of their policies.
96 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that it could be finding an auditor instead. Maybe the
97 Chamber could find someone who is willing to do the audit for all of the members. It might be
98 more cost effective that way. What the HRC's responsibility is in all of this is a good question,
99 and it might be a question for the next round.

100
101 ***4.D. It is recommended that the City and Keene employers expand and regularly provide***
102 ***internship positions that specifically attract underrepresented populations and create career***
103 ***opportunities.***

104
105 Ms. Fiske stated that this came up in a DEI training she did recently. A group of lawyers in MA
106 pooled their resources and created three or four intern spots for six months, and advertised in one
107 of the major metro areas for these internships that included pay high enough to cover a person's
108 rent. Because of that, those three interns ended up finding jobs in the region. This was possible
109 because of the lawyers' pooled resources as a group. The Library has an internship program paid
110 for Friends of the Library, part-time, in the Makerspace. It is not something that would draw

111 applicants from afar. This is a funding issue. Interns have to be paid, and at a high enough wage
112 to cover living expenses. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied yes, if the intern is from out of the
113 area. She continued that students from KSC and other schools are already living here.
114 Discussion ensued about are colleges and how diverse they are or are not. Chair Cunha-
115 Vasconcelos stated that a question might be how to create internships that draw these people into
116 the community to stay. Dr. Filiault stated that there is an exceptional pool of interns with KSC,
117 Antioch, and River Valley Community College. He continued that the Mayor wanted to create
118 internships like this, but that was derailed by the pandemic. The HRC could work to make it
119 happen.

120

121 Dr. Filiault continued that KSC's student body might be largely white but there is plenty of
122 diversity of other types; they need to talk about diversities, plural, not diversity, singular. It is
123 also about creating opportunities for students from the LGBTQI community, women, people of
124 various religions, and so on and so forth, not just race. Discussion continued. Chair Cunha-
125 Vasconcelos stated that she agrees that the HRC's focus/goal is diversities, plural, but they will
126 keep having this issue, because the RJCS Report is around race, and this meeting is around this
127 document. Dr. Morris replied that this document is what the HRC was charged to focus on. Dr.
128 Filiault replied that the document still addresses multiple diversities and recognizes the problems
129 of homophobia, anti-Semitism, sexism, and so on and so forth. It focuses on race but has an eye
130 on the other diversities. Sometimes race becomes most easily recognized because it is the most
131 overt and visually recognizable, but there are less overt diversities that sometimes get swept
132 under the rug. Dr. Morris replied that they should keep in mind that sometimes people of
133 different races and ethnicities also are [LGBTQ, of various religions, women, and so on and so
134 forth]. Dr. Filiault replied yes, there are multiple, overlapping diversities. Dr. Morris replied
135 that oftentimes, people of color are ignored even within the groups [for people marginalized due
136 to gender, sexual orientation, religion, etc]. For example, there is racism in the LGBTQ
137 community, or other groups. Sometimes people forget, when they say, "We need to talk about
138 this diversity and that diversity," that some people of color are also in those groups. It is a whole
139 discussion. However, the Racial Justice and Community Safety Committee was charged by the
140 Mayor to focus on race, so they did, and other [diversities] came up during the discussions when
141 they had open forums, which is how they ended up in the report.

142

143 Mr. Kirschner arrived at 7:00 PM and Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos briefly brought him up to speed
144 on where they are at in the meeting. She stated that Ms. Fiske brought up that this can be a
145 funding issue, regarding bringing people in from outside the community at a pay rate that allows
146 them to actually pay rent. They talked about the idea of tapping into the local colleges and the
147 topic of the diversities found there came up.

148

149 Mr. Aronson stated that all of these keep talking about the City of Keene and Keene employers,
150 so somehow they need to coordinate. He continued that he envisions the chairs of the different
151 groups – that is, Sofia Cunha-Vasconcelos from the HRC, the Chamber of Commerce's DEI
152 person, and [Pierre Morton, Vice President, and Catherine Workman, Co-Chair] from the
153 YMCA's MDEIB. He asked if Councilor Workman could bring this to the MDEIB, to get the

154 answer regarding Keene employers, while the HRC is focusing on the City's stuff. He asked if
155 that makes sense. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied yes, but the HRC cannot move forward on
156 that without the other groups' buy-in. It has not been a conversation yet. Mr. Aronson replied
157 that he suggests Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos and Mr. Bohannon have a conversation with
158 representatives from the other groups so they can coordinate all of this. Councilor Workman
159 replied that that can be one of the HRC's recommendations [for 4.D.] She thinks it is a great
160 idea; they need a lot more collaboration fleshing out of who is doing what, especially for the next
161 round of this, so they can start delegating some of [the RJCS Report's recommendations] to
162 those other committees.

163
164 Dr. Morris replied yes, because at the last MDEIB meeting, they were talking about doing an
165 assessment, but the RJCS Committee *did* an assessment, and the data is available to others. The
166 Governor's Council did an assessment, too. It has been done. Ms. Schwieger stated that taking
167 ownership creates community investment. Mr. Bohannon stated that he feels like the RJCS
168 Committee did a lot of work, meeting for a year, diving deep. He continued that the RJCS
169 Committee brought in many people from the community and there was a lot of conversation, and
170 they specifically went from meeting to meeting on specific topics, some of which he participated
171 in. The report came out and got handed to the HRC when the HRC was in a time of transition
172 and not quite ready for it, and then all of a sudden this other group formed and took off with it,
173 and the HRC does not know [what that group is doing]. That has caused some confusion within
174 the entire network. Thus, there needs to be a group discussion with Luca Paris, whoever the
175 representative is from the Chamber of Commerce's group, Dan Smith from the YMCA, Pierre
176 Morton, Councilor Workman as Co-Chair of the MDEIB, Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos, and
177 himself, all at the table, to get on the same highway. Councilor Workman replied yes, a year ago
178 when this report came out, the MDEIB did not exist, and the Chamber of Commerce did not
179 have a DEI Officer. Many of these positions had not yet been created in the community. Thus,
180 the HRC was the most appropriate group to take this on, and the group charged with all of the
181 work. Now that they are starting to see these other formations, groups, and positions within
182 employers in the community, the HRC can start to disseminate some of this work and really get
183 focused, so no one is duplicating the wheel.

184
185 Ms. Fiske stated that to shift the lens a bit, they can view this as an "embarrassment of riches."
186 They can look what happened as a result of this report - they now have groups they did not have
187 before. There is no need for anyone to complain about how the groups are not working together;
188 instead, they can be glad that all of these organizations are doing this, and talk about working
189 together. Ms. Schwieger replied that maybe one of the roles of the HRC is to weave the effort
190 together, because they were charged with a very specific task. Others agreed and discussion
191 continued.

192
193 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that this conversation has ended up more general than just about
194 internships, and she thinks it may apply to the next item as well.

