



HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE MEETING AGENDA

Monday, June 2nd, 2025 at 5:00 PM
Room 22 Upstairs, Recreation Center

Members:

Sofia Cunha-Vasconcelos
Dr. Dottie Morris
Debra Bowie
Marti Fiske
Rabbi Daniel Aronson
Councilor Catherine Workman
Gina Burke
Ritu Budakoti
David Morrill

Staff:

Alyssa Bender-Jesse, Youth Services Manager

Alternates:

Emma Charles
Dr. Mohammad Saleh

Agenda:

1. Welcome and Call to Order
2. Approval of May 5th, 2025 Minutes
3. Finance Report
4. Monadnock Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Coalition Updates
5. Racial Justice Community Safety Report
6. Acceptance of Committee Event Reports
 - a. Martin Luther King Jr. Day
 - b. Black History Month
 - c. Juneteenth
 - d. Pride Event
 - e. Keene International Festival
 - f. Indigenous Peoples' Day
7. New Business
 - a. Compassionate Communities
 - b. Welcoming City
8. Adjourn – Next Meeting July 7th, 2025 at 5:00 PM

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

City of Keene
New Hampshire

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Monday, May 5, 2025

5:00 PM

Room 22,
Recreation Center

Members Present:

Sofia Cunha-Vasconcelos
Dr. Dottie Morris
Dr. Mohammad Saleh
Marti Fiske
Rabbi Daniel Aronson
Gina Burke (via Teams)
Ritu Budakoti
Debra Bowie, Alternate
David Morrill, Alternate

Staff Present:

Alyssa Bender, Youth Services Manager

Members Not Present:

Councilor Catherine Workman
Jennifer Nescimento, Alternate
Emma Charles, Alternate

1) Welcome and Call to Order

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

She called the meeting to order at 5:01 PM.

Roll call was conducted. Ms. Burke stated that she is in her private home office in Keene, by herself, and she is participating remotely because she has to leave the meeting at 5:30 PM.

2) Approval of March 3, 2025 Meeting Minutes

Dr. Saleh stated that the meeting minutes say that three of the working groups sent written updates. He asked if it would make sense to include those written updates in the meeting minutes.

Discussion ensued. HRC members noted that while it would be helpful to have that in the meeting minutes, minutes legally cannot include text that was not spoken during the meeting. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos suggested they take an action to investigate this. Dr. Saleh agreed and suggested the written updates be an appendix attached to the minutes.

Ms. Bowie made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of March 3, 2025. Ms. Budakoti seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

3) Finance Report

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that something to note in the finance report is that the YMCA is the fiscal agent for Juneteenth, which is why the financials are not shown here. She asked if anyone had questions about the finance report.

Mr. Morrill asked about the two donations received for Pride month, which he does not see. Ms. Bender-Jesse replied that the one she has received so far is reflected in the finance report. Discussion ensued. Rabbi Aronson asked if the donations need to be approved by the City Council. Ms. Bender-Jesse replied yes and explained how she has the physical check, but it has not yet gone before the City Council for acceptance. Discussion continued about the process.

4) Monadnock Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Coalition Updates

Dr. Morris stated that the Coalition is still in the process of having discussions about who they are and what it means, with nothing definitive yet.

Dr. Saleh asked if Dr. Morris could update the HRC on the event at Keene State College (KSC). Dr. Morris stated that the community event did not have many people in attendance, but it was a small but mighty group. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked what the HRC can do to support the Coalition and these events. Dr. Morris replied that they could attend the events. She continued that she thinks they will host another event. The Education Committee meets Thursday, and they will figure out the next event. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that they can send the information to Ms. Bender-Jesse to send to the HRC.

Dr. Saleh stated that the whole event was a social conversation, as there are multiple issues that currently people are interested in discussing, including a topic he saw in the HRC's meeting minutes – Indigenous people's heritage and rights. Many people want to have conversations about the Middle East, and the erosion of LGBTQ people's rights. The common thread seems to be the (harm to) marginalized people. (MDEIB) Chair Cat Workman was there, and her idea was that the MDEIB could be the facilitator of a conversation that encompasses all of this. If the

MDEIB takes that lead, it frees up some of the regulatory precision that the HRC has to maintain. HRC members could help brainstorm how to facilitate such a conversation. Such a brainstorming meeting would be under the MDEIB's umbrella, with a report back to the HRC.

