

City of Keene
New Hampshire

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE MEETING AGENDA

Monday, January 3, 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:

William Hay, Chair
Dr. Dottie Morris
Janis Manwaring
Dr. Mohammed Saleh
Nancy Salwen
Sofia Cunha-Vasconcelos
Dr. Shaun Filiault
Ritu Budakoti
Marti Fiske

Staff:

Andy Bohannon, PRF Director

Guests:

Agenda:

1. Welcome and Call to Order
2. Approval of December 6, 2021 Minutes
3. Finance Report
4. Racial Justice and Community Safety Committee Report
5. Committee Programs for 2022
 - a. MLK Day – Monday, January 17th
 - b. Holi Festival – Spring
 - c. Pride Month – May/June
 - d. Juneteenth – June 19th
 - e. Keene International Festival – September 24th
 - f. Indigenous People Day – October 10th
6. New, Other Business
 - a. 2022 Meeting Calendar
7. Adjourn – Next Meeting Monday, February 7, 2022 at 5:00 PM

1 City of Keene
2 New Hampshire

3
4
5 HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE
6 MEETING MINUTES
7

Monday, December 6, 2021

5:00 PM

Room 22,
Recreation Center, and Zoom

Members Present:

William Hay, Chair
Councilor Jan Manwaring
Dr. Dottie Morris
Nancy Salwen
Dr. Mohammed Saleh
Marti Fiske, Ex-Officio
Sofia Cunha-Vasconcelos

Staff Present:

Andy Bohannon, Parks, Recreation & Facilities
Director

Members Not Present:

Ritu Budakoti, Alternate
Dr. Shaun Filiault

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

11
12 Chair Hay called the meeting to order at 5:07 PM. Roll call was conducted. Dr. Saleh stated that
13 he is participating remotely from his office in New York and no one else is in the room with him.
14

15 **2) Approval of November 1, 2021 Meeting Minutes**

16
17 Ms. Fiske made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of November 1, 2021. Ms. Salwen
18 seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.
19

20 **3) Finance Report**

21
22 Mr. Bohannon stated that nothing has changed, other than the correction that Dr. Morris had
23 inquired about at the last meeting, related to the Juneteenth presenters. He continued that all of
24 those were correct. Amina Jordan-Mendez was paid and he added that to the Finance Report.
25 They (correctly) did not pay the other individual whom Dr. Morris spoke about. Everything is
26 all set.
27

28 Ms. Fiske made a motion to accept the Finance Report. Councilor Manwaring seconded the
29 motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

30

31 **4) Racial Justice and Community Safety Committee Report**

32

33 Mr. Bohannon stated that last month, the HRC created a nice statement. He continued that he
34 contacted the City Attorney and now has to connect with the Mayor and the City Manager
35 regarding the committee's statement. The City Attorney did not necessarily weigh in on the
36 statement's subject matter; he said to see if the Mayor and the City Manager want to have this
37 statement created and read at the meetings. He (Mr. Bohannon) still has homework on this.

38

39 Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos arrived at 5:11 PM.

40

41 Mr. Bohannon stated that secondly, the City has a declaration that was done in August by the
42 City Council. He continued that that does hang in City Hall, the Library, and the Recreation
43 Center's lobby. He does not think it is the same thing (as the HRC's drafted statement), but he
44 wants everyone to be aware that this statement related to social justice does exist.

45

46 Dr. Saleh stated that he has a comment about the draft statement. The committee debated the
47 different phrasing and terminologies, but he questions the clause "those who identify as members
48 of the LGBTQIA community." As people are being more considerate and inclusive, and adding
49 more sexual orientations that people are identifying with, that (terminology) can change. He
50 wonders if there is any value in rephrasing it as "diverse sexual orientation." Then, if any change
51 happens in the structure of the "LGBTQIA" letters, they do not have to redraft it.

52

53 Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that it sounds like it would have to have to include sexual
54 orientations and gender identities. Discussion ensued about how to edit this. The group agreed
55 on the wording of "those of all sexual orientations and gender identities." A member asked if
56 they should then remove the clause about "women and non-binary people," since they are
57 included in the wording. Discussion continued, and Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos spoke in favor of
58 specifically acknowledging women and non-binary people due to the ways in which the voices of
59 women and non-binary people have historically been unheard. The group decided to use the
60 language "all sexual orientations and gender identities, including those who identify as women or
61 as non-binary."

62

63 The draft statement now reads:

64

65 *"As we begin this meeting, we choose to proceed with the awareness that the statements and*
66 *decisions we make will be perceived differently by those with different life experiences. We move*
67 *forward with the firm intention to hold space for the voices, opinions, and experiences of those to*
68 *whom space has historically been refused. These include but are not limited to people of color;*
69 *of all cultures, including indigenous people; of all faiths or none; those living with disabilities;*
70 *those of all sexual orientations and gender identities, including those who identify as women or*

71 *as non-binary; those not born in the United States, regardless of citizenship status; and those of*
72 *all ages.”*

73
74 Dr. Saleh stated that it sounds good to him now. Others thanked him for the good catch.

75
76 Mr. Bohannon stated that he will send this draft statement to the Mayor for his feedback. He
77 continued that he will get a report back for the January meeting, and they will see where this
78 goes. This has been a great conversation.

79

80 **5) Committee Programs**

81 **A) MLK Day**

82

83 Dr. Morris stated that she reached out to some folks (to ask them to be presenters for MLK Day),
84 but they did not get back to her.

85

86 Ms. Salwen stated that the person she reached out to did reply, but her fee – even with a sliding
87 scale consideration – is likely too high for the HRC’s budget.