195

196 **4.E. It is recommended that the City and Keene employers Identify where skills are**
197 **transferable amongst potential applicants to help provide opportunities and widen the**
198 **applicant pool (military to law enforcement, for example).**
199

200 Ms. Schwieger stated that this ties into Dr. Morris’s conversation. Mr. Bohannon stated that the
201 City has a new HR employee who is focused on recruitment, and he has seen a broader reach
202 happening, but there may be some resources that they are not tapping. If the City only advertises
203 locally, they are only reaching the local population. They are trying to broaden that, although
204 some positions may not lend themselves to that. A good audit, as Mr. Aronson said earlier,
205 would be able to provide information. Councilor Workman stated that she read an article
206 recently about how NH and VT have become desirable for “climate refugees,” and she knows
207 someone who came here from CA for that reason, and picked NH specifically, just by word of
208 mouth. That is something to think about. Also, there are local [non-climate] refugee
209 organizations that help with refugee settlement and getting people set up with jobs and housing.
210 Maybe the HRC can pull them into these discussions. Ms. Fiske stated that she thinks Bellows
211 Falls is becoming a Refugee Center, which is a potential pool. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated
212 that she has also heard about COVID-19 refugees moving to the NH area because there is more
213 space here.
214

215 Councilor Workman stated that regarding the refugee population, she has a well-educated friend
216 from Nigeria, but that education does not transfer to the US and her friend had to start at square
217 one and prove themselves. Maybe the HRC can talk about a way to streamline that process.
218 Licensing (for professions) is a whole conversation on its own, but there must be other jobs, and
219 maybe the HRC can look at that when they look at transferable skills that 4.E. talks about. Dr.
220 Morris stated that there is a lot to talk about with this, such as the need for people to understand
221 the fact that testing is culturally informed, as shown by tons of research. Standardized tests like
222 these are not good predictors of different groups, not just regarding race, but class. Dr. Filiault
223 replied that the Boston Police hiring test was overturned as being racially and class biased and
224 unusable and Boston had to come up with something different. Probably that case is a good one
225 to start with, to look at the reasoning the court used and what they have offered as an opportunity
226 to move forward. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that is a good idea, but of course, some of
227 this is beyond their municipal control, and done at the State level. But the HRC can be an
228 advocate for that change at the State level as well.
229

230 Mr. Bohannon stated that this talks about “City of Keene employers.” Others replied that the
231 language is “the City and Keene employers.” Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that the City does
232 not have entrance testing for any positions. Mr. Bohannon replied that actually, there is entrance
233 testing for Police and Fire, which definitely is needed. He continued that he does not know
234 much about the Fire entrance testing, but the Police entrance testing has to meet CALEA
235 (standards). They are a national certified program that does a complete audit of all of the KPD’s
236 services and how they conduct their business, and if the KPD does not pass it, they do not get
237 accredited. It is rigorous and there are not many CALEA-certified police departments in the
238 state. Councilor Workman replied that there are not many CALEA-certified departments in the

239 nation. Ms. Fiske stated that she does not know what other departments have testing. The
240 Library does not. Certainly there are some certifications needed, like for some Public Works
241 employees, but she is not sure if there is additional testing beyond the certifications. Discussion
242 continued. Mr. Bohannon spoke of City departments and positions that have opportunities for
243 employees to learn, study, and obtain certifications, and it is okay if it takes more than one
244 attempt. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked who defines the testing – by department? The State?
245 Mr. Bohannon replied that some is the State and some is national. Dr. Morris brought up the
246 high school and its vocational opportunities; maybe that is something to think about. She
247 continued that she hears teachers talking about the disparities between Keene students and
248 students from nearby towns, and a lot of it is around class. It would be nice to figure out some of
249 those key touchpoints, what young people are interested in, and provide that. Not everyone
250 wants to go to college. Mr. Kirschner replied that there are wonderful programs and teachers at
251 the [Cheshire Career Center]. Discussion continued. Mr. Bohannon stated that he knows this
252 conversation is happening now at Keene High School (KHS), driven in part by teachers' desire
253 to change the educational model, which they see does not work for every student, and all of the
254 options at the Career Center. He gave more information about KHS's efforts and funding.
255

256 Discussion continued about entrance tests in general and the potential biases in them. Ms.
257 Schwieger stated that when she thinks of reasonable accommodations for disabled people, she
258 wonders if there is a differentiated tool that an employer could use, with the understanding that
259 someone comes with a life experience that is not acknowledged in the testing. Dr. Filiault
260 replied that there is litigation about that, waiting on a decision. He continued that the argument
261 is that, for example, if 60 is a passing score, perhaps your life experience gives you 10 points
262 towards that and right now your score is only 50. Ms. Schwieger replied that she was thinking
263 more about how people are even accessing information on the test. Mr. Bohannon stated that
264 there is a national test to become a certified Parks and Recreation professional. He continued
265 that it is a standardized test but its administration is ADA-compliant, and everyone in the field
266 that he is connected with via LinkedIn, which is a diverse group of people, post that they
267 received the certification. He does not think there is bias within that test when you get to that
268 level of certification. The organization would be sued if they showed implicit bias.
269

270 Discussion continued and Dr. Filiault stated that the HRC will never get a national licensing
271 body to change its testing or the testing procedures, but he thinks they can be creative in ways to
272 help students and applicants to be better prepared. This dovetails nicely with the internship
273 opportunities and the educational opportunities they talked about in 4.D. An under-accessed
274 resource in the community is River Valley, in addition to the Voc-Tech Center at the high
275 school. Maybe the HRC should work more closely with River Valley and its students, who tend
276 to be more socio-economically disadvantaged. They could target those students from an early
277 stage of their educational career, give internship opportunities, and mentor them with an eye on
278 preparing them for the test they are going to be taking, particularly students from socio-
279 economically disadvantaged and diverse backgrounds. Dr. Morris replied that there are many
280 methods to help people, and they are not directly coaching people on the test, but teaching them
281 how to test. That is how she paid her way through her Master's program – she worked with a

282 program designed by a professor she knew, preparing inner city kids on how to test, because
283 many kids from wealthier schools were going to big, posh test-taking [centers], which inner city
284 kids did not have access to. The program worked with inner city kids on various strategies for
285 taking various kinds of tests. Discussion continued about testing. Mr. Kirschner spoke about
286 also working with open-access institutions that do not have the barrier of entrance tests, and
287 increasing access channels from there. Dr. Filiault suggested they reach out to River Valley and
288 ask them what the program-to-career pathways that the HRC, as a City group, can begin to work
289 with, and about the programmatic avenues to begin to target students and bring them towards a
290 career in City government, and what educational pathways would be appropriate. Others agreed
291 and discussion continued about River Valley.

292
293 Mr. Aronson stated that he does not know what “applicant tracking systems” means. Testing
294 would be a component, but what else goes into applicant tracking and what might fall through
295 the cracks? Ms. Fiske replied that part of the tracking system is questions for applicants such as:
296 Have you applied for this job before? Have you applied with this particular company before?
297 What was your income at your last job? She continued that the City still asks that latter question.
298 Some people who apply for Library jobs bravely decline to answer. The HRC could ask the City
299 to reconsider that question. Mr. Bohannon stated that as an employer, he likes to know if an
300 applicant was making, say, \$30 per hour at their previous job, because if the position he is hiring
301 for only pays \$18 per hour, the person is not going to take the job. HRC members replied that is
302 not necessarily true and gave several reasons why. Discussion continued about salary
303 differences in private sector versus municipal jobs and the potential value and/or potential harm
304 in the City continuing to ask applicants what their previous job paid, and what happens with
305 “over-qualified” candidates. Mr. Bohannon spoke about CivicHR, the tracking service the City’s
306 HR Department uses to track applicants, and how the information is available to the hiring
307 manager in the department that is hiring and the HR Department. The City will soon be getting
308 new financial software that will help that process and that data.

309
310 At 7:30 PM, Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos called for a five-minute recess. The meeting resumed at
311 7:35 PM.