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that that sounds like a great path, with much more freedom of movement. Dr. Saleh replied yes. He continued that he will reach out to whichever HRC members are interested, and to the facilitator of the first event the MDEIB organized, to see if he is willing to take on facilitation again.

Dr. Saleh stated that he is the chair of the MDEIB's Regional Engagement Committee and extends an invitation to anyone who is interested or knows someone who might be interested. He continued that particularly in this current environment with the pushback on DEI, it would be good to have people in Keene and outside of Keene who would like to partner to ensure that DEI initiatives stay alive in every community. An example of the kind of success this initiative can have is that the Town of Rindge recognized Juneteenth as a holiday that you can take, which Keene does not, which shocked him. It shows the power of an active selectboard. They want to do that kind of work across the region.

5) Racial Justice and Community Safety Report

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that to refresh everyone's memory, the RJCS report is now in the hands of the City's DEI Committee. She continued that they are lucky that Ms. Bender-Jesse is part of that and reports out to the HRC when she has news for them. Ms. Bender-Jesse stated that she does not have any news for the HRC at this time.

6) Acceptance of Committee Event Reports

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that they have some written reports from the subcommittees. She asked if anyone wanted to speak to their written report.

A) Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

Rabbi Aronson stated that he would like to have a planning meeting in June for MLK Day, and he is wondering if one or two HRC members would volunteer to work with him on that. Dr. Morris replied that she will. Ms. Bowie and Ms. Odatto (community member) also indicated that they will.

B) Black History Month

C) Juneteenth

D) Pride

Mr. Morrill stated that the Pride subcommittee is planning their event, and they are looking for submissions from artists. He continued that if any HRC members know an LGBTQ+ artist who might be interested in participating in their pub-crawl-style art show, they can give them a flyer about it. The deadline for submissions is May 18. Depending on how many submissions they have, they might extend that, but the show is June 12.

Discussion ensued. HRC members spoke of how they will bring flyers to the middle school, high school, and other groups they are a part of. Ms. Bender-Jesse spoke of how they are not allowed to hand out anything in schools unless it is approved through SAU29, which is a process that takes a few weeks. Discussion continued about how students could maybe share the information on social media. Ms. Bender-Jesse spoke about how she will share the digital flyer with the HRC, so the HRC members can share it on their social media accounts.

E) Keene International Festival

F) Indigenous People's Day

Ms. Fiske reported that there was a change for who was able to come for Indigenous People's Day. Indigenous Peoples event is set for Saturday October 18 at 1 pm in Heberton Hall at the Library. Dr. Meghan Howey, Professor of Anthropology & Earth Systems Research Center at UNH- Durham, will give a lecture on the effects of colonialism-- past and current-- on native peoples, their cultures, and the ecology of the region.

Dr. Howey's recent publications include "The Shock of Colonialism in New England: Fragments from a Frontier" (2025) and "Colonialism, Community and Heritage in Native New England" (2020).

7) New Business

A. Pride Resolution

Ms. Bender-Jesse stated that this is a mistake on the agenda; "Pride Resolution" should be "Welcoming Declaration." Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked to hear from whoever is taking point on this.

Phil Jones, City Councilor, introduced himself and stated that the Welcoming Declaration in front of the HRC today is something he wrote in 2021. He continued that it was adopted by the City Council and word smithed with the help of the Coalition. The Declaration addressed things that were going on at the time. It was approved by the City Council, signed by the Mayor, and every Councilor. It was well received. The original is hanging in the City Hall lobby. People

had asked him for copies, and there are 30 framed copies around the city, with frames he paid for himself. Discussion ensued about the locations of the copies.