88

89 Dr. Morris stated that since none of the folks she reached out to got back to her, she had a
90 different idea – having a panel on healthcare. She distributed copies of information she put
91 together about this idea. She continued that the healthcare panel could be based on Martin
92 Luther King, Jr.’s quote “Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health is the most shocking
93 and inhumane.” The panelists she has in mind are all from NH. She reached out to all of them,
94 and all but Bobbie Bagley said yes, they are in. She told these folks that it was a committee
95 decision. They all will do it if the committee says yes.

96

97 Discussion ensued and the committee spoke in favor of Dr. Morris’s idea. Committee members
98 stated that it is a timely topic, given the COVID-19 pandemic and the current situation with
99 reproductive rights. Dr. Morris shared more information about the people she had in mind –
100 Karen Jennings, Psychology Professor from KSC as the moderator; and Kirsten Durzy,
101 Epidemiologist with the NH Division of Public Health; Dr. Trinidad Tellez, Health Equity
102 Strategist; Dr. Marie Ramas, Medical Director of the GateHouse Treatment Center; and Dr.
103 Bobbie Bagley, Public Health official with the City of Nashua, as panelists. She continued that
104 she thinks these folks would do it for a price that the HRC could afford.

105

106 Ms. Fiske asked what the HRC’s budget is. Mr. Bohannon replied that they do not really have
107 one, but they could build one. He continued that they have some funding. The HRC once had
108 \$15,000, but spent it down over the years. The HRC has the ability to fundraise if needed.
109 There are local businesses that have supported the program in the past. If there was some
110 expense for the MLK Day event, they could use funds from the HRC’s account or go out and
111 fundraise.

112

113 Discussion ensued about whether the HRC should or needs to pay panelists, performers,
114 speakers, and others for the events they do; how much people should be or need to be paid; and
115 how to differentiate between which speakers, panelists, performers, and so on and so forth would
116 be paid or unpaid. A Committee member asked for “Fundraising” to be an HRC agenda item
117 next time. Another spoke about how performers/artists should be paid for doing events, but for
118 doctors, speaking on a healthcare panel might be considered a public service that is part of their
119 work/mission.

120
121 Committee members and Mr. Bohannon thanked Dr. Morris for her idea and for putting this
122 together. Mr. Bohannon stated that it is great that they have a moderator, panelists, and a title.
123 He asked if they need to have a narrative that goes with it. Dr. Morris and others replied yes.
124 Mr. Bohannon suggested a three- to four-sentence paragraph to get people in the right frame of
125 mind so they know what this event will be about, and then the HRC can publish it. He can begin
126 to have his create team build a flyer. Dr. Morris asked if he needs photos. Mr. Bohannon replied
127 that he will see if his team can find photos, and send the flyer to Dr. Morris, and she can send it
128 back to him with the narrative, and they will go from there.

129
130 Discussion ensued about the narrative. Dr. Morris suggested they set up a time for a couple
131 HRC members to meet with these panelists via Zoom, to figure out the details a bit more. Chair
132 Hay and Ms. Salwen volunteered. Dr. Morris asked if Chair Hay will be doing the introduction
133 to the event, or if Dr. Saleh wants to do it. Dr. Morris, Chair Hay, Ms. Salwen, and Mr.
134 Bohannon discussed the day and time for that planning Zoom, and decided upon Wednesday,
135 December 15 at 11:00 AM, or Friday, December 17 at 12:00 PM. Dr. Morris stated that she will
136 reach out to Dr. Jennings, Kirsten Durzy, Dr. Tellez, Dr. Ramas, and Dr. Bagley. She continued
137 that Dr. Bagley is very busy and likely unable to do this, but they can go with the other three
138 panelists.

139
140 **B) Holi Festival**

141
142 Mr. Bohannon stated that he has not had a conversation with Ritu Budakoti or Jennifer Carroll
143 about this, so he does not want to speak out of turn, but supplies were ordered for this event in
144 2021 and then it was canceled, so they still have them. He continued that he will have more
145 information at the January meeting. To answer the Committee’s questions, this event had been
146 at KSC, but now will be on the front lawn of the Rec Center. The festival is about one hour and
147 45 minutes, on a Saturday. He does not know the exact date; that is something he needs to work
148 with Ms. Budakoti and Ms. Carroll about. It is usually March but might be April. Brief
149 discussion ensued.

150
151 **C) Pride Month**

152
153 Councilor Manwaring stated that she has a handout of when various towns are holding their
154 Pride events in 2022. She continued that she thought Pride month was May, but usually it is
155 June.