312
313 ***4.G. It is recommended that the City and Keene employers seek and generate incentives to***
314 ***promote equity in employment.***

315
316 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked: who are we incentivizing? Others replied, the employers. Dr.
317 Morris stated that many private businesses use this model, and provide incentives for people to
318 do the work, and it becomes part of people’s evaluations and then they get bonuses. Dr. Filiault
319 stated that this recommendation is vague – what is the incentive? Who is being incentivized?
320 What is equity? This is hard to apply to a public model, because he does not think you can
321 incentivize an individual in the public sphere; it would create a perverse situation. For example,
322 [people would ask] if that is the reason you are hiring a diverse individual. Dr. Morris replied
323 that the way she remembers it, everyone has a set goal/expectation, which everyone is measured
324 by, and if you meet that, you would get an additional incentive. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated

325 that when she worked in corporate America and had to set annual goals, if her goal was, say,
326 “come in under budget on three different programs,” if she did that, she got a bonus. But what
327 metric do you use that would not be an issue in a public setting? What would a metric look like?
328 Dr. Morris replied that she does not have them at her disposal right now, but they do exist. Chair
329 Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if an action item could be to investigate this. Dr. Morris replied that
330 they would really have to think it through. It might have been one of the recommendations in the
331 Brattleboro report. They could talk with the HR person in Brattleboro. Chair Cunha-
332 Vasconcelos stated that the only metrics that come instantly to her mind seem fairly token, which
333 does not get the job done.

334
335 Ms. Fiske stated that there is a way of incentivizing without money. Others agreed. Ms. Fiske
336 continued that for example, you have to check many boxes when applying for a federal grant –
337 like “I agree that I have worker’s compensation insurance,” and “I agree that I follow these
338 different rules.” One incentive could be that you can apply for contracts with the City if you
339 have a DEI statement, for example, or that you would automatically be put into the pool for
340 consideration. Or they could say that no one can apply unless they have a DEI statement. They
341 can look at this more in the way that the federal government does, saying that you have to check
342 certain boxes before you can qualify for getting contracts or participating as a partner or
343 something else. Discussion ensued. Mr. Aronson stated that that could be agency-level, not
344 individual-level. Ms. Fiske replied yes, especially for the City – that could be an easier ask.
345 Then people would have to do it within the town, if they want to be involved with contracts for
346 the City. Dr. Filiault stated that he likes the idea, but he wonders if there is a “home rule” issue
347 with the City requiring a diversity statement. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that they need to
348 investigate that.

349
350 ***4.H. It is recommended that the City and Keene employers review and update initiatives,***
351 ***systems, operations and mission statements to identify practices that limit or thwart diversity.***
352

353 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that this is sort of the flipside to the same coin of internships,
354 recruitment reviews, and things of that nature. She continued that she feels that the same
355 avenues will work for this. Others agreed. Councilor Workman stated that when the RJCS
356 Committee was talking about this, it was to give businesses a blueprint on where to start, when
357 they say, “I’ve never even considered this. How do I start making change?” She continued that
358 when she is looking at all of these recommendations, she is just looking at that – creating a
359 blueprint/manual, for people looking to diversify or change the current status quo, for what to
360 start looking at internally, and what the jumping off points are. Many businesses say that they
361 want to do this work but just do not know where to start and need support such as
362 recommendations for good, reputable trainings.

363
364 Mr. Aronson asked what action the HRC wants to take for 4.H. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos
365 replied that she thinks it is along the same lines as the others above – they need to have a
366 conversation with the DEI person at the Chamber and the people at the MDEIB. The HRC needs
367 to handle it for the City, and the other two groups need to handle it for businesses, whether it is

368 identifying who should be reviewing these initiatives, systems, operations, and mission
369 statements, or whether it is the HRC actively taking a look at them themselves or supporting that
370 examination. That question might be a question for the next round, but it fits the same model.
371 Ms. Fiske stated that she sees 4.H. as kind of a repeat from other items they have already looked
372 at. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied yes, another facet, with the same tool kit to support it.

373

374 ***4.I. It is recommended that the City intentionally factor diversity into community driven***
375 ***development projects such as the arts corridor and the skate park, for example.***

376

377 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that she loves the idea but has no idea how to do this. Dr.
378 Filiault stated that the City Council has a methodology they use for non-profit
379 evaluation/funding, and this could be another factor they add into their formula. Ms. Fiske
380 replied that staff also have protocol meetings with community groups that want to use City
381 property.

382

383 Mr. Bohannon stated that he believes that when the City is going through the design process for
384 something like a park, Winchester Street, or the Comprehensive Master Plan, there are public
385 forums. They put those into the RFP process. They have to publicize and promote and get
386 people into the forums to discuss whatever the particular issue is, and he thinks the City as a
387 whole does a good job of that. Whether individuals want to attend those sessions is a different
388 topic, but the City at least puts it out there in a very broad sense.

389

390 Dr. Morris stated that this could be interpreted in a different way. For example, as they are
391 planning the skate park, or walkways for nature walks, or something else, they need to make sure
392 it is accessible. Mr. Bohannon replied yes, that is a high priority. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos
393 asked for more details about the term “accessible.” Do they mean physically accessible for
394 people in wheelchairs? Because this document is about race. Dr. Morris replied that she is just
395 trying to do what they have been asked to do, to expand the report beyond race, so she is
396 thinking about that, but she is also thinking about, for example, questions like what type of
397 artwork is displayed, and whether it [reflects diversity]. For example, the process for doing the
398 Walldogs murals was very intentional. At first, the design the Walldogs had for the Abenaki
399 mural looked, to her and others, more Navajo. The person who designed it was trying to be
400 inclusive, but when the designer heard that feedback, she/he/they then consulted with an Abenaki
401 person [to improve/change the design], and that is how Keene got the wall that is there now.
402 That is the kind of spirit that [4.I. is about] – making sure that if they are going to do something,
403 it is done intentionally. The Walldogs mural is a perfect example of a good, inclusive,
404 intentional process. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that she has not heard any negative
405 feedback about the Walldogs project or process, which is rare. Dr. Morris replied yes, because
406 there were so many opportunities for feedback and everything was very clear. She continued
407 that in the beginning of the process, someone said the art would be about “the good ‘ole days,”
408 which was [worrisome], until they took the time to really explain what their intentions and plans
409 were and how they were going to involve the community and think beyond, and it was a great
410 process. She would like to see that process replicated.

411
412 Ms. Schwieger stated that the Keene Arts Core is sort of social art project, in the fall, inviting an
413 artist who will do an intentional project with maybe a visual outcome or maybe not, but it is that
414 same intentional process. It is about identifying a need in the community and then working with
415 the community about it, to have some sort of outcome. It is aligned with [what Dr. Morris is
416 talking about], but it is a fine arts movement right now. It might be good to keep on their radar.
417 The JDC is partnering with them, so she can let the HRC know about it. Others agreed and
418 discussion continued about arts events.

419
420 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that regarding what Mr. Bohannon was saying about projects
421 having accessible public forums and the question of whether people want to attend being beyond
422 their control, there can be an element of culture leading some people to not feel that they can
423 come to those meetings or participate. She wonders if there is a way for the HRC to influence
424 that, such as advertising the public forums or somehow communicating about those meetings.
425 She is not saying the City has not already done that; she is just saying this is something to be
426 conscious of. Because just because the meetings are happening does not mean that everyone
427 feels comfortable attending.