Councilor Jones continued that the Declaration was very well accepted by the community, and that is what led into this year. Mayor Kahn, who was not the mayor then, asked him if they could write a proclamation for Pride, because of what is happening in politics nowadays. He wrote something but was not happy with it, nor was Mayor Kahn, so they sat down with the City Attorney and decided to write a new Declaration. He got some input from HRC members last month when there was no quorum for a meeting. He thanks Mr. Morrill for his input. This Declaration is what they created from that input and a sit-down meeting with the Mayor and the City Attorney. They also got Keene Pride's input on this. This is the new, finished version.

Per the HRC's request, Councilor Jones read it aloud for the record:

"Before the Keene City Council on the day of (to-be-filled-in), 2025, is a Declaration of the City of Keene, NH, as a Welcoming City. The City of Keene recognizes the importance of inclusion in building a stronger community. We are committed to promoting the fair treatment for all, ensuring that everyone feels welcomed regardless of their age, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, color, marital status, familial status, mental or physical ability, religion, or national origin. We value a sense of belonging among all populations that live, work, play, worship, and shop in our city. We believe that the variety of our experiences and viewpoints enhances our community's strength."

Councilor Jones stated that this Declaration almost says the same thing as the other one, with different words. They are done wordsmithing. If the HRC wants to, they can endorse this concept. It still has to go to the Planning, Licenses, and Development (PLD) Committee, which he is on, so they can wordsmith it a little more. Councilor Workman asked him to present it to the Coalition, which he will do in two weeks. This is not going to the full City Council until June. When the Council adopts it, there will be a nice, printed version. They hope to get signatures from all 15 Councilors and the Mayor. They have to be very careful with the wording because trying to get 15 people to agree on something is difficult nowadays.

Dr. Saleh asked if this is informational or if Councilor Jones is open to hearing additional comments on this. Councilor Jones replied that he is welcome to make comments. Dr. Saleh replied that there is no guarantee it will be accepted by the Council, he understands, but he feels that the word "ethnicity" was missed, because "national origin" and "ethnicity" are not the same thing. He thinks "ethnicity" is important to include, so it says "religion, ethnicity, or national origin."

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if Councilor Jones is requesting that the HRC endorse the concept of this statement. Councilor Jones replied that he is asking the HRC, if they wish to, to endorse the concept of doing a Declaration of Inclusion. He continued that a declaration is not a legal document; it is not like a Resolution and does not get a codified number. It cannot be

194 amended. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that however willing the HRC is to endorse this,
195 their endorsement does not have a lot of actual bureaucratic weight. Councilor Jones replied that
196 when it gets to the PLD Committee level, it would be nice to hear the endorsement. It also helps
197 show that they (the people who wrote the Declaration) were very transparent.

198
199 Mr. Morrill made a motion for the Human Rights Committee to endorse this well-crafted
200 declaration. Dr. Saleh seconded the motion.

201
202 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if there was further discussion.

203
204 Mr. Morrill stated that he is curious about why the word “inclusion” was used, and why they did
205 not use “diversity” and “equity.” Councilor Jones replied that it is more about acceptance. He
206 continued that he is also a State Representative in Concord, and they are taking that phrase away.
207 They want it out of everything. There were about 16 or 17 bills that take away “diversity, equity,
208 and inclusion.” There was even a department called the Department of Children Advocacy and
209 Equality, and they took out the word “equality.” He (Mr. Morrill) is spot on, but it was done on
210 purpose.

211
212 Ms. Bender-Jesse stated that she can add a little to that. She continued that she was part of the
213 group that met to create the exact wording in this Declaration, and it was a huge conversation.
214 The group included the Mayor, herself, and someone from HR. Having the word “inclusion” is
215 to show that they want everyone to feel welcome. That is the purpose of a welcoming statement.
216 They also want to make sure that when making a full declaration like this, (it is written to be)
217 super hard to be against it. It does not say “DEI,” or “Diversity, equity, and inclusion,” it is
218 extremely hard for people in their positions to be against what is written here. However, the
219 purpose and meaning behind DEI is in here.