HRC Meeting Minutes

156
157 Ms. Fiske asked if the Pride flags were all the HRC did for this last year. Mr. Bohannon replied
158 that in addition to the flags, they were looking to schedule a film, but those efforts fell short. He
159 continued that he does not know what the Committee is looking to do for Pride month, but they
160 still have flags, and should have that program go again, and maybe initiate that a little sooner. If
161 they want to do more, Railroad Square or another park would be a good venue.
162
163 Ms. Fiske stated that there are often parades associate with Pride. Discussion ensued. Councilor
164 Manwaring asked if any other organizations around here do Pride events. Dr. Morris stated that
165 Northampton paints some of the crosswalks [in rainbow colors]. Ms. Salwen suggests they go to
166 Northampton as a group to see what they do, to get planning ideas for Keene for the following
167 year. Others expressed enthusiasm for that idea. Discussion continued about locations for field
168 trips, and the possibility of painting a crosswalk or crosswalks in Keene. The field trip to
169 Northampton will inform their plans for next year, and this year, they will do something simple.
170
171 Dr. Morris suggested they start earlier this year than last year. Councilor Manwaring stated that
172 last year, Dr. Filiault's original idea was a drag show, which she thinks is great. Others agreed
173 and suggested they at least research that idea. Ms. Fiske stated that with outdoor screens they
174 should show the same film in multiple locations, if COVID-19 is an issue. Mr. Bohannon
175 replied there is also the amphitheater behind Railroad Square. Ms. Fiske asked/spoke about
176 licensing fees. Mr. Bohannon spoke about how having the film license does not allow them to
177 market the film showing, but they could post the information on social media. Discussion
178 continued about locations in which a film would be licensed to be shown. Ms. Fiske advocated
179 for adding a location further afield from the Library and Rec Center.
180
181 Ms. Fiske suggested they chalk paint a rainbow flag in one location, whether on Main St. or
182 another spot, because it is quite visible. Discussion ensued. Mr. Bohannon stated that they
183 should have that conversation with (Public Works Director) Kürt Blomquist.
184
185 Ms. Salwen asked if the Pride flags/banners can be put up in the official way that other flags are,
186 around the (poles). Mr. Bohannon replied that those flags/banners are handled by the Keene
187 Rotary Club. Dr. Morris replied that they would have to fundraise for that. Mr. Bohannon stated
188 that usually KSC puts flags up around that same time for their graduation, so they would have to
189 maneuver around that. Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that there are many light posts around
190 town. They could alternate – one for KSC, one for Pride, one for Juneteenth, and then there
191 would be fewer Pride and Juneteenth flags and they could save money.
192
193 Chair Hay stated that Pride is a great film, about a strike when Margaret Thatcher shut down the
194 mines in Wales and many gay people from London went out to support them. He continued that
195 it is a true story. Ms. Salwen stated that they could do a watch party on Zoom of that movie or
196 another great movie. Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos replied yes, that is what Dr. Filiault was trying to
197 achieve last year. Discussion continued about how it did not work last year. Ms. Cunha-
198 Vasconcelos asked if anyone knows if Dr. Filiault is planning anything. Dr. Saleh replied that he

199 had a conversation with Dr. Filiault, who is detaching himself from the Committee, as he
200 received a communication about how his term is ending soon and he is choosing (not to renew).

201
202 Dr. Saleh stated that several HRC members' terms are ending at the end of this month, including
203 his own, which is something they need to confront. How is this handled? Does a member who
204 wishes to serve for another term communicate that to the Mayor, or does the Committee need to
205 ask the members whose terms are ending to consider continuing? Mr. Bohannon replied that Dr.
206 Saleh should have received an email from him; he will resend it. Councilor Manwaring stated
207 that anyone who wishes to continue needs to ask to do it. Discussion ensued about whose term is
208 ending when.

209
210 **D) Juneteenth**

211
212 Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that it would make sense to reconstitute this subcommittee for
213 January. Councilor Manwaring agreed.

214
215 **E) Keene International Festival**

216
217 Mr. Bohannon stated that the Keene International Festival will be on September 24, and they are
218 good to go. Chair Hay stated that the Keene Immigration and Refugee Partnership is working on
219 something they will try to do around that time. He continued that Becky White, a photographer
220 who has had two books about immigrants from NH, is agreeable to doing an exhibition in Keene.
221 The Historical Society is excited about it and maybe other organizations will get involved. He
222 shared more information about Ms. White's work. He continued that if an exhibition of Ms.
223 White's work could cross-pollinate with the Keene International Festival, that would be great.

224
225 Dr. Morris stated that some people struggle with Ms. White's work, wondering if she is allowing
226 people to tell their stories, or if people's stories are being told through Ms. White's perspective.
227 She continued that she had thought about bringing Ms. White to KSC, and that was the feedback
228 she received from someone. She personally does not know. Chair Hay replied that Ms. White's
229 second book just came out in 2020, and when she is telling people's stories, she clears it with
230 them before she puts it in. Dr. Morris replied that she was just raising the question she was
231 asked; she personally does not know the answer.

232
233 **F) Indigenous People's Day**

234
235 Mr. Bohannon stated that the Mayor does a proclamation that morning. He continued that he
236 does not know if the HRC wants something more than that. Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that
237 she thinks this day/issue merits the same or similar treatment as, say, MLK Day. She continued
238 that at minimum, there should be a discussion.

239
240 Discussion ensued about possibilities. Dr. Morris spoke of a program starting at the KSC, by
241 two people who worked closely with the project that involves including the original, Indigenous

HRC Meeting Minutes

242 names of landmarks, mostly lakes. There are also some great folks on the Commission on
243 Native American Affairs. Maybe they could tap into that committee. Ms. Fiske stated that there
244 is also the NH Intertribal Native American Council, out of Laconia. Dr. Morris replied that that
245 is the one the couple doing the program at KSC, Paul and Denise Pouliot, are affiliated with.

246
247 Councilor Manwaring stated that she had another idea. She has talked a number of times with
248 Sherry Gould, who is on one of those councils. She is an Abenaki woman and a basket maker.
249 She thinks it would be great to get her perspective on what it is like to be Abenaki and a woman.

250
251 Dr. Morris stated that Marge Bruchac, an Indigenous woman formerly at UConn, and now at
252 UPenn, has done work with the Smithsonian. She loves talking with people and is a great
253 speaker. She gave more information about her.

254
255 Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that they have plenty of time to plan for Indigenous People's
256 Day, which is great. Chair Hay replied yes, they can do better than just having a proclamation
257 read in front of City Hall. Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos suggested they form a subcommittee for this.
258 She continued that there are many things the HRC wants to do, but their budget is not likely to
259 support it all. They should look at fundraising.

260
261 Ms. Fiske stated that she will talk with the Library's Program Director about maybe doing
262 something for Indigenous People's Day and hosting something at Heberton Hall. Others
263 expressed interest in that. Ms. Fiske added that she thinks the Program Director has worked with
264 Joe Buchac before.