428
429 Mr. Bohannon replied that if the City advertises in the Keene Sentinel, social media, the radio,
430 and so on and so forth, they have touched all the bases they can to promote the event. How else
431 would they promote the event? Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that something that occurs to
432 her is something that came up in the last meeting, and maybe it is beyond their purview, but the
433 HRC had talked about making a list of local community groups, such as different religious
434 communities, different cultural organizations, and so on and so forth. It may not be feasible, but
435 if there were a distribution network for that information through those organizations, that means
436 specifically reaching out to those groups, and people might feel that they are [welcome at the
437 public meetings]. Others agreed. Ms. Fiske spoke of how the outreach for one project might be
438 a little different than the outreach for another, such as the skate park and dog park. Mr.
439 Bohannon replied that he goes to the Lions Club, the Kiwanis Club, the Rotary Club, the
440 Women's Club, and so on and so forth; he will go to any group that has interest. He hears what
441 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos is saying, about having a list of groups they could contact related to
442 different things, and he will go and talk to anyone. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that an
443 email list would work. Mr. Bohannon replied that first they would have to make sure groups
444 want to be a part of it. They just need to find or create such a list, and he can definitely reach
445 out. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that one of the HRC's action items from the [April 12
446 meeting about the RJCS Report] was to create that list, which will be an undertaking.

447
448 Dr. Filiault stated that he thinks creating such a list is a great idea, but his concern about reaching
449 out to a list like that for these types of projects is that there will always be someone left off the
450 list, who feels left out, and it is unrealistic to reach out to every group on the list for every
451 project. There will always be some subjectivity for which communities are impacted and which
452 are not, for who is reached out to for a particular project. Discussion ensued. Mr. Aronson
453 stated that the bottom line is to be intentional in that process, and not just [quickly go down a

454 checklist]. It is true that someone could feel left out, but all they can do is try to be as intentional
455 as possible with who they reach out to.

456

457 Mr. Aronson stated that he wants to add the phrase “emotional safety” to all of this. He
458 continued that it is not just about inclusivity and access; it is also about ensuring that all of the
459 processes are safe for all people, so people feel safe speaking up and feel safe using the skate
460 park, wandering through the arts corridor, and so on and so forth. Dr. Morris replied that she
461 cannot remember who set it up, but someone set up alternative ways to give the RJCS
462 Committee feedback, so if people did not feel comfortable coming to a meeting, they could
463 submit information in several different ways. Maybe some people do not want to be part of a
464 public record or be easily identified.

465

466 Mr. Bohannon stated that he can have a conversation with Ms. Landry, who was the one who set
467 that up. Mr. Kirschner stated that to Dr. Filiault’s point, he hopes the HRC would be building
468 larger relationships with these groups aside from the asks, because yes, they will make mistakes
469 and harm will happen, so it is about what they do in response to that. Ms. Schwieger replied that
470 it is like a living organism, and maybe it would start to self-identify the missing links and
471 generate its own expansion. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that erring on the side of not
472 communicating because they are worried about offending someone is not the best way to go
473 forward. She continued that they want to be reaching out to someone, and the possibility of
474 missing someone does not seem like a good enough reason to not reach out to anyone. Ms. Fiske
475 stated that as a City employee who is constantly trying to get communications out and keep the
476 email list up to date, she thinks it might be easier if they encouraged people in the groups to
477 subscribe the City’s social media accounts, the email list for City news, and so on and so forth.
478 That might be easier, because the list would be impossible to keep up; it would change
479 constantly. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that she hears what she is saying, but she also
480 thinks the HRC needs to intentionally reach out to people to ask them to subscribe and maintain
481 that connection. Ms. Fiske replied that is what she means. Unless there is a special project that
482 touches on a certain thing, they cannot reach out to everyone, every time. There are so many
483 projects across the City. But they can encourage groups to subscribe to the City’s news.

484

485 Dr. Morris stated that the MDEIB is trying to create an events list, because there are so many
486 events, and there is not a central place in which to find them all listed. Maybe this could be a
487 similar kind of thing – having one central place to give feedback on everything [various
488 projects]. Ms. Schwieger stated that she knows a woman who started a tiny arts letter about
489 eight years ago, and now it is massive, because it exponentially evolved and people wanted to be
490 listed on it and new categories were created. This kind of thing can happen.

491

492 Dr. Filiault stated that this conversation has expanded to the topic of communication to the HRC,
493 but he thinks it is a worthwhile conversation, because it relates to the question of how they can
494 solicit feedback for City projects. He continued that he thinks they do need to have a centralized
495 way to communicate with the HRC. It would also be worthwhile to have either a HRC email
496 address or for each member to have their own City email address, so they can reach out to key

497 constituencies. Many of them are representing a key constituency/diversity, and a way to solicit
498 feedback would be to talk to those members of the constituency or diversity they represent, about
499 how people feel about a certain project. It would help if those people could email HRC members
500 and talk to them, but it would not be appropriate for HRC members to give out their personal
501 email addresses, and just having an email address up on the City's website saying that people can
502 email the HRC with thoughts about diversity in the City. A Facebook page would be good, too.
503 That would be a better way to solicit feedback, rather than constantly trying to run out and talk
504 with everyone and sending people to come to talk to the HRC in all the ways people feel
505 comfortable talking. Discussion ensued. Ms. Fiske stated that the only contact information the
506 HRC's webpage currently has is Mr. Bohannon's phone number, not even email. Mr. Bohannon
507 replied that the City does not put staff members' emails on the website. Chair Cunha-
508 Vasconcelos stated that the problem is that it would fall on one individual to review all of the
509 [emails to the HRC]. Ms. Fiske replied that it goes to a central place and then the IT Department
510 creates a listserv, so when you do a form on the Library's website, for example, that form,
511 depending on which box you check, goes to different batches of people. So something could be
512 set up to automatically go to HRC members. Mr. Bohannon replied that department heads
513 determine who the communication goes to. Anything related to parks, cemeteries, and programs
514 goes to him and Kristy Morrison, his administrative assistant, and if they need to send something
515 to someone else they will, but he and Ms. Morrison try to respond as quickly as possible. The
516 City will not give HRC members City email addresses. However, the HRC could talk with Ms.
517 Landry about generating how to promote the HRC.

518
519 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that if the HRC collects that input, the question becomes what
520 their process is for addressing it. That is much bigger question. Ms. Fiske replied yes, especially
521 when their plate is so full with all of the community programs they are doing. Chair Cunha-
522 Vasconcelos replied that there is an open question to discuss with the City Attorney the
523 differences between committee and commission and what the HRC is empowered to do and not
524 do. She absolutely supports the idea of having a way of getting input from the community
525 directly, but before they roll anything out, they need to carefully consider not just how the
526 information comes in, but how it is processed.

527
528 ***4.J. It is recommended that the Keene Public Library as well as school libraries expand***
529 ***collection diversity, that feedback be sought from the community for this purpose, that the***
530 ***Keene Public Library facilitate reading groups to promote diversity within its collection, and***
531 ***that libraries seek financial donations to help expand the collection diversity.***

532
533 HRC members noted that 4.J. has been accomplished. Ms. Fiske stated that the Library has
534 instituted a requirement that they have a minimum of 30% of new purchases reflect diversities.
535 She continued that it is very expensive, but they are currently seeking an audit of their collection
536 so they can see what exists in the collection and see ideas for titles to purchase in the future.
537 They are seeking funding for that and using financial donations as part of the diversity collection.
538 They have been averaging 35-40%, depending on the topic, which exceeds their required

539 minimum. Ms. Schwieger asked if it is the topic, or authorship, or both. Ms. Fiske replied that it
540 reflects the author, storyline (fiction), and/or topic (nonfiction).