220
221 Dr. Saleh stated that he was at the City Hall meeting when this was initially presented by
222 Councilor Jones, and he was under the impression that the new Declaration was formulated to be
223 more inclusive because they might not have included everyone in the original discussion. He
224 continued that now, it seems to him that the new declaration is a way to sanitize the original one.
225 He asked if he heard correctly that it was asked that the City have a new declaration that re-
226 words the original one, and he senses that the main purpose might be to get rid of the word
227 “diversity.” He asked if that is a far-fetched interpretation.

228
229 Councilor Jones replied that they wanted to be more specific. He continued that in the last
230 declaration, he just wrote the word “lifestyle.” That is something the Mayor wanted to take out,
231 and put in “gender identity and sexual orientation,” which they put in this one. The first
232 declaration was written when Black Lives Matter was going on, and he guesses they were not as
233 sensitive to the LGBTQ+ community at that time, so they changed that wording, but they also do
234 not want to “go too strong,” because as he said, they need 15 people to sign it.

Dr. Saleh replied that he understands, and he welcomes the effort to be more inclusive in including the LGBTQ+ community more explicitly, but he is disappointed if the word “diversity” is being omitted. He understands that it is not unique to (Keene) and many communities are doing that. But he is disappointed. He thanks Mr. Morrill for noting that, because he did not see that. He would be disappointed if the City could not get 15 (Councilors) to vote for this.

Dr. Morris stated that it is difficult for her to find the right words, but she wants to say something about this. She continued that a student taught her that the three words go together like interlocking puzzle pieces. Councilor Jones replied that they did put them in the original, because they thought they went together. Dr. Morris continued that without “diversity” and “equity,” “inclusion” becomes more like, *‘be a part of what we already have here existing.’* Diversity and equity mean that not only do we want people who are usually marginalized to be a part of it, but when you use those other two words, it evokes a change within the system to be able to provide for people who might be of a different marital status, for example. Just “inclusion” alone would mean *‘Okay, we include everyone of different marital statuses, and we are not going to make any accommodations to really acknowledge what you need.’* Different people need different things, depending on how they are different, which is the “diversity” piece. Giving people what they need is the “equity” piece. For example, some people wear glasses. The glasses themselves add to the diversity, and for you to see better, you need the glasses, which is the equity. It is about giving people what they need to be able to be not just “included,” but active participants within the process or within the system. Because of definitional theft, they are dancing around and backing off of these words that can really add a lot of richness to any community. And, she understands why they (Councilor Jones and the group who wrote the Declaration) choose the words they did.

Councilor Jones replied that what Dr. Morris is saying is right.

Dr. Morris stated that she wanted to say that for the record, because as her student said, *“Yeah, you can include me in a lot of stuff, but not listen to what I have to say, because you’re basically saying, ‘come to MY table.’”* Whereas equity means we will not even have a table to come to until we all come together to bring the table that allows for all of us to sit at the table. “Inclusion” is inviting someone to include them at an already-existing table. That is how her student explained it to her. Discussion ensued and others spoke positively about that analogy.

Dr. Saleh stated that he withdraws his second on the motion. He continued that in light of the full understanding of this, he understands that City Councilors are politically appointed and that they have elections and have different judgements, but this is the Human Rights Committee. Not only that, they are formerly the Jonathan Daniels Committee. Jonathan Daniels gave his *life*, which he cannot emphasize enough, for diversity and the greater purpose of equity. It is a dishonor if they take a step back because certain people want to move society backward. He is not okay with it. He is strongly expressing his disappointment in the City Councilors.

Councilor Jones replied that if Dr. Saleh withdraws his second, the HRC does not endorse the Declaration, which is fine. The HRC was still made aware of it, which was the purpose of him coming to them. Everything Dr. Saleh is saying is right. But just from a different perspective, of community acceptance, they (he and the group who wrote the Declaration) had to word it the way they did.