265
266 Dr. Morris added that there might be some folks at Antioch to reach out to as well. She
267 continued that Winona LaDuke attended Antioch.

268

269 **6) New, Other Business**

270

271 Chair Hay recommended the book *The Burning*, about the Tulsa massacre.

272

273 Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos asked that "Fundraising" be an agenda item next month. Mr. Bohannon
274 asked where on the agenda folks want that. The group decided to have it right after the MLK
275 Day agenda item. Chair Hay asked folks to give it some thought and come with ideas.

276

277 Dr. Saleh stated that he has something else to add. The HRC discussed the diversity/inclusivity
278 statement, but they then skipped ahead and went into other agenda items. Part of their goal, as
279 they discussed previously, is to implement the other recommendations from the Racial Justice
280 and Community Safety Report. There is a lot. They had talked about creating a spreadsheet. He
281 did not do that, but if people are still interested, he can try to do that. Having a spreadsheet
282 would help them track things better and maybe help trim things down, since there is a lot of
283 overlap. They should give some time for that discussion next month. He asked if they should
284 plan to have the meeting be 15 minutes longer. It is hard to have a good conversation in an hour.

HRC Meeting Minutes

285
286 Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if they can schedule the meeting until 6:30. Mr. Bohannon
287 replied yes. He continued that he has a spreadsheet he uses with some other committees that
288 could fit right into this. He will send Dr. Saleh a copy and Dr. Saleh can see if it will work. He
289 may be able to help support Dr. Saleh with this. Dr. Saleh replied that would be a good starting
290 point.

291
292 Dr. Saleh asked if others agree with meeting for 90 minutes next month. Others replied yes.

293

294 7) **Adjournment – Next Meeting Monday, January 3, 2022 at 5:00 PM**

295

296 There being no further business, Chair Hay adjourned the meeting at 6:15 PM.

297

298 Respectfully submitted by,
299 Britta Reida, Minute Taker

300

301 Reviewed and edited by,
302 Andy Bohannon, Parks, Recreation and Facilities 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
New Hampshire

Racial Justice & Community Safety Committee Report

March 18, 2021

Committee Members:

Dr. Dottie Morris, Co-Chair

Richard VanWickler, Co-Chair

Catherine Workman, City Councilor

Julia Atkins

Tia Hockett

Pierre Morton

Eli Rivera, Sheriff

Aditi Saleh

Gail Somers

City Staff:

Rebecca Landry

Shane Maxfield

INTRODUCTION

As the nation witnesses acts of racism from unfair lack of access to resources and opportunities to brutal acts of violence against people of color, an examination of Keene, the community we call “home”, is important. It is essential to engage in sincere efforts to understand the lived experiences of people of color living and/or working in the community, to analyze systems, and to develop an effective and sustainable plan to address any concerns as key steps in creating an equitable and anti-racist community. The Ad Hoc Racial Justice and Community Safety Committee (the “Committee”) began meeting in July 2020 upon being charged with “developing recommendations to prevent or correct systemic and cultural inequities in Keene.”

Racism for many people in Keene is invisible while, for others, racism is present in their lives. The Committee held open forums during which people of color shared personal experiences in schools, in the workplace and in public settings that illustrated the realities of both blatant and implicit bias in our community. The City of Keene elected officials (in collaboration with others in business, education, law enforcement and others) have such an important responsibility to engage the greater community in stopping racism and bias; in moving toward equity, diversity and inclusion; in ending unfair treatment of people of color and making Keene a better place for all people.

This brief report serves to make recommendations that will both create a racial equity lens for the City, businesses, and individuals throughout the community and also build a foundation for what will, ideally, be beginning steps in a long-term, sustainable, and effective approach to advancing racial equity.

THE PROCESS

1. Buckets

The Committee realized at the onset that the substantial and important work required would benefit if organized into key categories or bucket lists based on input received in the June 2020 public forum hosted by Mayor Hansel. The public provided comments in the forum that were grouped by the Committee along with members’ thoughts into the following “buckets”, and additional public forums were later held for each individual category.

- **Community Education and Schools**
 - Fairness and opportunity for all students, faculty and staff
 - Prevention of achievement and opportunity gaps
 - Strategic programs and curriculum that prevent implicit bias and that promote a culture of fairness
 - Multi-racial leadership development
- **Laws, Policy and Policing**
 - Advancement of racial equity
 - Development of policies that facilitate the integration of racial equity into decision-making
 - Identification of impacts desired of policy solutions
- **Social and Community Justice**
 - Implementation of tools to open racial equity discussions that lead to progressive change in the community
 - Identification of ways to change programs and practices that perpetuate implicit bias

2. Speakers

The Committee invited a number of guest speakers and subject matter experts with the intention of educating the committee and public on current practices and identifying opportunities. There were also

members of the SAU29 School Board, local teachers, City department heads and others who participated in the meetings.

- Steven Russo, Keene Police Chief
Chief Russo reviewed the KPD use of force training and policy as well as KPD's Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) accreditation.
- Elizabeth Dragon, Keene City Manager
The City Manager reviewed City hiring and recruitment practices; the charge and activities of the City Human Rights Committee; the importance of the KPD's CALEA accreditation; the NH Commission on Law Enforcement, Accountability, Community and Transparency created in June 2020; and the KPD body camera trial program.
- Sheena Bice, Veteran and First Responder (VFR) Healthcare
Ms. Bice provided a presentation overviewing the purpose of VFR Healthcare highlighting the high-risk, high-stress nature of first responder jobs and the importance of mental healthcare in this field.
- Robert Malay, Superintendent of Schools, NH SAU 29
Superintendent Malay reviewed school curriculum, staff training and inclusionary opportunities; recent Keene School Board activities; and disciplinary data, policies and opportunities.