541

542 Mr. Aronson stated that last year for the wellness festival, he was going to have a children's
543 story hour with stories about self-esteem and topics like that. He continued that the Library's
544 Youth Department is great and gave him about 30 books, with all kinds of people represented. It
545 was a great experience for him. He asked if there are audiobooks, too. Ms. Fiske replied yes,
546 and the children's collection has been easiest to (increase the diversity of), because it has just
547 been built in. It has been part of school curriculums for a long time, to publishers have been
548 creating the content. Where the Library has been struggling is with adult content. Because the
549 publishers for adult content tend to only publish things they think will sell. The Library
550 sometimes struggles to find certain types of diversity, especially in fiction, before the current
551 climate happened. Oprah's Book Club was an amazing thing for diversity, for adult fiction.
552 Regarding nonfiction, the problem has sometimes been, for example, getting a book that is not
553 just about cooking in Pakistan but written by an actual Pakistani person, or gardening books that
554 do not just have people who look like Martha Stewart.

555

556 Mr. Kirschner asked Ms. Fiske what her engagement with the community has been like, in
557 expanding the Library's collection. Ms. Fiske replied that whenever they do any book talks, they
558 include a diverse range of titles, as do the book discussion groups. They have been having a lot
559 of community conversations focusing on race, equity, and diversities. The Library's weekly
560 newsletters highlight the titles. Mr. Kirschner replied that he hears a lot of what the Library is
561 doing for the community, but his question is what the Library is doing *with* the community.
562 What feedback have they sought or are they seeking for this purpose? Ms. Fiske replied that the
563 Library purchases almost anything that a community member asks them to. Mr. Kirschner asked
564 if that practice is well promoted. Ms. Fiske replied that there is a link people can use to make a
565 request. She continued that in addition, if someone asks for an interlibrary loan for a book the
566 Library is unable to get from another library, they will purchase it. Councilor Workman stated
567 that a member of the RJCS Committee made a big donation to the Library last year [to increase
568 diversity in the collection]. Ms. Fiske replied that that person moved out of town and she lost
569 contact with her and never received that donation, but the Library is using all of its donations in
570 this way. There is someone who has been sending the Library titles, particularly on Jewish
571 history, for decades, in honor of his parents. Any monetary donations the Library receives have
572 to automatically go through that diversity 30% minimum.

573

574 ***4.K. It is recommended that the City review Cheshire TV programming and encourage***
575 ***additions and changes that promote diversity and inclusion.***

576

577 HRC members noted that they cannot address 4.K. because Cheshire TV [went off the air]. Ms.
578 Fiske replied that on Thursday at the Finance, Organization, and Personnel Committee meeting,
579 the agenda includes discussion a group that is putting in a bid to become the new public access
580 station. She continued that it is an outside organization. Mr. Bohannon stated that they would

581 provide access to the public to come in and do their own recordings. Dr. Morris stated that
582 maybe the HRC could supply some content. Discussion continued.

583

584 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that the next step (with the RJCS Report) is circling back
585 around and starting at the top, and defining the next level of granularity. She continued that they
586 need to pick another day to meet for two hours again. Discussion ensued. The group decided on
587 Monday, May 23, from 7:00 to 8:30 PM.

588

589 There being no further business, Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos adjourned the meeting at 8:30 PM.

590

591 Respectfully submitted by,
592 Britta Reida, Minute Taker

593

594 Reviewed and edited by,
595 Andy Bohannon, PRF Director

1 City of Keene
2 New Hampshire

3
4
5 HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE
6 MEETING MINUTES
7

Monday, May 23, 2022

7:00 PM

Room 22,
Recreation Center

Members Present:

Sofia Cunha-Vasconcelos, Chair
Dr. Shaun Filiault, Vice Chair
Marti Fiske
Dr. Dottie Morris
Hunter Kirschner
Rabbi Daniel Aronson

Staff Present:

Andy Bohannon, Parks, Recreation & Facilities
Director

Members Not Present:

Heidi Schwieger, Alternate
Jan Manwaring
Dr. Mohammed Saleh
Ritu Budakoti, Alternate
Councilor Catherine Workman

8
9
10 **1) Racial Justice and Community Safety Committee Report**
11

12 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos called the meeting to order at 7:09 PM. She stated that now that the
13 HRC has taken a first pass at all of the recommendations in the RJCS Committee's report, they
14 will start again at the top and go into more detail.
15

16 *1.A. It is recommended that the City of Keene take a position against racism starting with a*
17 *strong anti-racist statement.*
18

19 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that the City has a written declaration, posted in City Hall and
20 other City buildings. She continued that the HRC submitted a statement [to be read before each
21 City meeting], which [the Mayor] had a concern, not wanting to add that burden to the beginning
22 of meetings. Mr. Bohannon stated that for the record, the statement was not rejected for its
23 content or its purpose. He continued that at the time, it was felt that adding one more thing to all
24 of the committees, having them read the statement into the meeting minutes, was not necessarily
25 comfortable. The HRC should go back and explore this. There is opportunity to revisit it.
26

27 Discussion ensued. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if she and Mr. Bohannon could have a
28 conversation with the Mayor. Mr. Bohannon replied yes, they can do that, and the HRC can
29 refine the statement. He will set up the meeting with the Mayor. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos
30 asked if the HRC should refine the language now. Mr. Bohannon replied no, they can first find
31 out where the language needs to be refined.

32

33 Dr. Morris stated that the Chamber of Commerce has a task force, and they are writing a
34 statement as well. She continued that she does not know the content or intentions of that
35 statement, such as whether it will just be for businesses.

36

37 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that that brings up an action item that will keep coming up –
38 the Chamber has a task force, there is the Monadnock Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and
39 Belonging Coalition (MDEIB), and there is the Human Rights Committee.

40

41 Mr. Bohannon stated that the MDEIB, led by the YMCA, asked the City Council for \$55,000 to
42 have an MDEIB Director at the YMCA. Dr. Morris replied that they need \$120,000, because it
43 has to cover benefits and other things. She continued that they are doing fundraising. The
44 person would be working on behalf of several places but would be housed at the Y and report to
45 the Y's Executive Director, which some people are struggling to understand, which makes the
46 fundraising efforts more difficult. Pierre [Morton, MDEIB] talked to the Mayor and the City
47 Manager before presenting the request to the City Council. Some of the money would be used
48 for training for the community and other sorts of things.

49

50 Mr. Aronson stated that [regarding the statement the HRC wanted City committees to read
51 before their meetings], he wonders if a compromise would be to always have the statement
52 printed on committees' and boards' agendas. He continued that that way, it would not take up
53 time to read it at the start of meetings. Others agreed that that is a good idea. Mr. Bohannon
54 stated that the Chamber has, on its website, its Civil Rights Policy. Mr. Aronson stated that
55 having a statement on a wall or website is one thing, but having it in front of decision-makers
56 every time they have a meeting is different, and says 'this is a priority, and we need to have this
57 mindset as we make our decisions.'