Dr. Saleh asked if this will have a public hearing. He continued that a City Council endorsement does not necessarily translate to community (endorsement). Councilor Jones replied yes, because it will go to the PLD Committee and public input will be allowed at that time. Dr. Saleh asked what the date is. Councilor Jones replied the second Wednesday of June. Dr. Saleh asked if all the City Council members will vote after that hearing. Councilor Jones replied that the five PLD Committee members will vote whether to recommend it to the City Council or not, and then it goes to the full Council of 15 people. Dr. Saleh replied that since it is not yet a done deal, the HRC's feedback should be included. Councilor Jones replied that Dr. Saleh and anyone else can come to the PLD Committee meeting and give input. He continued that it is as transparent as possible. Dr. Saleh replied that any feedback that the HRC as a collective provides should go in the record as well. Councilor Jones replied that he cannot guarantee it will go in the document, but it will go in the record. He continued that they (he and the group who wrote the Declaration) are looking at it from a different perspective than the HRC is.

Mr. Morrill stated that Dr. Morris's comments got to the reason behind why he asked that (question about why the word "inclusion" was chosen), and it is his understanding that diversity, equity, and inclusion are building blocks to belonging. Thus, if you have two without the third, or one without the other two, you do not have belonging. That was why he asked. He understands why they chose "inclusion," but a compromise people might be supportive of is replacing "inclusion" with "belonging." Belonging is the goal of those three words together.

Councilor Jones replied that that is a good point. He continued that the title is "Welcoming Declaration," and it is about being a "welcoming city." He asked if Mr. Morrill is suggesting changing it to "belonging city." Mr. Morrill replied that that was his initial recommendation, but (unfinished sentence). Other HRC members replied that it does not work grammatically, so they would have to think about how to phrase it. Ms. Fiske suggested "The City of Keene recognizes the importance of belonging." Discussion continued about the wording and grammar.

Ms. Budakoti stated that she wants to say a few things, being on both sides. She continued that personally speaking, for the immigrant community to which she belongs, if they take out the words "diversity," "equity," and "inclusion," she starts questioning her existence. Does she even belong here? Does she even belong to this table? What is she contributing, and is it even having an impact? All of those questions come to her. Having said that, she also very much understands and appreciates City staff's reframing it instead of completely dropping it. She was worried about that, when the battle becomes tough and there is (pressure) to take everything (about DEI) out. She thanks the Council and especially Councilor Jones, who is working diligently to be able to say some things here that still will be special and meaningful to people

like her. She appreciates the effort. She knows it is not a full-blown inclusion, but she also understands the diplomatic way of (doing it) because right now they are in a state of a lot of conflict. There has to be a work around. This is a work around. As a member of the HRC, she is happy to have this. Maybe in the next four years it will change; she hopes it will. She appreciates that instead of completely taking (the welcoming declaration out), Councilor Jones and others are making it more explicit and saying things without saying it.

Councilor Jones replied yes, that is exactly what they are trying to do.

Ms. Budakoti stated that she works with families who are not as well socio-economically, and that part is missing from the Declaration. She continued that they want to be welcoming to people of all socio-economic positions. She recommends they add that. They want to find resources for those friends and communities that are not as privileged, and that is how they are going to be more welcoming and inclusive. Councilor Jones replied that he agrees with adding “socio-economic status.” He asked where in the document to put it. Discussion ensued, and HRC members suggested inserting it between, say, “sexual orientation” and “race.”

Councilor Jones stated that he wants to remind the HRC that Keene is the only city in the state that has a Declaration. He continued that they are only one of three in New England. The ones in Waterbury and Rutland, VT, say nothing, and Keene’s from 2021 was much more specific. They have to be careful that they do not put a target on (Keene’s) back, because of what is happening in Concord. They are taking money away from anyone that deals with those words. He continued that President Trump wanted to take Federal money away from Maine because the Governor of Maine used those terms.

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that part of her says that is precisely why (Keene) should not back down. What is wrong with being a target of this administration? Will it be painful? Potentially, and she is not on the City Council, and this is not her decision to make. But she is putting out the idea. Dr. Saleh replied that that is what his point was. He continued that the compromise could be that the City Council goes along, but the HRC makes a protest. The HRC does not have to comply to the will of the City Council. This is not a political entity. They have the freedom to express their truth.

Councilor Jones replied that they would never get 15 signatures. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that she thinks Dr. Saleh’s point is that the HRC is not a part of those signatures, so, Councilor Jones can do what he needs to do to get the Declaration through, and the HRC can say what they have to say. Other HRC members agreed.