3. Public Forums

The Committee held three public forums in November and December 2020, one for each of the subject buckets identified herein. The Committee unanimously values the importance of public input in identifying the local Keene community's specific challenges and opportunities, and strongly recommends that the City provide ongoing opportunities for the public to provide input in a manner that is open and safe for members of our community. The input received was revealing and helpful, however, there is concern that more people might have participated if they felt their input had the potential to affect change and, importantly, if they were confident their input would not subject them to racist treatment or criticism resulting in negative outcomes.

KEY OBSERVATIONS

There were common themes that became evident throughout the Committee's process of collecting information to form recommendations. Acceptance of these observations as truth is critical to the success of any actions taken to advance our community toward equity and inclusivity for black people, indigenous people and all people of color.

1. Racism Exists In Keene

Based on the lived experiences spoken by people of color in Keene, the Committee concludes that racism exists in Keene. The public is calling for community leaders to immediately take a clear anti-racism position by addressing systemic, cultural and individual manifestation of racism.

"There are people of goodwill who haven't experienced racism. If it's not part of your everyday consciousness, there is a blindside. We often think that racism is about a person's behavior. Some people, we think, act in explicitly racist ways toward racial minorities. Those are the 'real' racists, we tell ourselves. But racism is not merely a function of individual attitudes, and it can't be eradicated by changing hearts and minds. Racism is the social, legal, political, and economic distinctions that mark and maintain unequal access and entry points to privacy, property, protection, prosperity, and

personhood. Racism is embedded in structures, institutions, and ideas, especially those about work, deservingness, representation, redistribution, and government's role."

(source: global.cornell.edu/themes/silence-racism)

The Committee received clear public testimony from members of the community who experience racist slurs, aloof comments about slavery, school curricula that are inadequate regarding the important experience and influence of black Americans, lack of anti-racism policy, fear of reprisal for any response to racist activity and lack of racial diversity in important services such as medical services, for example. These are just brief examples of the bigger picture of racism that plague many quiet American communities, and Keene is no exception. A recurring acknowledgement amongst both Committee members and the public is that there is a need for everyone to understand that everyone is harmed by racism. It will take our community as a whole to make changes that effectively improve equity and inclusivity for all people of color which will, in turn, make our community better for all.

2. Implicit Bias Must Be Identified

Many members of the Keene community have not experienced racism and, yet, may unintentionally perpetuate racial inequities, discrimination and biases. The purpose of identifying sources and practices of implicit bias is not to cause conflict, but to ultimately unearth unconscious bias and teach people and organizations to use a lens of equity in working together as a community to promote health and wellbeing for everyone. The creation of processes to "call in" each other (or organizations) into dialogue when addressing problematic and potentially harmful behaviors will help affect positive change.

3. Open Dialogue Requires Significant Expansion

In every meeting of the Committee, the need for open and ongoing dialogue was identified as paramount to achieving progress toward eliminating racial inequities and improving outcomes for all racial groups. The group considered the use of one-time surveys, regular climate surveys, citizen and stakeholder groups, student groups and other inclusive opportunities for open dialogue. The activity is community engagement, but the specific goal here is for victims of racial injustice to have safe and effective channels to share their personal experiences and ideas and for people who may have implicit biases to listen, learn and engage.

4. Community Education is Essential

The Committee received numerous ideas from members of the public highlighting the importance of community education. Ultimately, overcoming racial inequity and bias in Keene will require disrupting local complacency and expanding the knowledge base of everyone in the community. Educating citizens, organizations, leaders and community groups about the experience of people of color in our community as well as teaching how to identify implicit bias and adoption of newly embraced policies, procedures and practices rooted in the principles of equity are essential.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee makes the following recommendations to the City Council and to the community at large based upon information gleaned from its research, discussion and public input. Though this is the result of the work of a City committee, the recommendations will be most effective as adopted by an intended audience including all businesses, educational institutions and government agencies throughout Keene and the greater region. It is acknowledged that this will likely include some overlap and coordination with additional local and state initiatives focused on racial justice.

1. Government Leadership

- A. **It is recommended that the City of Keene take a position against racism starting with a strong anti-racist statement.** The Committee received multiple suggestions that the City Council issue a strong and clear public statement stating its anti-racist position and commitment to racial equity and inclusion. The public is looking to the City for leadership at a time when acts of racism around the nation are a cause for alarm and a call for change. In addition to issuing a statement, it is recommended that the City Council adopt a Council Goal specifically focused on achieving racial equity in Keene.
- B. **It is recommended that the City work with community stakeholders to establish clear community racial equity and inclusivity goals and that the goals be widely adopted by the City and Keene agencies and businesses.** This report is just the beginning of a process. Next steps will require identification of clear and measurable goals and accountability measures together with other organizations across the community as well as a plan for implementation and review of progress made over time. This process can only be successful if built upon information gathered in section 2 of this document, “Public Input and Community Education”, which aims to specifically identify the local challenges and biases to overcome.
- C. **It is recommended that the City continue its commitment and efforts toward racial justice and community safety whether via an existing committee such as the Human Rights Committee, a new equity and inclusion task force, or a joint effort of multiple community organizations and agencies.** Again, this report is just the beginning - just the first step. There is much work to be done and much motivation to make a difference. A strategic approach to moving Keene toward racial justice and inclusivity will require consistent effort, analysis and adjustment including regular follow-up on the recommendations in this report. There is also much data available that, when collected and analyzed, can help identify where and to what extent bias exists in our community. This data will help build awareness of the situation and emphasize the danger of complacency.
- D. **It is recommended that the City promote diversity in its boards and commissions membership and responsibilities.** Racial diversity amongst City committee members will provide important diverse perspectives that benefit the community and will help build sensitivity to and eliminate implicit bias over time. Committee charges and responsibilities should be evaluated to determine if they welcome diversity and provide realistic opportunities for inclusion.
- E. **It is recommended that the City promote festivals that celebrate racial diversity.** The International Festival and Martin Luther King, Jr. Breakfast are good examples of existing local celebrations that welcome and promote racial equity. Juneteenth, Holí Festival, Pride Celebrations, Cinco De Mayo, and other celebrations provide additional opportunities to appreciate diversity and to overcome stereotypes, build awareness and encourage unity.