58

59 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos read the Chamber's statement aloud:

60

61 *"The GKPC operates its programs and services without regard to actual or perceived race,*
62 *color, religion, national origin, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, or age in*
63 *accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and other statutes and authorities that prohibit*
64 *discrimination in federally assisted programs and activities. Any person who believes they have*
65 *been aggrieved by any unlawful discriminatory practice under Title IV may file a complaint with*
66 *the GKPC."*

67

68 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that she read this aloud because she wants to understand where
69 the HRC's goals differ from the Chamber's. She continued that the Chamber seems to have an

70 interest in adhering to federal policy, and the HRC's goals are significantly less regulatory. It is
71 relevant for the three groups to be in communication. She does not quite know how to go about
72 that or what that would look like. Maybe the chairs of the three groups could talk. Dr. Morris
73 replied that Mr. Morton is stepping down as co-chair of the MDEIB due to work responsibilities,
74 and Councilor Workman is the other co-chair, and she does not know who is taking over for Mr.
75 Morton. She continued that they could reach out to Mr. Morton, who would probably be happy
76 to meet [with Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos and the other chairs], but she does not know when he is
77 stepping down. Councilor Workman has been very involved.

78
79 ***1.B. It is recommended that the City work with community stakeholders to establish clear***
80 ***community racial equity and inclusivity goals and that the goals be widely adopted by the City***
81 ***and Keene agencies and businesses.***

82
83 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos took a few moments to read through the HRC's previous discussion of
84 1.B., from the (April 12, 2022) meeting minutes. She stated that she will consider 1.B. taken
85 care of for the short term, given what those meeting minutes say. She continued that there is a
86 bigger set of questions around the idea of the ombudsman and how to collect input, and so on
87 and so forth, further down the list of action items.

88
89 Dr. Morris asked if they know how other communities might do something like that. Chair
90 Cunha-Vasconcelos replied no, but that did come up in conversation a few times. She continued
91 that Brattleboro, VT, has undergone a process like this and there might be best practices to look
92 for. Discussion ensued. Dr. Morris shared some information about how Brattleboro's DEI
93 Committee works. She agreed to contact Brattleboro's HR Director, Sally Nix, to see if Ms. Nix
94 could have a conversation with her and Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos. Mr. Aronson asked if Mr.
95 Bohannon knows of other HRCs in the state or is part of a listserv he could reach out to and ask.
96 Mr. Bohannon replied that he is not aware of any other groups like the HRC in the state, but he
97 can put out an email and ask. He asked if Ms. Fiske could do the same, by reaching out to
98 Library folks. Ms. Fiske replied yes, and they get might get more responses if they ask about
99 DEI groups in addition to HRCs. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if Keene has any kind of DEI
100 group (involving City staff). Mr. Bohannon replied no, and discussion ensued. Mr. Bohannon
101 stated that Rebecca Landry, IT Director and staff liaison for the RJCS Committee, knows
102 someone who is interested in a summer internship with the City and maybe they would be
103 interested in looking at a DEI program. That is something to explore.

104
105 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that there was an action item from the minutes that did not
106 specify who would be taking the action. Mr. Bohannon replied that that is true of many of the
107 action items the HRC came up with. Mr. Aronson replied that part of tonight's work is to figure
108 that out. Others agreed. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that she would like to start putting
109 some timeframes around the action items as well. She asked if it is reasonable for action items to
110 be initiated within a week, in general. She continued that an example would be that if someone's
111 action item is to reach out to a person the HRC would like to have a conversation with, they send

112 that email out within a week of being tasked with it. They cannot control how quickly the person
113 responds to the email. Others agreed.

114

115 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that they know they need to find a way of connecting public
116 comment. She continued that she does not think they know yet if the HRC is the correct body to
117 collect public input. Her personal opinion is that there is no point in collecting information if
118 you do not have a process to close the loop on the information, whether it is a complaint,
119 concern, recommendation, and so on and so forth. If it just goes into the void, people get
120 frustrated. Mr. Aronson had raised the idea of having an ombudsman. The HRC does not have
121 the authority to create any new positions for the City. Maybe the HRC would make a
122 recommendation to the City Council. Maybe the HRC's responsibility is to brainstorm a process
123 for collecting the information, which identifies the responsible parties in that process; they could
124 flesh out the process and recommend it to the City Council.

125

126 Discussion ensued. Mr. Bohannon stated that yes, the HRC could flesh out a process and
127 recommend it to the City Council. He continued that Dr. Morris had suggested the HRC have
128 open forums/open discussions in the community about specific topics, and see what gets drawn
129 out; that is something the HRC could talk about.

130

131 Mr. Bohannon asked Dr. Morris if it accurate to say that if the MDEIB Coalition does not get the
132 funding it needs [for the MDEIB Director], the group will no longer exist. Dr. Morris replied
133 yes, because its main purpose is to try to get that position in place. She continued that there are
134 some things the Education subcommittee will be doing in the meantime, but getting the MDEIB
135 Director is the group's main focus.

136

137 Ms. Fiske stated that her concern with the idea of the public forums is not knowing where the
138 public comment would go – is the person taking the comments supposed to find a solution? It
139 could be anything from something needing a detective to just someone needing resources pointed
140 out. Public comments could be about crimes, or policy matters, or anything else. Discussion
141 continued about who has what responsibility. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that the question
142 is who is triaging the public input. Discussion continued about what an ombudsman would be.
143 Mr. Aronson stated that if there was an ombudsman, who is kind of like a concierge, that person
144 would be entrusted with the triage, directing, and networking with other non-profits like the ADL
145 and other advocacy groups equipped to do some of the research and networking.

146

147 Ms. Fiske stated that this requires some discussion; that ombudsman work sounds like a full-time
148 job. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that her question first is whether this is the direction the
149 HRC wants to go in, designing this process as a recommendation. She continued that an
150 ombudsman is an example of what the process might look like. Reality is that the HRC does not
151 have a budget or any authority. What should the HRC's time be spent on, in examining these
152 action items?

153

154 Mr. Aronson replied that if there were a State ombudsman or State Chief Diversity Officer, this
155 discussion would be different. Maybe they could advocate for that.

156
157 Mr. Kirschner stated that he hesitates about creating a process for another person/position to
158 enact. What is the need? If the need is solutions to racial bias, he expects that there will be a lot
159 of emotional labor in this work, not just practical. He continued that he approaches this kind of
160 work in relationship, and relationships involve emotions. Racial harm can cause trauma.
161 Someone who has experienced or witnessed racial harm is likely to have many emotions and a
162 need for processing, to be able to move through and find a solution or reconciliation. Thus, he
163 hesitates to have a solution-focused process, because the truth telling is so important. Public
164 forums and conversations are important, to see if there is wisdom that can come from the
165 community, rather than outsourcing that to another person or process.

166
167 Dr. Filiault stated that they need to stay grounded in their role as the City's Human Rights
168 Committee, and they are not a commission. He continued that the best they can do is make a
169 broad recommendation. They do not have authority and thus need to stay at a high level of
170 abstraction in their recommendations. Ms. Fiske added that she is concerned about the HRC
171 possibly taking on too much work. She continued that this is their third meeting about the RJCS
172 Report in addition to their primary work, the educational component. The RJCS Report deserves
173 recognition, but she thinks the HRC will need to decide at some point whether to focus on the
174 RJCS Report or their educational work, because she does not think they can do both. Mr.
175 Aronson agreed and stated that the HRC is approaching hour six of working on the RJCS Report,
176 and the question is "How long is this piece of string?" Ms. Fiske replied that the HRC could
177 potentially make recommendations for another committee to pick up. Mr. Bohannon asked if
178 that can be the MDEIB Coalition.