Dr. Morris stated that she often hears that people do not want to have a target on their back, and she thinks about all the disenfranchised people who constantly have targets on their backs. She continued that she is glad Ms. Budakoti brought up class, because people do not talk about class. Unhoused people are always targets. It is time for some people, with some amount of privilege, to take some of the target amount, to be a part of that whole configuration, acting in solidarity

with people who constantly have a target on their backs and people who cannot take the target off.

Ms. Fiske stated that she really appreciates the Welcome Declaration being updated to support the LGBTQ+ community. She continued that she would like Councilor Jones to speak to the fact that the passing of a new Declaration does not null the old one. Councilor Jones replied right, the old one was a statement at a point in time.

Ms. Fiske stated that a sentence in the old statement says, "*We vow to condemn and never ignore acts of racism, bigotry, oppression, and hatred.*" She continued that she, for one, will make sure the Library keeps the old statement up. She will try and look at this new one as an expansion, because it includes people who were missed in the first, but to also keep the old one so they have the reminder of that point in time. Councilor Jones replied yes, he would like to see both of them up.

Dr. Saleh stated that his understanding is that for the City Council, this new one will replace the old one. He asked if that is correct. Councilor Jones replied no, it becomes a brand new document. Discussion ensued. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if the message then becomes the two of them put together. Councilor Jones replied that they are two declarations done at certain periods of time. You cannot take away an old declaration.

Rabbi Aronson stated that he completely endorses a non-supersessionist approach to this, which is a bit of theological humor. He continued that he just discovered a website called certifiedwelcoming.org, and just looking at their homepage gave him some ideas. It might give Councilor Jones some ideas about what language to use. His home city of Portland, ME was the first the first in Maine to become a certified Welcoming City.

Ms. Budakoti stated that she thinks they understand that this is the need of the hour, they are trying to protect their city from the powers that be, understanding the economic impact it could have on the city. But she also thinks, especially when Councilor Jones said that not everyone on the City Council is going to sign it, that as the population of the city that makes the city really what it is, there should be a session where those Councilors need to hear from them. Hearing that some Councilors will have a problem signing this is the worst part and hardest for her, as a resident. If someone in that place of power has a problem signing something like this, she has a problem with that. If their philosophy is not about keeping residents safe and keeping the city more inclusive, that is a problem, and they need to find a place where the City Council can hear their thoughts in an explicit way.

Councilor Jones replied that Ms. Budakoti and others are more than welcome to come to the PLD Committee meeting in June and say all of that.

Dr. Saleh stated that if this was going to be on the City's website or be a formal constitutional document, then he would see the need to change it. He continued that it looks like it is kind of a

historical document, and he does not see that Concord or anyone will make a budgetary decision based on a Resolution that was passed five years ago. To him, it seems like it is not necessary, if the purpose was to sanitize it. They are being proactively accommodating, which is not necessary.

Dr. Morris stated that the other thing is, it is not what you say, it is what you do. She continued that they could make the statement, and then there are certain things they could *do* to support the statement and make it the definition that they want it to be. To her, that is the critical next step. You could have a wonderful statement without living up to it, or have a statement and then live up to it in a certain way. That is what she cares about, people doing the things they say, standing by their neighbors, supporting each other. She appreciates this discussion.

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that a thought is to use the word “belonging” after “importance of.” She asked if the word “participation” would be useful, e.g. “*We value a sense of participation among all populations...*” Discussion ensued. Dr. Morris replied that that is the action piece. Others agreed with the word “participation.” As discussion continued about the wording, Councilor Jones asked if they are saying “inclusion” is out. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied yes. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that per Mr. Morrill’s suggestion, the beginning would say, “*...the importance of belonging in building a stronger community,*” and the second to last sentence would be, “*We value active participation among all populations...*” “Active” was Ms. Budakoti’s word.

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if there was any other new business. Ms. Budakoti stated that speaking on behalf of the Keene International Festival’s (KIF’s) Planning Committee, she wants to say that the team is determined, but also very unsure of charting this territory, planning a festival they do not know will be attended. She continued that they would like someone from the City to give them some sort of guidance. The KIF works under the guise of the HRC, which is a committee of the City of Keene. They would like guidance on how to move forward so they can either plan (the festival) or plan an alternative. They would like to know what sort of safety precautions are in place.