2. Public Input & Community Education

- A. **It is recommended that the City, school systems (k-12-college) and community organizations and groups provide regular, safe and open opportunities for difficult conversations about local, personal racial justice experiences allowing input to be in-person or written, anonymous or personally identified.** The purpose of this effort must be specifically focused on welcoming and encouraging testimony from black people, indigenous people and people of color about their experience in Keene – including those who are reluctant to share or who may not trust that their input will improve racial equity in Keene. It is also of utmost importance that those who wish to share anonymously have the opportunity to and that they feel comfortable doing so.

There are members of the public who are reluctant to speak about their concerns. People have stories that they are not sharing. Personal conversations are needed to get tangible feedback, but being vulnerable and exposed is not comfortable. The committee did hear some testimonies and agreed that bringing these personal experiences to light will be necessary to disrupt local implicit bias and complacency, to build a broader awareness of the true extent of the problem in Keene. This will require multiple platforms such as anonymous surveys and strategic dialogue including public bodies and key stakeholders. There are two important objectives here: to provide a safe and welcome means for victims of racism to share their experiences without fear of negative consequences, and to engage those who do not experience racism in order to increase awareness of the existence and the consequences of silent racism.

- B. It is recommended that the City meet regularly with other businesses to share local observations and data and to develop, implement and measure organizational and community programs designed to 1) improve racial equity and inclusivity and 2) build public awareness of and knowledge to combat implicit bias.** Keene is not alone in its motivation to address racial inequity and to improve inclusivity. There are well established programs and standards that can establish key objectives and a framework for this work. Examples include the NH Governor's Advisory Council on Diversity and Inclusion, the New Hampshire Commission for Human Rights, the "Restorative Justice Vehicle for Dialogue, Organization For Chief Diversity Officers Tenets", and the "Race and Equity in New Hampshire Series", to name a few. Businesses engaged in this process should include the following, at minimum.

Government Agencies	Regional NAACP
Schools	Regional ACLU
Churches	Cohen Center For Holocaust and Genocide Studies
Healthcare Providers	Keene State College
Chamber of Commerce	Franklin Pierce University
Keene Family YMCA	Antioch University New England
Keene Police Department	River Valley Community College
Cheshire County Sheriff	Keene Public Library

This will likely require implicit bias training for the people involved, and meetings should be facilitated by a professional with racial equity experience and skillset.

- C. It is recommended that the services of local colleges and universities be engaged to conduct community racial equity and inclusion climate surveys every two years and that survey results and findings be shared with community leaders, the City Council, the general public, and organizations listed in section 2.B. for their education and response.** Racial equity climate surveys measure a community's – or an organization's – or a group's – level of adoption of a racial equity lens in its employment, programs and services. A regular effort is important to both increase people's receptivity and cooperation which yields better information and to assist in identification of specific needs and opportunities to advance racial equity.

In June of 2020, for example, Living Cities administered their fourth such annual climate survey and provides the following feedback which shows how helpful this approach can be in designing programs that address the specific needs of an organization or community.

"In comparison from past years, we saw that staff were more willing and have more language to name tensions that they're holding as well as dissonances they are seeing within the

organization. Many of the dissonances named are a direct result of how adding elements of pro-Black culture without actively dismantling white supremacy culture is insufficient to grow an organizational culture that is pro-Black... Last year, staff reported deepened understanding of interpersonal, institutional and structural racism. This year, we saw even deeper analysis and interrogation on what it might take to address the different levels of racism and how much they are interconnected. At the same time, staff felt the tools they have for addressing racism within the organization are insufficient."

(source:<https://www.livingcities.org/resources/372-internal-scan-2020-racial-equity-and-inclusion-competency-survey-results>)

3. Public Safety

- A. **It is recommended that the Keene Police Department continue its CALEA accreditation and continue to publicize what is required for the CALEA accreditation as well as its most recent assessment report.** CALEA accreditation is voluntary, and in August of 2020 the KPD was one of just fifteen NH law enforcement agencies with this accreditation, which it has held since 2009. It requires a lengthy annual review and regular audit of policies, procedures and records for the ultimate purpose of fairness in the application of justice. Among the many practices carefully reviewed by CALEA are hiring processes and use of authority and force, for example.

The Committee's efforts involved a general overview of KPD reports, training practices, use of force and other policies. The City Council and public are encouraged to visit the KPD website, "About" and "Resources" pages which include detailed information about training required by the KPD and its most recent CALEA assessment report which provide in-depth information including recent data and activities. The Committee found this information to be helpful in its review.