179
180 Ms. Fiske asked if the HRC needs to get the Mayor's permission to pass this work on, if the
181 Mayor assigned them the RJCS Report. Mr. Bohannon replied that there is debate about where
182 the report lies, because there is no public record of the report being assigned to the HRC, but the
183 report itself referred it to the HRC. He continued that obviously no one wants the report to
184 collect dust, but this needs to be figured out. What is the MDEIB Coalition's charge? That
185 group is not connected to the City. There seems to be a little circle of people having this
186 conversation right now. What about the other groups? He thinks it will help to have a meeting
187 between Luca Paris, a Chamber of Commerce representative, Dan Smith from the YMCA, Chair
188 Cunha-Vasconcelos, himself, Councilor Workman and Pierre Morton from the MDEIB
189 Coalition, to talk about who will take ownership of this and how to move it forward. He has
190 concerns about how the MDEIB Director position could be sustained, because everyone is
191 fighting for positions and funding. Every City department needs positions. It does not seem
192 likely that a new, outside position could be funded/sustained, given this.

193
194 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that she thinks that an underlying issue they keep bumping into
195 is that there is no structure for this kind of work. Mr. Bohannon replied that is correct. They are
196 trying to create it. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that they are trying to do it without

197 necessarily having the organizational buy-in of the City. The HRC is an ancillary entity. Mr.
198 Bohannon replied that he believes the HRC can provide education to the greater Keene area with
199 the intent from this report. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that the HRC is good at education.
200 Mr. Bohannon replied right, and they need to continue the education, otherwise it will get lost if
201 the HRC stops carrying the flag on this.

202

203 Dr. Filiault stated that he thinks the HRC can continue to create educational programming that
204 keeps the RJCS Report's recommendations/bullets in mind and carries the charge of them. He
205 continued that they have spent over five hours talking about what the bullets could look like.
206 Maybe at this point the HRC should write a letter to City Council and the Mayor about their
207 thoughts on the RJCS Report's recommendations, and leave it at that. And then continue
208 working seriously on the charge that they know they have, to continue educating the city. The
209 HRC can incorporate the bullets from the report into their work when they create educational
210 events and make sure they are checking the boxes.

211

212 Discussion continued. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that the HRC should absolutely hold
213 itself accountable to the RJCS Report in its own work, but she is concerned that there are
214 elements of this that will not get done, if the HRC is not taking up the banner. For example,
215 unless the City Council decides to have a public forum on a matter, [it probably will not happen].
216 Communities do not tend to do that unless something goes wrong. If there is going to be a public
217 forum on any of these issues, she suspects it will have to come from the HRC. She agrees that
218 education is the HRC's primary charge, but not their only one. The idea of putting their
219 recommendations in a letter to the City Council and saying "This is as far as our mandate can
220 take us, given the nature of this committee" feels a bit like passing the buck. Dr. Filiault replied
221 that the HRC does not have a buck to spend. He continued that if they write such a letter to the
222 City Council, it would be read into the record and given to City staff to work with. The Council
223 might give it to a Council committee, or to Mr. Bohannon to give back to the HRC, but then the
224 HRC will be officially given a charge, and there will be a public record of it.

225

226 Ms. Fiske stated that the HRC has come up with action items they *can* do, like collecting
227 resources for educational training for City partners, like businesses, for example. She continued
228 that that is a solid piece of work they could accomplish, publishing the list of resources for
229 anyone who wants it. Dr. Morris replied that here is an example of overlapping work in the
230 different groups, because the Education subcommittee of the MDEIB Coalition has started
231 collecting these resources and is planning to generate a list to publish on the YMCA's website.
232 She continued that they just discussed it this morning. There is some duplication of work. It will
233 be such a valuable conversation when the chairs from the Chamber's group, the HRC, and the
234 MDEIB Coalition get together. Discussion continued about the work of the Education
235 subcommittee, which includes the Events & Outreach Coordinator from the Monadnock Food
236 Co-op. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if Dr. Morris could reach out to her about collaboration
237 possibilities.

238

239 Mr. Kirschner spoke about the benefits of coalition building with the Chamber's group and the
240 MDEIB Coalition, and how this is not just the HRC's work, it is everyone's work, which means
241 sharing the responsibilities, resources, and information. He continued that the relationships
242 between these groups will have a direct impact on whatever it is that the HRC is able to do for
243 the City. Others agreed.

244
245 Mr. Bohannon stated that a while back, the HRC used to give an annual report to the City
246 Council. He continued that the HRC could ask to go on the Municipal Services, Facilities, and
247 Infrastructure Committee (MSFI) agenda to provide an update on what the HRC has been doing.
248 They could do this every year. It would keep the City Council aware of the HRC's work, their
249 events, and their financial situation and needs. He spoke of how keeping the HRC's work,
250 including how they are collaborating with other groups, in the Council's awareness could help
251 the HRC. Discussion ensued. Mr. Bohannon added that he would recommend that HRC
252 members make the presentation, instead of him, because the Council hears from him so much
253 already.

254
255 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that she is still getting her head around how much the HRC can
256 reasonably accomplish and what exactly they are mandated to do. She continued that she fears
257 moving forward in a vacuum under the seal of the City of Keene without the actual government
258 of the City of Keene sharing the HRC's agenda. The other two organizations that the HRC
259 wants to partner with have some authority by dint of their membership giving those groups
260 authority. If you a member of the Chamber and on the [DEI] committee, it is because you want
261 to participate in it, whereas the HRC is here because they have been selected to do this work, but
262 it does not necessarily mean that they are bringing the City with them. The City is on board with
263 the HRC's educational programming, or at least, the HRC has never had any complaints, but
264 regarding anything further, there is no "loop closing" to make sure the City government actually
265 supports what the HRC is trying to do. Discussion ensued. Dr. Morris spoke of Mr. Morton's
266 experiences meeting with the Mayor and the City Manager as the co-chair of the MDEIB
267 Coalition, and asked if it is similar to the process for the HRC. Mr. Bohannon spoke of the
268 differences and similarities in processes for an outside group (MDEIB) and an inside group
269 (HRC) seeking funding.

270
271 Ms. Fiske asked if the HRC should have a meeting with the Mayor, or talk with the Council. She
272 asked if it is correct that the RJCS Report is the Mayor's project. Mr. Bohannon replied that the
273 Council adopted it. Dr. Morris stated that the Mayor gave the charge. Ms. Fiske replied that it
274 seems like it would make sense for the HRC to organize their notes better, to specify the action
275 items they have thought of, the problems they are running up against - money, lack of clarity
276 about their charge, duplications of efforts, and so on and so forth, and ask [the Mayor and City
277 Council], "How far do you want us to go?" They could ask if it makes sense for this project to
278 be turned over to another group or for some combination of the groups to happen. Others
279 agreed.

280

281 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if that sounds reasonable to Mr. Bohannon. Mr. Bohannon
282 replied yes and stated that so much of what the HRC has said tonight is also said in the report –
283 such as, there is a lot of work, and it is hard to know where to start. Ms. Fiske replied that there
284 is also the question of who has the authority to be able to do the work. Mr. Bohannon replied
285 that the answer to that, from the report is: *“The committee makes the following recommendations*
286 *to the City Council and to the community at large based on information gleaned from its*
287 *research, discussion, and public input. Though this is the result of the work of a City committee,*
288 *the recommendations will be most effective as adopted by an intended audience including*
289 *businesses, educational institutions, and government agencies throughout Keene and the greater*
290 *region. It is acknowledged that this will likely include some overlap in coordination, with*
291 *additional local and State initiatives focused on racial justice.”* Mr. Kirschner replied that this
292 report is so big the HRC does not have to overlap in its efforts with other groups. They can say
293 what they are focusing on and prioritizing. That is a conversation they need to have. Mr.
294 Bohannon replied yes, they will set that meeting up, and maybe it could happen quarterly. He
295 continued that it does not have to be the same people each time, but each meeting could have
296 people from the Chamber’s group, the MDEIB Coalition, and the HRC, to check in with each
297 other.