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if the concern of the KIF Planning Committee is whether there is support in the community for the festival as it has existed before. Ms. Budakoti replied yes, but it is more than that – the festival is to recognize diversity and multiculturalism. The festival is for people from all walks of life, including marginalized and disenfranchised people; it is free and multigenerational. They (the festival organizers) never ask for documentation, but they are worried that the festival could be targeted by ICE. They do not want to put people under that stress or put the Planning Committee under that pressure. They would like the City to guide them. How does the City want to do this? How can they create a sense of belonging and how can they do it as a city? That is her question to the City. The Planning Committee meets next week, so she hopes someone can get back to her sooner so the Planning Committee can either fuel it or take the plug out.

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Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that she does not know if the HRC is necessarily the ones who can (do that). Discussion ensued, and Ms. Fiske stated that the Keene Police Department and City administrators are more the ones who could address this. Ms. Budakoti replied that the KIF does not have access to them. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that they absolutely do. Ms. Budakoti replied that the HRC can be the KIF's backbone. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if Ms. Budakoti/the Planning Committee wants her, as the chair of the HRC, to go with her to have a conversation with the Police and the City Manager. Discussion continued, and Ms. Budakoti stated that it would be best if it could be a virtual meeting.

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if there was any other new business. Ms. Bowie stated that something for a future agenda is to look at whether and how the City of Keene could take steps towards becoming designated as a Compassionate Community. She continued that the United States Conference of Mayors at one point put together some "Compassionate USA Partner Communities," and there are over 300 of them in the country. She will send Ms. Bender-Jesse the information.

8) Adjourn – Next Meeting June 2, 2025 at 5:00 PM

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

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

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

PREVIOUS HRC Subcommittee Reports

Juneteenth:

The event is set for Thursday, June 19th, 2025 on Central Square.

Pride:

- **4/7 report**
- We are moving ahead with and making progress on our art crawl plans.
 - Art show will open on Thursday June 12th at 6:00.
 - Art will be displayed through the rest of the month.
 - Opening night will consist of a short kick-off event at Brewbakers including a speaker, moving on to the other venues pub crawl style, then finishing the night at Madame Sherri's for the after party.
- Venues will be 4 downtown restaurants (Brewbakers, Fireworks, Birdies and Otto's) and two other venues if needed (17Rox and the Library).
- We've hired Adam Toepfer as DJ for the after party at Madame Sherri's.
- We have a couple requests out for donations to cover expenses.
 - the DJ. will be the biggest expense (\$300).
 - We have most of that in our budget. Short by ~\$70.
 - We're confident we can raise the funds.
 - Other expenses will be minimal.
- We are working on getting the Call for artists out ASAP.
- Working on finding a speaker for our kick-off event.
- We are considering some sort of swag for the event. Leaning away from t-shirt in favor of something less expensive and less environmental impact. Bandana, button, stickers, etc.
- **5/5 report**
- Plans continue to come together. The call for artists is out there and we have some submissions. Deadline for submissions is May 18th. If you know of any artists that are part of the LGBTQIA+ community, send them the call for artists. Spread the word. We're also working on promotions for the event (flyer, social media posts, reaching out to other media).
- In addition to planning our Pride Art Crawl we also booked a table at this year's Keene Pride Festival in September.

Keene International Festival:

Festival Date: September 27th, 2025

Festival time : 11 am - 3 pm

Festival Venue : Keene Rec Centre

If anyone interested in joining this meeting or the Planning committee please contact the Festival Chair- Ritu Budakoti **Email** ritunbudakoti@gmail.com

Indigenous People's Event:

Indigenous Peoples event is set for Saturday October 18 at 1 pm in Heberton Hall at the Library. Dr. Meghan Howey, Professor of Anthropology & Earth Systems Research Center at UNH- Durham, will give a lecture on the effects of colonialism-- past and current-- on native peoples, their cultures, and the ecology of the region.