- B. **It is recommended that the KPD and other local law enforcement and first responder agencies engage external resources to conduct a review of recruitment and job application processes to identify and correct any possible bias that may limit applications from or the advancement of black people, indigenous people, and people of color.** Diversity in law enforcement personnel is essential for effective law enforcement and for community relations. Chief Russo made it clear that the Keene Police Department is actively seeking applicants, and racial diversity is desired, but a shortage of applicants in general continues to be a challenge in law enforcement in and well beyond the Monadnock region. In addition to the CALEA accreditation process which includes a thorough review of hiring practices, there is an opportunity to look more closely at the recruitment and skills testing processes used by the KPD and other local law enforcement and first responder agencies to attract a diverse workforce. There may be opportunities to reach a more diverse applicant pool, to improve the message of racial equity and inclusion within recruitment programs, and to post job openings with services that have a more diverse following. It is also recommended that the Keene Police Department review and update its recruitment video with these goals in mind.
- C. **It is recommended that the KPD provide public education on what methods are trained and used by the KPD to limit any necessary response to what is reasonable within various circumstances.** Committee discussions included a review with the KPD of what is commonly referred to as "use of force". There were questions about what is legal and what is not, what is considered reasonable response to resistance and what is not, how KPD personnel are trained to respond in various circumstances, and how data regarding incidents involving use of force is recorded. It became clear in these discussions that the KPD has specific and ongoing training, review and reporting requirements regarding its response to resistance activities and policies that the public is not

generally aware of, and that could aid in improving public knowledge of KPD practices.

- D. **It is recommended that the City Council support the need for more community mental health services and any opportunities to assist the KPD in its response to emergencies requiring these services.** This recommendation is specifically focused on community safety and addresses the concern that some emergencies that involve psychological or behavioral crises have the best possible outcome for all involved when assisted by or managed by mental health professionals.

The Committee considered mobile crisis intervention services that could possibly provide immediate stabilization in cases of psychological or behavioral crisis. These types of services, however, do not transfer the responsibility of response from law enforcement to the mobile crisis resources because, in times of emergency, the dispatching of services must be immediate and, thus, cannot include a level of questioning or decision making required to determine whether mental health services might be needed. The immediate dispatch of law enforcement response continues to be required to meet public safety requirements and expectations. The potential promise of fewer crises if there are more community mental health resources, however, is a good reason to support any increase in these services to our community.

- E. **It is recommended that the KPD continue to engage the services of organizations such as the Veteran and First Responder Healthcare organization to support the needs of KPD personnel.** First responder jobs come with high risk, big expectations and nontraditional work hours. Recognition of stress response and engaging support services when needed is important for first responder health which is directly related to job performance and community relations.
- F. **It is recommended that the KPD continue to engage directly with Keene youth and families to maintain and build upon community relations and acceptance.** The KPD has a great track record with programs such as the Police Athletic League (PAL), for example, which helps children in the community build relationships with and see the human side of Keene's law enforcement personnel. The very visible reporting of nationwide incidents of racism including law enforcement makes it incredibly important now to build and maintain a positive rapport between the KPD and Keene children and families. It is understood that the COVID-19 pandemic limits these types of opportunities, but, even in this difficult and unusual time, the KPD can use creative ways (such as a pen pal program, for example) to proactively connect with Keene youth and families and is to be commended for their efforts thus far.

4. City and Community

The path to racial equity in the Keene community will require organizational change, and it will require leaders amongst Keene's employers to serve as catalysts for change. The goal is to create and use a racial equity lens and implement a community process to empower businesses to advance diversity and inclusion. The following recommendations are intended both for the City of Keene as well as all Keene businesses. Many of these actions will require the assistance of experienced diversity and inclusion consultants.

- A. **It is recommended that the City assign an administrative role within the City government moving forward the mission of diversity, equity and inclusion set forth by this Committee.**

- B. **It is recommended that the City and Keene employers regularly conduct diversity, equity and inclusion training for employees that fosters an open and welcoming workplace culture for all people.**
- C. **It is recommended that the City and Keene employers review employee recruitment, retention, pay and promotion policies to achieve improved diversity and equity amongst applicants and throughout organizational personnel at all levels.**
- D. **It is recommended that the City and Keene employers expand and regularly provide internship positions that specifically attract underrepresented populations and create career opportunities.**
- E. **It is recommended that the City and Keene employers identify where skills are transferable amongst potential applicants to help provide opportunities and widen the applicant pool (military to law enforcement, for example).**
- F. **It is recommended that the City and Keene employers update traditional skills testing procedures that may unnecessarily disqualify black, indigenous and people of color and that the parameters of applicant tracking systems be broadened.**
- G. **It is recommended that the City and Keene employers seek and generate incentives to promote equity in employment.**
- H. **It is recommended that the City and Keene employers review and update initiatives, systems, operations and mission statements to identify practices that limit or thwart diversity.**
- I. **It is recommended that the City intentionally factor diversity into community driven development projects such as the arts corridor and the skate park, for example.**
- J. **It is recommended that the Keene Public Library as well as school libraries expand collection diversity, that feedback be sought from the community for this purpose, that the Keene Public Library facilitate reading groups to promote diversity within its collection, and that libraries seek financial donations to help expand the collection diversity.**
- K. **It is recommended that the City review Cheshire TV programming and encourage additions and changes that promote diversity and inclusion.**

5. Education

Building and appreciating racial diversity in ways that create real opportunities and promote long term community success starts with youth and, therefore, must involve Keene's schools. This will be a very effective driver for long term positive outcomes in racial equity in the Keene community. It is understood that the City of Keene does not govern Keene public school policy, however, racial equity and community safety throughout our city will require efforts outside of City Hall.

The following recommendations are made as a reflection of comments and concerns received by the public for the consideration of Keene school leadership, and the City Council is respectfully asked to support these recommendations upon any opportunity to do so. The Committee appreciates the participation of Keene School Board members and SAU29 Superintendent of Schools, Robert Malay, in the discussions had on this topic.