298
299 Dr. Filiault stated that the HRC can choose one piece of the RJCS Report to do and do it well.
300 He continued that maybe it is integrating the report into the HRC’s work and creating a checklist
301 for themselves, and finding the pieces that the people in this room can run with, and running with
302 it well. Then, coordinating the HRC’s work with the work of others who are also picking up the
303 torch. Discussion continued about the logistics of the three groups meeting together, like where
304 to meet, when, and the question of meeting minutes. Mr. Bohannon clarified that those quarterly
305 (or however frequent) meetings would not be public meetings. He continued that if they were
306 public meetings, they would [be subject to the requirements of RSA 91-A, such as noticed in
307 advance, with agendas, meeting minutes, and so on and so forth]. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos
308 replied that the intent would be something less formal. Discussion ensued about whether they
309 would want a public record, and what the public expects. Mr. Bohannon stated that other HRC
310 members are welcome to attend whatever meetings are set up with the MDEIB Coalition and the
311 Chamber’s group, as long as there are not so many HRC members that they create a quorum of
312 the HRC, [which would make it a public meeting subject to RSA 91:A]. He continued that there
313 could be a greater collaboration somewhere that he is not thinking of. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos
314 replied that they will not know until they meet.

315
316 Ms. Fiske stated that as long and painful as this process has been, the HRC now knows the report
317 intimately. She continued that they have some good ideas, a good sense of what is going on in
318 the community, and some things they can make recommendations for and work towards. Mr.
319 Bohannon replied that he agrees, and he would like to see if he and Ms. Fiske can work on the
320 City side, regarding trying to push some of the DEI stuff, maybe with the possibility of the intern
321 he mentioned earlier. He continued that he thinks that is where some of the bones/structure will
322 get created. To quote what Mr. Kirschner said to him the other day, “Twelve hours a year does
323 not solve this problem.” It is true. The HRC has added six hours, but it is still not enough. If

May 23

, 2022

324 someone has 148 hours that they can dedicate to focusing on some of the things the HRC is
325 looking to get done, it pushes the HRC in the direction they want to go in. He can have that
326 conversation. Having that intern participate in the HRC's meetings would be good.

327
328 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if Mr. Bohannon is talking about him and Ms. Fiske trying to
329 create a DEI committee for the City departments, like a safety committee, involving this intern.
330 Mr. Bohannon replied that he does not know; they need to have that conversation. Chair Cunha-
331 Vasconcelos replied that she thinks it is a great idea. Discussion continued. Dr. Morris stated
332 that that is something to keep in the back of their minds when/if they meet with Sally Nix. Chair
333 Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if Mr. Bohannon wants to join that meeting with Sally Nix. Mr.
334 Bohannon replied yes, it could be helpful for him to understand what is happening in
335 Brattleboro. He continued that he has some other New England communities he can check in
336 with, to see what they are doing. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that she thinks a DEI
337 committee in the City, similar to a safety committee, is a wonderful idea and perhaps not
338 something that should come from the HRC. If it could happen organically, as a recommendation
339 from staff, it would have more traction. Ms. Fiske replied yes, right now some DEI work is
340 being done by individuals in different departments, but they do not know what other departments
341 are doing. Dr. Morris stated that the DEI Committee in Brattleboro came about after a colleague
342 of hers provided a full day of DEI training to every single municipal employee, and the
343 employees had the idea themselves of creating a DEI Committee, so Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos is
344 right, it did not come from an outside group.

345
346 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that they have a few minutes left in this meeting. She continued
347 that they have some action items, and getting the meeting minutes and notes and action items
348 organized is the first step. She suggests that the action items they have in the short term –
349 contacting Sally Nix, reaching out to the co-op's Outreach & Events person, and reaching out to
350 the Chamber's group and the MDEIB Coalition – are valuable regardless of whether the HRC
351 writes a letter to Council or has a meeting with the Mayor, and certainly within the HRC's
352 purview. Once the notes are together, they could review that document via email, and come
353 back together to decide how to proceed on a broader basis. She asked if that sounds reasonable.
354 Others agreed.

355
356 There being no further business, Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos adjourned the meeting at 8:27 PM.

357
358 Respectfully submitted by,
359 Britta Reida, Minute Taker

360
361 Reviewed and edited by,
362 Andy Bohannon, PRF Director

7/1/19- 6/30/20	HRC	KIF	7/1/20- 6/30/21	HRC	KIF	7/1/21- 6/30/22	HRC	KIF
Balance 7/1/19	\$ 4,574.00	\$ -	Balance 7/1/20	\$ 4,096.73	\$ 3,411.00	Balance 7/1/21	\$ 3,391.88	\$ 2,541.89
	This was entered at 4574.70							
Income			Income			Income		
City of Keene	\$ 500.00		City of Keene	\$ 500.00		City of Keene	\$ 500.00	
Donations KIF		\$ 6,847.83	Donations KIF		\$ -	DONATIONS KIF		\$ 5,000.00
subtotal	\$ 500.00	\$ 6,847.83	subtotal	\$ 500.00	\$ -	subtotal	\$ 500.00	\$ 5,000.00
Total Income	\$ 500.00	\$ 6,847.83	Total Income	\$ 500.00	\$ -	Total Income	\$ 500.00	\$ 5,000.00
Expenses			Expenses			Expenses		
International Festival		\$ 3,436.83	International Festival		\$ 869.11	International Festival		\$ 5,500.57
			Pride Flags - 15	\$ 104.85		Pride Month	\$ -	
			Juneteenth Presenters \$200	\$ 800.00		Juneteenth	\$ -	
			Steve Schuch					
			Hadi Lanceric					
			Jonah Wheeler					
			Jalissa Rodriguez					
			Amina Jordan-Mendez	\$ 300.00				
Martin Luther King Day			Martin Luther King Day	\$ -		Martin Luther King Day	\$ -	
Peter Blood	\$ 500.00		Dr. Jim Waller					
KSC Dining	\$ 477.27							
Total Expenses	\$ 977.27	\$ 3,436.83	Total Expenses	\$ 1,204.85	\$ 869.11	Total Expenses	\$ -	\$ 5,500.57
Net 19-20	\$ (477.27)	\$ 3,411.00	Net 20-21	\$ (704.85)	\$ (869.11)	Net 21-22	\$ 500.00	\$ (500.57)
Balance on hand	\$ 4,096.73	\$ 3,411.00	Balance on hand	\$ 3,391.88	\$ 2,541.89	Balance on hand	\$ 3,891.88	\$ 2,041.32

City of Keene – Human Rights Committee proposed statement of inclusion:

“As we begin this meeting, we choose to proceed with the awareness that the statements and decisions we make will be perceived differently by those with different life experiences. We move forward with the firm intention to hold space for the voices, opinions, and experiences of those to whom space has historically been refused. These include but are not limited to people of color; of all cultures, including indigenous people; of all faiths or none; those living with disabilities; those of all sexual orientations and gender identities, including those who identify as women or as non-binary; those not born in the United States, regardless of citizenship status; and those of all ages.”