Dr. Howey's recent publications include "The Shock of Colonialism in New England: Fragments from a Frontier" (2025) and "Colonialism, Community and Heritage in Native New England" (2020).

7/1/22- 6/30/23	HRC	KIF	7/1/23- 6/30/24	HRC	KIF	7/1/24- 6/30/25	HRC	KIF
Balance 7/1/22 4,091.88	\$ 2,991.88	\$ 3,985.44	Balance 7/1/23	\$ 2,692.50	\$ 5,951.74	Balance 7/1/24	\$ 3,192.50	\$ 3,946.97
Income			Income			Income		
City of Keene	\$ 1,000.00		City of Keene	\$ 2,000.00		City of Keene	\$ 2,000.00	
donations TILL	\$ 1,800.00		Donation MLK	\$ 750.00		Donations: Pride (Bensonwood & Keene Pride)	\$ 400.00	
donations Juneteenth	\$ 3,150.00		MLK Book Funds	632.65				
Donations KIF		\$ 8,312.00	Donations KIF	\$ 11,944.77	\$ 4,300.00	Donations KIF		\$ 13,377.00
			Donations - Juneteenth*					
subtotal	\$ 5,950.00	\$ 8,312.00	subtotal	\$ 3,382.65	\$ 4,300.00	subtotal	\$ 2,400.00	
Total Income	\$ 5,950.00	\$ 8,312.00	Total Income	\$ 3,382.65	\$ 4,300.00	Total Income	\$ 2,400.00	\$ 13,377.00
Expenses			Expenses			Expenses		
						Extra - table cloth	\$ 150.00	
Martin Luther King Day 500.00	\$ 45.55		Martin Luther King Day 500.00	\$ 331.90		Martin Luther King Day 500.00	\$ 300.00	
Black History Month TILL	\$ 1,800.00		Black History Month	\$ -		Black History Month	\$ -	
Juneteenth 500.00	\$ 3,098.58		Juneteenth 500.00	\$ 500.00		Juneteenth 500.00	\$ -	
			Expenses - \$11,707.96*					
International Festival		\$ 6,345.70	International Festival		\$ 6,339.06	International Festival		\$ 7,224.89
Indigenous Peoples Day 500.00	\$ -		Indigenous Peoples Day 500.00	\$ -		Indigenous Peoples Day 500.00	\$ 500.00	
			Pride Event - Story Clear Film 500.00	\$ 500.00		Pride Event 500.00	\$ - 238.06	
						2024 Pride Festival	\$ 600.00	
Total Expenses	\$ 4,944.13	\$ 6,345.70	Total Expenses	\$ 2,882.65	\$ 6,339.06	Total Expenses	\$ 1,788.06	\$ 7,224.89
Net 22-23	\$ 1,005.87	\$ 1,966.30	Net 23-24	\$ 500.00	\$ (2,039.06)	Net 24-25	\$ 611.94	\$ 6,152.11
Balance on hand	\$ 3,997.75	\$ 5,951.74	Balance on hand***	\$ 3,192.50	\$ 3,912.68	Balance on hand	\$ 3,804.44	\$ 10,099.08
Correct Balance	2692.5		*Keene YMCA was fiscal agent of Juneteenth			*Keene YMCA was fiscal agent of Juneteenth		

HRC Subcommittee Reports

Juneteenth:

The event is set for Thursday, June 19th, 2025 on Central Square. Fundraising and marketing efforts continue. Fundraising is behind where we would like it and we are working to address that. Otherwise, program is set, and things are moving forward.

Pride:

Things are coming together. Opening Night is June 12th. kick-off event is at 6:00 (doors open at 5:30) at Brekbakers. The crawl hits the road at 6:30. We have the artists. We have the venues lined up. Artists are responsible for coordinating with venues to install (and de-install) their works. We have a speaker for our kick-off event. The after party is booked with DJ and Drag performance. There are a couple odds and ends to wrap up, but it's mostly just getting the word out. Please share the FB event which can be found to the Friends of Public Art Facebook page. QR code on the event flyer will get you there. We have a new flyer for the event you can share digitally or print and share.

Keene International Festival:

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