- A. **It is recommended that Keene schools develop specific anti-racism policies and appeal to the State of New Hampshire to establish a standard anti-racism policy as a baseline for all schools.** The Committee heard concerns from the public that the current general anti-discrimination and anti-bullying policies in Keene schools are not sufficient in handling situations of racism. The use of racial slurs and other types of racist behavior call for a clear and specific response that sends a message of zero tolerance, tends to the needs of the victims and helps to break down implicit bias. The reports of racist behaviors and the fear and hesitation that victims and victims' parents have to report incidents give credence to the need for specific anti-racism policy and practice.
- B. **It is recommended that Keene schools review discipline data regularly and address systemic issues of racial inequality.** The purpose of this recommendation is to take a proactive approach to address inequalities in schools at all levels rather than a response-oriented approach. Superintendent Malay reported that a new model at the Keene High School includes a Dean of Students position that oversees all student discipline that will help make progress in this direction at that particular school.
- C. **It is recommended that Keene schools facilitate and maintain recurring student forums for student input and conversations about racial equity and inclusion at all levels.** Much like public input is key to achieving racial equity and inclusion in the greater community, student input is key to making progress in this direction within the schools. The intent is to provide a safe and welcoming means to build awareness of the problems that exist and to reveal and correct implicit bias in the school system.
- D. **It is recommended that Keene schools conduct regular, anonymous equity and inclusivity climate surveys and youth risk behavior surveys.** Parents and students of Keene schools represent a significant portion of Keene's population. This provides the schools with an opportunity to use annual surveys to measure racial equity and inclusivity awareness and experience and to implement programs to affect positive change.
- E. **It is recommended that schools thoroughly review special education, food security and other student and family assistance programs to determine where racial bias exists and make efforts to correct it.**
- F. **It is recommended that Keene schools review all curricula with a lens of racial equity and change or replace curricula as necessary to eliminate bias and help ensure all students feel respected and included.** This is an issue that came to light during Committee meetings and public forums where it was made clear that students of color have found themselves in uncomfortable situations due to biased or inadequate texts and topics. The National Education Association conducted an initiative to eradicate institutional racism in public schools and provides helpful information and resources to help with this type of effort. Superintendent Malay suggested Social Studies content as a good example of material that needs updating to eliminate bias that has been otherwise overlooked to date.
- G. **It is recommended that Keene schools ensure equity in the education system by promoting diversity amongst faculty including concerted outreach to organizations and institutions where diversity exists.** Having teachers of color can help schools improve curricula selection, mentor all students and challenge implicit bias. The opportunity exists to review position descriptions, postings and recruitment practices, remove any inherent bias and adjust as necessary to appeal to a more diverse pool of candidates to the extent possible. It is understood, however, that faculty diversity is stagnant nationwide – Keene is not alone.

- H. **It is recommended that Keene schools conduct social equity and justice training for teachers and implement culturally responsive pedagogy.** The Committee heard from a local teacher who noted that the use of common social innuendos, stereotypes and practices of assimilation occurs in schools, and that there are training programs available to help teachers recognize and adjust these practices. The goal is a comfortable and enriching academic experience for students of all races.
- I. **Additional creative programs and approaches in schools that promote awareness and support of diversity and inclusion are encouraged,** such as international pen pal programs with local elementary students, for example.

CONCLUSION

“The whole of us is affected when the least of us is affected.” (*Gail Somers, Keene Resident*) The specific number of complaints received does not reflect the impact or severity of the problem – this is one of the challenges. Our City has limited diversity to begin with, and that fact means we may not get mass complaints. This does not make the reality of racism in Keene insignificant or unimportant. Ultimately, the goal is to “build a community that is safe, just and accessible to all through ongoing community and government commitment that is codified, measurable and accountable in and for every single member of our community. This puts forward the values we believe in.” (*Pierre Morton, proud member of the Keene community*)

The Racial Justice and Community Safety Committee presents this report to the City Council with both sincere concern and optimism. Keene is a beautiful and safe community, but the existence of racism and implicit bias cannot be denied. It is important that the City assume a leadership role in affecting change that builds racial equity and inclusion. Committee members agreed that there is much work to do, and it is difficult to stop meeting because there are many opportunities for further examination in addition to positive community energy on this topic, however, in the important interest of making an immediate impact, these recommendations are advanced. The continuation of this process with community involvement and to include ongoing examination, dialogue, measurement and change will be key to long term movement in improving racial justice and community safety for Keene.



Human Rights Committee Event

BUILDING THE BELOVED COMMUNITY:

The time is right to do what is right about health disparities in New Hampshire.

"Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health is the most shocking and inhuman."
- Martin Luther King, Jr.

 Monday, January 17 2021

 10.00 AM - 11:15 AM

 Virtual Event

MODERATOR

Karen Jennings

Ph.D. - Professor,
Department of Psychology,
Keene State College

PANELIST

Kirsten Durzy

MPH - Epidemiologist, Equity
Subject Matter Expert, NH
COVID-19 Incident
Management Team & Branch
Director, COVID-19 Vaccine
Equity Branch - NH Division
of Public Health, NH DHHS

PANELIST

Trinidad Tellez

MD - Consultant, Health
Equity Strategist

PANELIST

Marie Ramas

MD - Medical Director, Gate
House Treatment Center

PANELIST

Bobbie Bagley

MS, MPH, RN, CPH - Director,
Department of Public Health
and Community Services for
City of Nashua

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WEBINAR LINK :

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86264716731>

Passcode: 665437



**City of Keene
New Hampshire**

Human Rights Committee

2022 Meeting Schedule

January 3rd

February 7th

March 7th

April 4th

May 2nd

June 6th

July 11th

August 1st

September 5th

October 3rd

November 7th

December 5th

Meetings are held on the 1st Monday of the month at 5:00 PM and are conducted in Room 22 (upstairs) Recreation Center 312 Washington Street

meeting dates, times and location are subject to change